

**Hamlet Isaxanli**

**ON EDUCATION SYSTEM  
IN TRANSITION ECONOMY**

***A view from Azerbaijan***

**Khazar University Press  
Baku**

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**Hamlet İsxanlı**  
**Keçid iqtisadiyyatında təhsil sistemi.**  
**Azərbaycandan baxış**

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İsaxanlı, H. A.

On education system in transition economy:  
a view from Azerbaijan / H.A. Isaxanlı

**ISBN10 9952-20-037-4**

**ISBN13 978-9952-20-037-9**

1. Education-History-Azerbaijan. 2. Higher education-Azerbaijan. 3. Education policy.  
370.94754-dc22

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# **Capacity Development Strategies in Knowledge and Learning in a Country with Transition Economy: The Azerbaijani Case**

**UNDP Global Event:  
“Capacity Development Strategies: Let the Evidence Speak”  
Madrid, Spain, 27-29 November 2006**

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Sustainable development of individuals, institutions and the society at large is based on lifelong education and training. In particular, an institution's success in its own field of study directly depends on its high-level organizational and institutional culture, which is basically a result of education and training. Low-level education is also a big obstacle on poverty reduction, because it leads to low income level. Poverty of parents, in its turn, makes quality education of their children problematic. In other words, poverty and poor or incomplete education feed and necessitate each other.

Primary, and then basic (between primary and high, that is *incomplete middle school* according to old Soviet terminology) and secondary education are directly aimed at overcoming or reducing

illiteracy in the society and receiving general knowledge, which constitutes the basis for gaining life and professional skills. That's why, in most countries and societies utmost attention is paid to primary, basic and secondary education, which comes before higher or vocational-technical education, and states as well as international institutions carry out serious works and spend huge amounts of money on this issue. Here, difficulties are also related with the fact that primary, basic and secondary education constitute the largest sector of education (and in general, largest sector of human activity!?).

In the process of rendering education and training an effective tool for sustainable development state policy and government's attitude play an important role. It is also crucial that domestic and international institutions become actively involved in preparing reform programs and providing financial aid. International organizations can also play the role of mediator and conciliator between the parties by considering international experience as well as local culture, and approaching with respect ideas of both the state and other interested parties. While saying "interested parties" or shareholders here, we mean private and public education institutions, relevant government agencies and non-governmental organizations, the industry, and business world, etc.

Modernity in education (as in all other fields of human activity) means thinking about today and future in an interrelated manner,

and this requires being open to new ideas. A decision can be made behind closed doors, but everybody – the state, education centers, other institutions and individuals – would benefit if the most correct way is found out through open discussions. It is more expedient if the truth is found out through exchange of ideas between the relevant officials and experts. It is not easy for one side to see all delicate details of an issue. Flexibility and changeability of rules and ideas are important elements of development. At the same time, some instant, unconsidered and impulsive changes and innovations do not serve the reform process and on the contrary, can even fetter those who are on the right way.

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The world is colorful. There are differences between countries and regions in terms of economic-political development and these differences can be very big sometimes. There is also variety in terms of literacy rate as well as level of educational, scientific and cultural development. Whereas in places with high rate of illiteracy the main attention is paid to primary, basic and secondary education, in economically, politically and culturally developed countries and regions of the world all levels of education become a topic of hard debate, where focus of issues change from time to time, this or that issue is covered more broadly and analyzed more deeply, re-distribution of financial resources is debated, etc. In

former socialist bloc countries as well as East European and former Soviet countries, which are now called transition economies, the society used to have a broad and improved network of educational, scientific and cultural centers. Positive impact of this can be still widely felt. People are literate and go for education. But the society now is concerned more with the fundamental problems which emerged in the process of collapse of Socialism and restoration of Capitalism. Although the period of big crisis is behind, ways of development are being sought, and international cooperation and integration programs also serve this purpose. Of course, political will, effectively working government, struggle against corruption and monopolies, and development of democracy lead to speedy solution of the problems step by step and increasing living standards and moral environment.

In majority of transition economy countries school education (with duration of 11 years – from age of 6 till 17) used to be compulsory and free (from tuition and other fees), and at present in most of these countries at least basic and secondary education, which together last for some 9 years, is compulsory and free. This is one of the reasons why in most of these countries primary, basic and secondary education as parts of the school education have not been separated from each other. That is, they are located in the same building and have a single administrative structure. Let us look at the main problems existing in this field: 1. Development of

infrastructure (constructing building, repairing existing building, modernizing laboratories, etc);

2. Installation or strengthening of ICT (note that only 4.4% of schools in Azerbaijan use the Internet); 3. Update of the curriculum and textbooks; 4. Re-training of teachers; and 5. Increasing salaries (currently, average salary of school teachers is about 110 US dollars).

The first problem is gradually being resolved, but is still very far from full solution. This problem is apparent in the fact that number of students at schools is too high and they have to come to school in two, sometimes three shifts. Moreover, as a result of Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno Karabakh, a lot of families became refugees and this makes the problem even harder and necessitates speedy development of infrastructure. One difference from the Socialist-Soviet times must be noted here: Part of the students in Azerbaijan (the available statistical data on this issue does not seem credible) leave school after 9-year education and either go for earning money to support their families or go to vocational-technical schools. According to some sources, students who leave schools at the age of 15-16 constitute 4.3% of the total; among students at the age of 16-17 this percentage is much higher – 18.8%.

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At this point let us briefly touch upon the issue of preschool education too. According to statistics, in 2005 only 20% (according to an alternative source, only 12%) of children at the age of 3 to 6 went to kindergarten. Refugees inhabited majority of kindergarten buildings. At present, a large part of kindergarten buildings are opened for privatization with the condition of not changing their educational-teaching profile. If this privatization process is carried out successfully, kindergartens may improve and increase their quality as a result of the development of private sector in this field. However, the possibility is not low that the principle of keeping their educational-teaching profile intact will be violated. Flourishing construction sector is eager to use territories of kindergartens for constructing living and office buildings, and keep only a small symbolic part of them as kindergarten. High level of initial privatization prices as if reveals this threat.

Vocational-technical schools are in big crisis. Their number is becoming smaller and smaller, and even those who survive cannot analyze changing demands and adapt to them. Although transition from planned economy to market economy demands sharp change of this sector in terms of its form and content, this change has not yet happened. In my opinion, this sector can get the opportunity to revive itself and become feasible well functioning only as part of the private or non-governmental sectors. Instructor/student ratio here is very big (around 1/6) and curricula are totally useless. This sector could also contribute to the struggle against unemployment

and poverty. As a very bright example, we can see two vocational - technical schools founded by ADRA in two regions of Azerbaijan (Ganja and Aghcabadi). Adapting to the market demands, establishing relevant physical plant and functional equipment, selecting good teacher and masters, and effective administration does not make one wait too long for good results.

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Access to higher education has become one of the most serious problems. There is a gap between general (secondary, high) and higher education. Low quality of teaching at secondary schools as well as material and especially, moral erosion of schools renders it inevitable for students and parents to use service of private tutors. Private tutorship has become a spreading shadow industry. Preliminary researches show that at least 45% of teachers and 55% of secondary school students are involved in this industry. Decline of vocational-technical schools and non-attractiveness of technical colleges giving sub-Bachelor degree increases problems after school education. The fact that vocational-technical two year (after high school) colleges could not establish a system similar to the American system of Community Colleges, in other words, lack of possibility to get accepted to a higher education institution after completion of two-year college education minimizes development opportunities both for these colleges as well as their students. Of course, the state bears the main responsibility in this issue. In other

words, here, determination of correct state policy becomes a crucial issue.

Unfortunately, in this field, that is, in the state policy concerning access to higher education, there are certain aspects that are difficult to understand with rational mind. In terms of the proportion of students in higher education from the relevant age group (17-21 or 18-22) Azerbaijan is far behind not only advanced countries, but also its former Soviet neighbors and from year to year this gap is becoming even bigger and bigger.

Let us give some statistics for the year 2004. OECD, the group of countries leading in terms of economic, scientific and technological power, is also leading in terms of the rate of participation in education. Gross enrollment rate in tertiary education in OECD is 71.2% on the average. The group of Eastern Europe and Central Asia is in the second place with an average of 49.8%. Leaders of this group have achieved results comparable to OECD countries in this field. Some good examples are Belarus - 60.5%, Estonia - 65.1%, Hungary - 59.6, Latvia - 74.3%, Lithuania - 73.2%, Poland - 61%, Russia - 68.2%, Ukraine - 65.5%. In a significant part of countries in this group (for example, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Romania) the participation rate is around 40-50%. Among countries lagging behind are Armenia - 26.2%, Tajikistan - 16.4%, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (although concrete statistical data on these countries are not available, the

rate of participation in these two countries are estimated at approximately 20-21% and 15-16% respectively). The participation rate in Azerbaijan is 14.8%.

According to the reports of the State Commission for Student Admission, beginning from 2002 number of individuals applying for admission has been rising, but the admission plan has been decreasing. Here, by saying “admission plan”, we mean the high-rank state officials’ decision which determines the yearly maximum number of students to be admitted to each major for each higher education institution. It must be noted that in Azerbaijan these officials every year determine appropriate majors and the number of students to be admitted to these departments not only for public but also for private universities. Sometimes, the government can, without any rational explanation, even prohibit admission of students to a field of study, for which a university has spent a lot of funds and where high quality of education has been attained (!?).

So the ratios between high school graduates, admission plan and those who were admitted to higher education institutions immediately after graduation from the school for 2002-2006 are as follows:

Years	Number of graduates	Admission plan	Admission	
			Number	As percentage of graduates
2002	57.258	27.577	8.145	14.2

2003	100.968	27.462	19.527	16
2004	126.427	28.475	20.278	16
2005	123.108	28.785	22.282	18.1
2006	115.414	25.629	18.384	15.9

The situation with regard to student admission to private universities is even worse:

Years	Number of applications	Admission plan	Admission	
			Number	As percentage of applicants
2002	7.984	3.119	793	9.9
2003	13.642	4.025	2.448	18.1
2004	18.742	4.820	3.187	18.7
2005	18.967	5.200	4.906	25.9
2006	19.194	3.150	2.713	14.1

Even this admission plan is not completely fulfilled due to certain shortcomings in admission principles. That means higher education institutions, especially private ones, are not even given the number of students determined by the government officials. Thousands of applicants with higher test scores are left out and thousand others with lower test scores receive admission. Those left out despite high test scores apply to private education institutions for admission, but the government does not permit private education institutions to admit them (?) – the main reason of this is extreme centralization in the issue of admission.

For the purpose of comparison, let's see the percentage of admission to higher education institutions in the year of graduation from high school in countries with various levels of

economic development for the year 2000: in Sweden 67% of school graduates entered higher education institutions, in Hungary – 65%, in Norway – 59%, in USA (in 2001) – 46%, Great Britain – 46%, South Korea – 45%, Japan – 39%, France – 37%, Slovakia – 37%, Germany – 30%, Mexico – 26%, Czech Republic – 25%, Turkey – 21%. As it can be seen in the example of these countries, the lowest admission to higher education institutions in the year of graduation from school is 21% (Turkey) and the highest rate is nearly 70%. It is a notable fact that, some of the former Socialist bloc countries do not lag behind and are even among the leaders in this field. However, Azerbaijan, with 15.9%, is lagging far behind in this field.

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What is behind the government's clearly controversial decisions regarding student admission?

1. Maybe, low number of higher education institutions?  
Absolutely, no. At present, 33 public and 14 private higher education institutions function in Azerbaijan. Some of these institutions are capable of educating more students than they are doing now.
2. Maybe, the state is doing this because of the problem of increasing expenditures on education? It is true that funding of public higher education institutions is mainly up to the state.

However, the public universities have increased quota of paid education, which means state funding does not necessarily increase in the same rate with the number of students. In some public universities, number of people in paid education constitute about half of the total number of students. On the other hand, the state does not provide private higher education institutions with any financing. This means, admitting more students to private higher education institutions (or to some best of them) does not increase expenditures of the state. On the contrary, it would help the state in planning its expenditures more effectively and optimally.

3. Maybe, quality, content and form of education do not satisfy the state? True, quality of higher education in the country is not so high and unfortunately, the scale of corruption in education is not low. However, we also have certain higher education institutions that are absolutely free from corruption and are exemplary in terms of the form and substance of education, and with high reputation inside as well as outside the country. But it is one of the biggest paradoxes of our days that student admission is decreased exactly to these higher education institutions. It would be more logical, taking also into account the international experience, if the state appealed to higher education institutions providing quality education (and free from corruption), saying “admit more students” (and if the state extended certain assistance to them).

4. Maybe, test scores in the admission exam are too low and in order to increase quality of education it is necessary to admit small number of students? Although this idea can look substantiated at first sight, in general, it is not correct. First of all, because a three-hour exam that is held only once a year cannot be enough to test or measure the student's knowledge, skills and motivation. Secondly, as noted above, there are thousands of cases in which, due to shortcomings in principle of placement at higher education institutions, individuals who received lower scores were admitted to higher education institutions, but those with higher scores were left out (?). Thirdly, I would like to give an example from admission process of this year. In 2006, number of those who received "very good" and "excellent" scores in the test was 29.859 (according to State Commission for Student Admission's data), but the admission plan, as mentioned before, was 25.629 and even that plan was not fulfilled (23.817 were admitted).

The State Commission for Student Admission does its work professionally and honestly, and I deem it necessary to acknowledge this. The shortcomings we discuss (as well as those we don't discuss) here are caused by incompleteness and unsystematic nature of the education policy. Organization of student admission appropriately and seriously is only one part, i.e. technical part, of the story. The trouble is in admission, and in general, in education policy, and this problem is becoming more

and more apparent. In fact, the state does not deliberately make things difficult – the state cannot have such an interest. It is the state, who bears the responsibility for providing stability in all spheres of life in the country. From this perspective, it is also natural that the state acts in a conservative way on some issues. But what brought us to this situation is lack of education policy and a serious education conception, taking care for the present and looking to the future. Thus, without a clear vision, we wander to the left and right and sometimes even go the reverse way – back. With minor exceptions, what we call educational reforms today are not so profound and consider neither the international nor our own, in many cases, bitter, experience.

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Let us also briefly look at the important steps and achieved successes in the field of education (in chronological order): 1. Creation and activity of private education sector, despite all the shortcomings peculiar to education centers (good examples of success stories in fighting corruption can be told only about some private higher education institutions!). 2. Creation and functioning of a centralized test system for student admission (despite all shortcomings created by unprecedented extreme level of centralization). 3. Revitalization in construction of new schools and rehabilitation of old ones (basically carried out through

sponsorship of Heydar Aliyev Foundation). 4. Publication of books in Latin Azeri script with the funding of the state.

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And finally, let us touch upon some important issues related with development of higher education and their solution.

Increasing the quality in education has always been one of the pivotal issues in all civilized countries. However, in transition economies and states which recently gained independence, overall conception of education is being revised and educational reform and reconstruction are widely discussed. During this process ideas may confront and usually the government keeps the situation under control not with a strategic vision, but through tactical steps. In the modern world, usually accreditation commissions function as the agency for evaluating quality of education. However, in transition countries, subordination of such commissions frequently changes from one institution to another (indeed, new commissions are formed), their aims and responsibilities are not clear, and the decisions they make do not live long. These commissions are not able to make decisions based on their evaluations and to show the ways and allow time to institutions for overcoming shortcomings. The result of accreditation does not affect decisions on funding and other privileges to be given to an institution; it only determines whether a higher education institution or a particular academic unit of it can function or it must be closed down. The decisions are

not always correct and objective. Patronage from outside, unnecessary politicization attempts and corruption around accreditation – all of which are characteristic to transition countries – make things even more complicated. In my opinion, it would be possible to solve this problem if accreditation was done by independent public accreditation agencies, which are not subordinated to the government or any other higher agency, jointly with professional associations in various fields of arts and sciences. Participation of appropriate international institutions and foreign experts in these accreditation commissions would also contribute greatly. Specialists educated abroad and their alumnae type of associations too can play an important role in this. On the other hand, it is possible to use services of regional accreditation institutions, based joint activities with some neighboring and other countries, also including European ones. Within the framework of the Bologna Process and creation of European Higher Education Area, it is envisaged to create Pan-European accreditation agencies and to give right to higher education institutions functioning in the European education area to apply to them for accreditation.

Establishment of broad cooperation networks inside the country, in the region and worldwide has become a necessity for the education institutions for the purpose of globalization and capacity-building. Consultations on the education policy, awarding joint degrees, twinning programs, and their accreditation can help with increasing quality of education to some extent. This

networking activity also plays an important role in strengthening autonomy of an education institution and decreasing its dependence on the government.

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Let us touch upon another issue with regard to financing education. Direct financing of public education institutions by the state does not serve the purpose of development of higher education institutions on a competitive basis. All public higher education institutions get their "share" regardless of the quality of their education. However, all interested parties would benefit if the state financed not higher education institutions but the students who received high scores in the State Admission Test and if these students were allowed to use these funds to study at a higher education institution of their own choice. In this case, the state would be able to distribute funds more fairly without increasing them and higher education institutions would strive for increasing quality of their education in order to attract holders of state scholarships. In this way of distribution, private education institutions too would indirectly get the chance to receive from the state some financial assistance they deserve. In turn, prospective students with low financial opportunities would not be forced to get free but low-quality education, and would be able to study at their own chosen institution.

The ways for solution of these and many other important problems should be envisaged in the country's Law on Education. Unfortunately, as some provisions of the Law on Education promulgated in 1992 have been recently frozen and some other provisions are outdated, education in the country is based not on law but on lobbying and interpersonal relations. Maybe this is not a tragedy. But from the perspective of formulating our education policy, it is important to consider broadly and deeply the changing world and modern tendencies in organization of scientific and teaching activities while drafting and promulgating the law.

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It is also important to note here the issue of strengthening research activities and the deep crisis that Academy of Sciences is living through. Functioning of higher education institutions and the Academy of Sciences separately from each other does not the demand of the time. In general, initiating very large scale research activities and financing numerous scientific-research institutes, which was a typical characteristic of the Soviet period, is not appropriate under current circumstances. Moreover, the level of research activities has become significantly lower (there are certain objective indicators of this such as ISI, SCI, SSCI, A&HCI international citation indexes). A very small part of researchers at the Academy of Sciences is actively involved in research activities; vast majority of them live at the expense of others, or more

correctly, with the charity of the state. An correct policy of the state concerning finance of scientific, educational and other activities is not just indexed to the rising funding, but it also crucial how effectively the funds are utilized. It is important to carry out serious reforms, considering the international practice and an economic development strategy that is called “knowledge economy”. Delaying such reforms means delaying development of the country. First steps in this direction can be bringing together and uniting research institutes of the Academy of Sciences with higher education institutions (it can be discussed how it could be done) and to turn the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Science (Research) and Education, as it is the case in many countries of the world.

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Azerbaijan is a rich oil and gas country. The endowments existing under the ground can provide opportunities for welfare on the ground. High literacy rate of the population inherited from the socialist times, existence of convenient climatic and agricultural zones in the country, as well as, the role of the country as “East of West”, “West of East”, “North of South” and “South of North” can give an impetus to the country’s rapid development. It is not surprising that Azerbaijan is the leading country in the world in terms of GDP increase (approximately 30% in 2006). At present, emphasizing the role of oil (that is, the “black gold”) wealth in

human development, the government has initiated a state program called “Converting black gold into human gold”. The program also covers development of education, within the framework of which a scholarship program for training Azerbaijani citizens abroad and in the country, is underway. It is also important to prepare a loan or credit program for Azerbaijani citizens who want to study, especially, for those who strive to get quality education at paid education institutions in Azerbaijan. On the other hand, the strategy for development of education should include not only individual scholarships for students, but also institutional grants, to be given on a competitive basis, for funding cooperation and partnership programs between Azerbaijani and foreign education institutions.

In transition countries, it is clear to everybody when the transition started, but it has not been broadly discussed when it will end. The history will have its own say on this issue, but I think, we will not need to wait too long. In countries with large pace of economic growth, like Azerbaijan, development of scientific research and education can help with completing the transition rapidly, confidently and with fewer losses. And significant international institutions, such as UNDP, should contribute to this process.

Thank you for your attention!

### **Questions-Answers**

**Q. 1.** Besides training specialist, civil education is also important. What can you say on this issue?

**A -** In ancient primitive societies not education but training played the main role. Both family and community were trying to train a character in the child. Through training they brought up the child with skills and habits necessary for the community and its growing member – the child. When demand for education increased, there was left less time for training and upbringing. The child spent nearly all day for going to school and preparing homework. And the issue of upbringing (moral education) was up to the family. However, the family alone is powerless in educating citizens. Education institution is capable of playing a special role in harmonic development of an individual at all levels of education. What can we do against “cultural imperialism” – peacefully inculcating poor cultural elements, forms of behavior that challenge values of the society, and increasing ignorance to human brains through media? The cure against this can be a serious activity aimed at joining the youth with their national and world cultures. Of course, here, admonition can not be an effective means; tact, university-level mastery and attractive forms of presentation are needed. It is important to include in the curriculum subjects like mother tongue, history of homeland, national literature, music and fine arts, comparative literature, world history, cultures of the world peoples, and to demonstrate that they are based on and constitute a part of the universal values.

Khazar University (Baku, Azerbaijan) has interesting and edifying experience in this field.

**Q. 2.** What is the situation with the issue of gender in education? What problems do you face in education of females?

**A -** The fact that first modern secular school for girls was opened in Azerbaijan in 1901 was a good example of the rising interest of Azerbaijanis during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in European-style education (different from traditional forms of Middle Eastern – Muslim education). Afterwards, during Soviet times, there was no discrimination in education and this tradition has not been violated in the contemporary period too. Although overall number of people leaving school after 9-year education has risen, in urban areas, number of girls leaving school is much less than that of boys; in rural areas, it is vice-versa. In primary and secondary schools, number of female teachers is higher than number of male teachers. There is a gender balance in higher education institutions. Simply, traditionally, there are more female students in some majors and more males in some others.

**Q. 3.** Are there many organizations giving scholarship to students? What is the size of paid education?

**A -** The state provides those who receive high scores in the entry examination administered by the State Commission for Student Admission with free education at public higher education

institutions (the number of such students is determined in advance). All others admitted to higher education institutes have to pay for their education regardless of studying at a public or private institution. Top 100 individuals with highest scores receive special scholarship of the President of Azerbaijan. Khazar University has signed an agreement with British Petroleum company, according to which the latter provides most successful petroleum engineering students of the University with "Oil-gas scholarship" to cover, particularly, their tuition fees. At the moment, a chance to get state scholarship on a competitive base is emerging for those who want to study abroad. Of course, there is a great need to provide more opportunities for students to get scholarships and loans. Strengthening economy of the country can bring about an increase in such opportunities. Similar activities can be observed in other countries with transition economy.

**Q. 4.** What can you say about application of distance learning?

**A** - Various interesting and useful aspects of e-learning have started to appear. But I think, fantastic expectations in this form of education are not justify hopes. Nevertheless, as a result of the use of the Internet and distance learning, opportunities for the students to study actively at work or at home without an instructor have increased. Of course, quality assurance in distance learning, especially, the issue of receiving an academic degree (Bachelor,

Master, Doctoral...) through this way, are always in the agenda as debatable issues.

The problem of brain-drain and its consequences was discussed here. On the one hand, brain-drain is a competition between countries and economies, and there will be winners and losers. Simply, the loser side, i.e. country, should think about it and find a way of strengthening. There is no other way out. It is evident that with the development of China, more and more Chinese people who studied in America or other Western countries are now eager to go back to their countries. On the other hand, we have to agree with the opinion that “distance learning helps with alleviating the impact of the brain-drain to some extent”. Also, international educational programs, including partnership programs between universities and colleges, help with affording the impact of the brain-drain. We have earlier mentioned the importance of international network of education institutions and we can see that it can also help with easing other pains.

# Higher Education in Azerbaijan

UNESCO Conference  
Reform of Education System of Azerbaijan  
for Sustainable Future  
Paris, France, July 6, 2005\*

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## Education in Azerbaijan before the Soviet rule

Before the final division of Azerbaijan between the Russian and Persian (Iranian) empires in 1828 **there was basically one Azerbaijan, and its educational system was similar to those in countries of the Middle East. Most schools were religious institutions; however, their curricula contained also secular subjects. Primary languages of instruction were Persian and Arabic; later Azerbaijani was introduced gradually. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a research, education and training center with an observatory was established in Maragha, near Tabriz. This center distinguished itself in non-Euclidian geometry, trigonometry, astronomy, physics, and ethics. However, a general decline in scientific research and education began in the Muslim world during the late Middle Ages. The number of high quality schools declined,**

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\* **See also:** Strengths and Weaknesses of Private Universities in a Transition Economy: A View From Azerbaijan (18th International Conference on Higher Education. Ankara, Turkey, August 26-28, 2005).

and higher learning institutions continued to exist only in important urban centers of the Muslim East.

After 1828 the north of Azerbaijan became part of Russia, and South Azerbaijan remained with Persia (Northern Azerbaijan is where the modern Republic of Azerbaijan is located today). Educational development in Northern Azerbaijan from 1828 to 1918 (The Period of the Russian Empire) was defined through combination of national religious and secular schools as well as Russian type of secular and bilingual schools. Academic programs and curricula were developed in a cooperative effort between Azerbaijani intellectuals and Russian educators. These schools contributed to the rise of the modern Azerbaijani *intelligentsia* (intellectual elite). For higher education, students would mainly go to Russia and Europe.

Azerbaijan's two-years of independence (The Period of the First Republic, 1918-1920) before the country became part of the Soviet Union was not long enough for it to develop a national system of education, but at least Azerbaijan State University, Russian type of higher learning institute was established in Baku in 1919. Also, about one hundred students were sent to Europe for higher education.

## Higher Education in Soviet Azerbaijan

**The Soviet period brought rapid advances in literacy, which rose to 90% within 10-15 years. Under the Soviet Union (The Period of the Second Republic, 1920-1991), there were two main types of higher-learning institutions:**

- 1. Universities offering 5-year programs resulting in something like a master degree and higher than bachelor degree. Each Soviet Republic had at least one university, comparable to an American college of arts and sciences, in many cases with Law.**
- 2. Specialized higher learning institutions, such as institutes of Fine Arts, Economics/Finance, Technical, Civil or Petro-Chemical Engineering, Agriculture, Pedagogy/ Teacher Training, etc. These offered 4 or 5-year programs leading to something like a bachelor degree or higher.**

**After graduating from these universities and institutes, graduates could continue with a 3-year graduate program (*aspirantura*), leading to the Candidate of Science degree, akin to the American Ph.D. and then, a few of them could continue in pure research for a Doctor of Science degree in certain fields.**

**The language of instruction in higher learning institutions in Azerbaijan was mostly Azerbaijani, with Russian coming second. For instance, for every 100 students majoring in Mathematics and studying in Azerbaijani, there would be a**

**group of 25 or 50 math students studying in Russian. In the five Central Asian republics, in contrast, the language of instruction in higher education was primarily Russian.**

### **Higher Education in Azerbaijan after Gaining Independence**

**Post-Soviet Azerbaijan's (The Period of the Third Republic, 1991) education system has experienced changes, particularly in higher learning. There are now 32 public universities (with Soviet-mode structures) and 15 private universities. Public universities get about half their money from the state budget, and the other half from tuitions. Private universities, on the contrary, do not get any public funding.**

**There were a number of factors that have had a negative impact on the education system, including:**

- The country's economy is in transition and is plagued by corruption and bribery;**
- Government funding of reforms in education system is relatively limited;**
- The tax system is intricate, at least when it comes to the education system;**
- Libraries are poor, engendering weak access to knowledge and information.**

**On the other hand, globalization has had a positive impact on education.**

Attitudes of foreign countries on the Azerbaijani higher education institutions are not simple and differ from each other. As Russia is very familiar with this region and knows internal environment here well, it has not undertaken any initiative to influence the education system, neither positively nor negatively. At the same time Russia does support branches of Russian universities in Azerbaijan, which are not recognized by the Azerbaijani government and undoubtedly are of poor quality. Authorized agencies of Turkey (YÖK) and Iran (Ministry of Research and Education) mainly pursue controversial policies in the recognition of Azerbaijani higher education institutions and their academic programs, namely, by discriminating certain institutions and favoring others. Instead of taking into consideration quality of education, presence or absence of corruption and other important indicators, they act in accordance with their personal acquaintances and linkages and/or in line with the will of Azerbaijani officials. One country that evaluates the education system of the region relatively well by impartially determining who is who and acting accordingly is the United States of America, which also is ahead of European countries in this sense.

The current features of Azerbaijan's education system are two-fold- inherited from the Soviet past are quality curricula in such fields as Natural Sciences, some Applied Sciences and Engineering, some fine arts and music, but more with memory

based teaching methods than student-centered system. The main weaknesses, which impede the process of change, are rooted in a strongly centralized system, which suffers from corruption and the influence of kinship.

Starting a new private research and education institution in Azerbaijan was, of course, a big challenge. Among the main goals and principles of best private universities I would mention attaining the following: academic freedom, strong and vigorous student and faculty body, quality of academic programs, no corruption, cooperation with North American and West European academic institutions, resistance to cultural imperialism, and an attempt to develop university-industry relations.

#### European Higher Education Area

National system of education is eroding worldwide, just like systems of “national railway” or “national mathematics.” Those higher education institutions that are not integrating into the global education system are candidates to become peripheral learning centers.

The Joint Convention of the European Council and UNESCO on Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications and Documents (Lisbon, April 11, 1997) can be considered as the starting of a new

period towards unity in the European Higher Education System. This convention covered such important issues as access to higher education, term of education, and recognition of higher education documents as well as creation of appropriate mechanism for these goals.

After reviewing and discussing the Lisbon Convention, we achieved timely ratification of it by Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, in the following years, important steps taken towards creation of European Higher Education Area, excluding certain exceptions, were not closely observed in Azerbaijan.

A meeting of the Ministers of Education of 29 European countries was held on June 19, 1999, in Bologna. In that meeting The Joint Declaration of European Ministers of Education was adopted. It aimed at creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) that would be in a leading position in the global competition by 2010. To achieve this, the following were proposed (grouping of objectives here is different from the original Declaration):

1. Implementation of easily readable and comparable degrees, applying Diploma Supplement for this purpose that is composed of two cycles. First cycle shall last a minimum of 3 years, and second cycle should lead to masters and/or doctoral degree.

2. **Providing free movement of students, faculty, researchers and administrative staff between countries; application of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in the case of movement of students.**
3. **Establishment of European dimension in higher education including cooperation in the field of preparing criteria and methodologies for the purpose of quality assurance in higher education.**

**Approaching with respect to various national education systems, a lingual and cultural differences, and autonomy of universities (Magna Charta Universitatum), while implementing this program, was specifically emphasized in the document.**

After this the process of creation of the European Higher Education Area was called the **Bologna Process** [in my opinion, Sorbonne-Bologna would be a more correct name due to preliminary important meeting of ministers of four big countries responsible for higher education, namely France, Germany, Italy and United Kingdom on May 25, 1998, held in Paris, Sorbonne]. It has been recognized by everybody that **higher education institutions and students are not objects but the main players in the Bologna Process.**

In order to provide coordination in successful implementation of the Bologna Process and admit countries those are willing to join the Process, Ministers of Education decided to meet within two years. Through the Prague meeting of May 19, 2001 and Berlin

meeting of September 19, 2003, a number of European countries joining the Bologna Process reached 40. As a result of the Bergen (Norway) meeting on May 19, 2005, Azerbaijan among 5 new countries joined the Process.

As an advancement of the Bologna Joint Declaration, it was proposed to create a **European Research Area** in addition to the European Higher Education Area and to prepare **joint masters and doctoral programs**. It was accepted that doctorate degree was the third cycle of higher education after the two cycles indicated in the Bologna Process. The ministers decided to attach a Diploma Supplement to the graduate diplomas from 2005 onward and took the commitment of creating access to education for everybody, using all available resources and means.

The main demand of European universities, on the other hand, was **autonomy with responsibility**. Universities demanded independence for formulating their strategies, prioritizing fields of studies and programs, and choosing faculty members and students in accordance with their own criteria. Application of tightly centralized administration hinders dynamic development of higher education institutions and impedes their capability to compete and respond rapidly to the needs of the changing environment.

## European Higher Education Area and Azerbaijan

### *What is the situation in Azerbaijan in regard to the Bologna Process?*

However paradoxical it may seem, although in the period of collapse of the Soviet Union Azerbaijan was going through severe political, economic and military crises, in several areas, including education, new ideas were spreading and new discourses and models were emerging.

The first private university in Azerbaijan, Khazar University (one of the first in the former Soviet Union) opened and paved a new way for itself and for Azerbaijan in the field of education by offering a new substance and adopting a new form (Khazar is the name of Caspian in Middle Eastern languages). Applying American-style credit accumulation model and offering programs leading to bachelor, master and PhD degrees since its establishment in March 18, 1991, Khazar has played the role of the field for an experiment and clearing-house for reforms in the higher education system of Azerbaijan. For the first time in Azerbaijan, Khazar University has applied a student-centered teaching model and credit accumulation system. That is, students study courses which have certain credit value and they receive a corresponding number of credits for each course they pass. The credit unit applied in Khazar University can be considered as two European credits (ECTS).

Credit accumulation model is based on prioritization of individual study trajectories for each student. But it will not be so simple for higher education institutions in Azerbaijan to move towards application of this student-centered credit system. It is an issue of educational or university culture, and therefore, it is not easy to implement it quickly, starting it from zero.

**In 1992, Milli Məclis (the parliament) of Azerbaijan passed the Law on Education, which constituted a legal basis for the establishment of the two-cycle higher education system in Azerbaijan, namely the system composed of bachelor and master degree studies. Later on all higher education institutions and programs in Azerbaijan, with few exceptions (for medical studies and the like), adopted this system.**

However, as transformation to the two-cycle system was not carried out carefully and stage-by-stage, and instead was done in the form of **a quick national-scale campaign**, the purposes, context and differences between bachelor and master programs have not been grasped by many higher education institutions up until now, and remnants of this “incompleteness” can be observed even today. In addition, the contents and form of studies after masters degree, has not been explicitly established yet. Some people talk about **a third cycle of higher education**, that is PhD; some others argue for continuation of the old Soviet model of third and fourth

cycles, which lead to the degrees of Candidate of Science and Doctor of Science.

Azerbaijan becomes a member of the Bologna Process; various Azerbaijani universities will likely join **student mobility programs** but gradually and at different times. One of the first and foremost aspects of Azerbaijan's participation in educational programs of European dimension can be preparation of joint degree programs, especially masters and PhD programs, by European and Azerbaijani higher education institutions, which have experience in ECTS and international partnership programs. The publication of University Catalog and fulfillment of its requirements are also important in student exchanges. Unfortunately, among Azerbaijani universities, only Khazar publishes a standardized catalog on a periodical basis. Of course, autonomy of higher education institutions is an important pre-condition for achieving success in this direction. But in Azerbaijan even high-reputation private universities are deprived of their right to issue their own diplomas.

The Institute of Education Policy and Strategy **is starting to function at Khazar University. The main aim of the institute is to study international practices in education, work on quality enhancement of education and problems related to its evaluation, find out ways of development of educational policy and education system in Azerbaijan, and particularly, closely**

**watch the Bologna Process and assist those interested in its furthering.**

### Current Problems of Azerbaijani Higher Education

As mentioned above, Khazar has been implementing PhD programs for a long time now and is the only university in Azerbaijan in doing this. But in general, the country is still keeping the system of Candidate of Science / Doctor of Science. **Not enacting the new bills on education** keeps this issue and other related vital matters in a frozen condition. Inconsistency and contradiction between rapidly changing environment and growing demand, on the one hand, and old, obsolete laws on the other, play the role of an obstacle and hold back development.

**Unfortunately, the attempts towards promulgation of a new bill on education, which started in 1997, have completely failed [and it is to my great chagrin that that draft law under discussion consists predominantly of such stipulations as “under the full authority of relevant executive bodies”].**

**As a result, governance in the field of education is regulated not by laws, but through personal networks and connections with high-ranking public officials. Furthermore, the success of an initiative mostly depends on the degree of closeness of the initiator to these high-ranking executives. It renders great difficulties in**

implementing the action plans and strategic development programs of higher education institutions.

In Western Europe, universities are striving for greater independence. The kind of independence they are looking for is not that easy to understand from the standpoint of universities in countries with transition economy. The present level of independence of European institutions, I believe, would suffice for Azerbaijani higher education institutions, including high-quality private universities, for many decades ahead.

Academic freedom in higher education institutions, including private universities, is at a very low level or almost absent. Academic freedom as well as autonomy of universities should be directly proportional to their quality in research and education. Unfortunately, only one higher education institution in Azerbaijan--Khazar University--has been able to incorporate academic freedom into its education policy (while struggling for autonomy without much success at present).

Endemic corruption and bribery in the education system is another factor leading to strengthening of central administration and strictly diminishing the autonomy of higher education institutions. The role of higher education institutions themselves in proliferation of the problems is quite large. Moreover, the absence of joint struggle of universities and the Ministry of

Education for assuring quality in education has seriously damaged the autonomy and reputation of both.

The saddest point here is that some higher education institutions that do not 'deserve', so to speak, this kind of treatment are also subject to it. The few universities that possess exemplary moral environment, offer high-standard study programs, implement modern teaching methods, maintain broad international relations, and whose graduates' skills and abilities are appreciated highly by the industries and businesses, have also become victims of the general situation prevailing in the Azerbaijani system of education and depend on destiny and fortuity.

Even the most serious and high-standard private university has no autonomy in such important issues as student admission, selection of specialization programs, issuing diplomas to its own graduates, etc. The question here is what private rights does private university enjoy? What are the things that make it private, after all? Private universities pay V.A.T. (which is unacceptable for educational institutions not-for profit, and which is very high, 18%) to the government, but do not receive anything from the state ...

Although the government does not extend any financial assistance to private higher education institutions, it has monopolized student admission to them at all levels of studies

and tries to restrict admission to private institutions by any means. In terms of the access to higher education, Azerbaijan's rating is one of the lowest not only in comparison to developed countries, but also among former-Soviet republics. Despite this apparent shortcoming, the government strictly prohibits prospective students to get admission to any university they want at their own expense! Starting from 1968, admission to higher education institutions started to rise rapidly in Europe, as it was the case in North America; everybody who wanted to study was given such an opportunity. At the moment, the proportion of students in higher education from relevant age group is highest in the world in South Korea and USA (82% and 81% respectively), followed by Canada (59%), European Union (52%) and Japan (49%). In Azerbaijan, approximately 15% of people from the relevant age group are studying in higher education institutions.

It is very important to pass into the system of financing directly students entering to the university in forms of scholarships and loans, instead of financing only higher learning institutes. Entering examinations through State Commission on Student Admission may play a role to define who is acceptable for scholarship and/or for loan. Taking this decisive step may create healthy environment in higher education system, nourish the competition between universities.

There are Rectors Conferences in European countries, which act as main bodies uniting heads of higher education institutions. They actively participate in the discussion of problems in teaching, research, student and faculty exchange, and in general, on correct formulation of academic policies and development. In Azerbaijan, this body (*Rektorlar şurası*) exists only on paper. Each rector is trying to keep his head safe, but keeping one's head safe is getting more and more difficult or more and more expensive. The main reasons for rectors (and universities) not undertaking joint efforts in this direction are differences between their aims and purposes. Thus, Azerbaijani higher education institutions are not able to act as players and are rather played with, like toys.

Although Azerbaijan government has not yet achieved serious success in overall reform of the education system, but at the same time, functioning of some higher education institutions on the basis of diverse ideas and practice, existence of opportunities for development, and individual universities' efforts to push towards higher standards are also realities of the day. The establishment of the Education Commission under the President of Azerbaijan recently may be regarded as an indicator of the government's consideration of education policy.

As far as the issue of assuring and increasing the quality of education is concerned, at the moment, discussions on determination of common European criteria and rules as well as activities of corresponding accreditation agencies are going on, and a certain consensus is expected in this area. It is not excluded that the role of certain pan-European and regional accreditation agencies may be increased and new ones may be created. Azerbaijan will have to consider the results of these discussions.

Quality in education is a system of values, a position, and a culture. Quality is changing of the existing form, and permanence of the evolutionary effort. Quality is a process and therefore, the concept of quality enhancement is something more important than quality assurance or quality control.

Who measures quality in higher education institutions and why? There are evidently three candidates that are ready to undertake this responsibility - the education institution itself, the government and independent authorized accreditation agencies. Higher education institutions in Azerbaijan almost do not conduct any serious internal evaluation themselves; but here again, Khazar University is an exception. Khazar regularly conducts internal evaluation with active participation of students, and results of the evaluation are published both on paper and electronically.

The main result of accreditation for a private university should be the right for that institution to apply for and receive credits or loans from the government on quite favorable conditions, and similar rights should be extended to that university's students as well. On the other hand, state universities, funded by the government, either are not subject to accreditation at all or their accreditation is only formal?!

The experience of the motherland of accreditation - USA shows that there is no need for direct participation of the state in accreditation; state interference, in fact, can only cause harm. In transition countries, like Azerbaijan, this issue is even more complicated. As a well-known maxim goes sometimes a child forgets that hammer is for hitting a nail, and starts to hit everything with it. The state, when it controls something, like accreditation, behaves like a child with a hammer. That is why the most expedient form of it after internal evaluation is external evaluation carried out by independent authorized accreditation agencies.

#### University - Industry Links

Industry can foster closer ties to the educational system, **including funding to upgrade the quality and quantity of manpower.**

Khazar University has been a pioneer in Azerbaijan in **prioritizing the nourishing of relations with industries** as an integral part of its development. These help the university to uphold the quality of its programs, faculty, support services and students.

**The Center for Economic and Business Research and Education** affiliated with the School of Economics and Management is intended to support Khazar University in developing relations with industries. The Center periodically conducts various training seminars and workshops in Economics, Finance, Marketing, Small Business and alternative disciplines, for small and medium entrepreneurs in Baku and other regions of the country.

In 2003, the School of Economics and Management at Khazar University and the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER) under the auspices of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (Japan) launched **the project “Corporate Governance in Azerbaijan.”** The project sets a wide range of goals and purposes. As a result of this joint research project Khazar University and MIER undertook to prepare recommendations on improvement of management for midsize and large businesses and government organizations in Azerbaijan. The project has contributed to the strengthening of relations between Azerbaijan, Malaysia and Japan and promotes development of corporate governance in Azerbaijan. Now Southern Korean scholars are also entering into the project.

The international exposure set Khazar University up to be a successful partner going forward with a **program of enhanced learning for BP Drilling & Completions Engineers**. Benefit comes with **the link between BP, Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh and Khazar University in Baku**.

According to BP, Khazar was chosen to complete this triangular link for several reasons mentioned below:

- A well managed University
- Has introduced western standard curriculum
- Teaches all subjects in English
- Has a Petroleum Engineering & Business undergraduate and M.S. and M.B.A. programs currently running.
- Has a managed Quality Assurance Program for all University Administration & Curriculum Development.
- Has a willingness to deal with industry in less bureaucratic manner than most.

**The ultimate goal of this triangular relationship is to utilize the Heriot -Watt curriculum with lectures and ongoing tutorial support provided, at a much cheaper cost, by Khazar lecturers**

Following on from the success of this trilateral relationship, BP has decided to utilize Khazar University in **the first true Industry Sponsored Scholarship Program in Azerbaijan**. BP will pay for up to 16-20 undergraduate Petroleum Engineering Scholarships per annum. Through Khazar's proven approach to Quality

Enhancement, a method of performance management has developed for all parties involved to ensure the success of this program going forward.

This University - Industry link was also one of catalysts accelerating and directing **the creation of Advisory Board** of School of Engineering and Applied Science, first this kind of Board in Azerbaijan with broad governance function.

# **Student Support System in Higher Education Institutions**

**UNESCO Conference  
Reform of Education System of Azerbaijan  
*Baku, August 24, 2005***

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Higher education institution is a point, area, center or, to some extent, city, where people who learn and teach live. The existence and functioning of this city requires organization of appropriate administration, management and service sector. The main populace of higher education institution is the students. Depending on the type, country and size of higher education institution, number of students is usually 10-15 times more than the number of faculty members and those working in the administrative-service sector.

Majority of students are young people with little life experience and therefore, besides studying and learning, they need all kinds of care and assistance. Together with research excellence and modern and quality education, a good higher education institution has to have a service sector for supporting and assisting students. This, in turn, plays an important role in seeking the necessary number of students at the necessary level – a very crucial issue for higher education institution. As a result of this support and

service, lifestyles and behavior of students are formed; they spend their time more effectively and are prepared well for business life.

On the other hand, students in paid education demand higher quality from the institution and from instructors teaching there, because they consider themselves as clients buying a service. Compared to the period of free education, this is a completely different time, environment and psychology. Moreover, contemporary higher education is much more colorful than the past one – there are more elective courses, more areas of specialization, new teaching models tailored to individual needs of the students, a more international composition of the student community, a wider use of information-communication technologies, etc. These and other characteristics make it necessary for the service in contemporary higher education institution to be more serious and colorful. In higher education institutions without a single united campus, where administrative and teaching facilities as well as laboratories and practical-internship units are dispersedly located, there are also specific factors that makes student support service more difficult. In order to solve this problem timely and appropriately, student support system must be established on the basis of specialized or specially trained group of professionals.

Student-centered model of education requires organization of active interaction with students. In this model, students are not united as a group around a teacher (instructor-centered model); but interests of each one of them are satisfied individually, and the priority is put on active participation of students in the learning

process; and instructors work together with students and only direct them. The education model that is based on credit accumulation is a student-centered system, where each student has his/her own trajectory of progress. One of the important components of the European Higher Education Area, which is planned to be created by 2010, and the Bologna Process, which is the way leading to it, is the active participation of students in this process. Unfortunately, this participation is not at the necessary level in the majority of European countries. One of the crucial reasons of it is that among administrators and assisting agents of education students are not considered as a party in the process of higher learning, but are taken as users or customers.

The first interaction between students or prospective students and higher education institution happens during the admission process. Generally, can the network of higher education institutions satisfy the desires of all individuals who want to become students? Satisfaction of this desire is implemented in the form of a government program in several, especially developed, countries; the issue of giving opportunity to everybody who has graduated from high school to get admitted to a higher education institution and thus, supporting them in this sense is brought up. In USA, 81 % of individuals from the appropriate age range study at higher education institutions. In this USA is second only to South Korea – an Asian country that supports science and education – where this percentage is 82 percent. This percentage is 59 in Canada, 52 in the European, and 49 in Japan (in Azerbaijan it

is around 15-20 %).

As it can be observed, even in highly-developed countries, the number of those who desire to obtain higher education but cannot achieve it is not small. The main problem of these people is financial difficulty. For example, as there is no free education in USA, lower-income population can receive education only through long-term and low-interest (6-8% per year) loans from appropriate funds. In the European Union and Japan, the state pays for the higher education of only a part of the students; the rest either pay for their education themselves or do not receive any higher education. Of course, individuals without financial difficulties do not have big problems in selecting a higher education institution.

In developing countries, the state funding to higher education is small (decrease in such funding is a worldwide trend, with very few exceptions), the government does not provide loans to students on favorable terms, and majority of the youth are not able to afford higher education because of the high level of poverty. Moreover, a big part of the youth whose family budget allows to pay for higher education become victims of the centralized system of admission; they are caught "unprepared" as a result of only one examination and are not permitted to receive higher education (in spite of the fact that there are higher education institutions at various levels, which are willing to provide education for them).

What is the admission mechanism to higher education institutions?  
In North and Central Europe admission to higher education

institutions take place in accordance with the average grade of students in high schools exams, especially, the final exams for graduation, and do not hold any special admission exams. Of course, higher education institutions everywhere (America, Japan, Europe...) themselves carry out student admission (except, Turkey and Azerbaijan; although certain degree of moderation has been observed in Turkey recently).

The first important step after admission is conducting student orientation days; there is a need for guiding the new students through the higher education institution and showing them right directions. General familiarization with the school, rules related with study courses (attendance, choosing courses and credits, order of precedence and consistency of courses with each other, general education courses and majors, core and elective courses...), library, dormitory, sport fields, as well as existence of a student support system and what kind of services it provides, and creating in advance a correct impression in the students about acquaintance, norms of conduct and similar issues play a special role in the organization of student life. Besides visual and oral orientation, it is important to prepare written and electronic orientation materials, such as the university website, university catalog, various guidelines and information booklets, including, student's handbook. Students should be provided with continued consultation on issues related with teaching; they should be continuously given information and consultation on important issues that might not have come to their minds.

When the classes start, it is very important that students should be given in advance a syllabus or plan of the course on the website or in the first class at latest, showing contents and form of the course, exams and grading principles. Syllabus can also be seen as an agreement concluded between the student and the instructor. Instructor clearly and officially explains his/her rules in the syllabus, and these rules are officially binding for both the instructor and students during the semester and exams. The most effective way to struggle with cheating in the exams is to explain to the students the very severe consequences of it. In fact, instructors can put their rules on this too in the syllabus.

In developed countries, it has become a usual fact of life to give students information and advice on funding opportunities, including state funding, bank system and bank credits, local and international funds, specific and general scholarships, etc. However, in transition countries such services are new and therefore, poorly-developed. Most of the transition countries that allow paid education, unfortunately have not prepared a system of funding and loans to support students. For example, students may be provided with study loans to be paid back in a certain period of time - let's say, in 10 years from finishing high school. Analogically, similar but shorter periods may be determined for the loans for higher degrees such as master's and doctoral degrees. Loans may be started to be paid back two years after completion of the degree study in a period of 10-15 years. It is possible that in the countries having a state oil fund this problem can be solved

through extending low-interest or no-interest loans from the fund; no doubt that preparing highly-qualified specialists is one of the factors determining strategic development of the country and the Oil Fund was established exactly for this purpose.

Lack of possibilities for full-time students to extend grants or loans and inadequacy of the provided funding for living expenses bring about their job search and employment. This in turn makes it inevitable to solve several new problems in organization of teaching. 75% of full time students in Denmark, 68%-in Germany, 66% in Austria and 46% in France work. In the European countries (with positive exception of Denmark) most of the working students are not employed in their own field of specialization.

Another primary issue is psychological and legal assistance to students. Problems in family life, dormitory or house, among friends, between junior and senior, male and female students, financial problems, homesick, problems with getting used to big-city life, as well as foreigners problem in coming to a new cultural environment can bring about depression in students. Lack of timely consultation, showing the way of solution and taking the necessary measures can be a result of the university's negligence, and absence or non-functionality of such a service at the university. Giving consolations on health and providing first medical aid to students requires a special attention. Medical Center functioning at the higher education institution should play an important role in providing students with medical and psychological assistance. Whereas some services, such as education-related advices, can be

provided by the relevant school or department, some other services, such as psychological assistance, may be provided in a more centralized form. Indeed, this issue, that is, localization or centralization of student support services, depends on the size of the higher education institution, whether or not it has a single campus, the number of available specialists and finally, the tradition.

Besides contributing to the liveliness of student life, sports and arts also bring the students closer to each other and unite them. The role of intra-university, national and international competitions, events and festivities in publicizing students and higher education institution is not small. Sports and especially some part of the art activities can be incorporated to the curricula; some other part of them can be carried out through associations, groups, student societies, etc.

Student unions functioning in higher education institutions play an important role in student life and in the life of the institution in general. In the Western world, hundreds of student unions, clubs and societies function within one university. Any idea can constitute a basis of a union – exemplary education, citizenship-locality, politics, religion, interest in various fields of study, sports, culture, arts, etc. Usually common idea of three students is enough for creating a union. Independence of student societies is very important. However, in former socialist countries there are a lot of problems in that field. Initially, higher education institution allots funds and creates necessary conditions for functioning of the registered student organizations (by the university council or

another higher agency), but later on they try to finance their activities themselves and attract sources of funding from outside. Student unions play a significant role in development leadership, self-management and other skills, including business habits.

Functioning of international student center in higher education, i.e. organization of the international student service makes it easier for foreign students to adapt to the student life and protects them from the danger of getting isolated. At the same time, it enriches the university with different cultures, races, religions and languages, helps to erode existing stereotypes, and increases students' understanding towards and way of approaching other peoples. This center or another authorized agency also studies possibilities for students' earning credits from foreign universities and/or transferring credits to them.

It is clear that students with physical and mental disabilities need a special care and service. Unfortunately, in transition countries, the situation in this field is also unsatisfactory.

One of the most important agencies supporting students and graduates of higher education institution is the career center. Introducing job search and employment tactics and psychology to the students, this center also tries to establish relations between employer companies and organization, on the one hand, and senior students, on the other. Graduates of the higher education institution also play a decisive role in this. One of the invaluable sources of power for a higher education institution is being in constant contact

with the graduates and following their successes. That is why, one of the most serious tasks of a higher education institution is to help with establishment and functioning of the association of alumni.

Students should be given a role in the management of a higher education institution and enhancing quality of education. Inclusion of student organizations in the university and faculty councils, systematic study of the students' opinion on the university, school, instructors and subjects as well as various student support services through anonymous student polls, and including students as a side while making internal evaluations bring about certain degree of student participation in the overall administration and decision-making process. Experience of Khazar University has proven that all steps towards listening to students' voices play an important role in establishing high-quality student support services.

# Azerbaijan Moving Towards European Higher Education Area – 2005

Report delivered at the seminar organized by  
Council of Europe and  
the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
April 20, 2005, Baku

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(Khazar University, Baku, Azerbaijan)

500 years ago Europe started to emerge as the new leader of the global historical process. With the discovery of America and determination of the Globe, the invention of the movable printing press, the spread of publication technology, and the formation of universities and scientific thinking, the “European Age” of the world history began. Finally, with the development of capitalism, Europe managed to far outpace the rest of the world.

**In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, rivalry and confrontation between European nations was at its peak; Europe became the scene for two devastating world wars. In 1945, Americans and the Soviets met in the middle of Europe – in Germany. This marked the end of the “European Age” – an end of the European hegemony in world politics and economy.**

**In 1957, a Soviet satellite mobilized America and Europe, and inclination towards integration seriously started to rise in the**

West. The European Economic Community (European “Common Market”) agreement, signed in 1957, also included provisions on cooperation in the field of education. In mid-1970s, the issue of mutual recognition in the field of education was formulated and from mid-1980s, a mechanism for movement of students, researchers and scholars from one European country to another was devised; programs, like ERASMUS, proved successful in this. One of the most important documents of these years is Magna Charta Universitatum, signed in 1988 in Bologna, which emphasizes autonomy and independence of universities as the most vital factor in creation of the European Higher Education Area.

The Joint Convention of the European Council and UNESCO on Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications and Documents (signed in Lisbon, on April 11, 1997) can be considered as the starting of a new period towards unity in the European higher education system. This convention covered such important issues as access to higher education, term of education, and recognition of higher education documents as well as creation of appropriate mechanism for these goals.

After reviewing and discussing the Lisbon Convention, we achieved timely ratification of it by Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, in the following years, important steps taken towards creation of European Higher Education Area, excluding certain exceptions, were not closely observed in Azerbaijan.

**On May 25, 1998, in a meeting of the Ministers of Education of four leading European countries - France, Italy, United Kingdom and Germany - held at the Sorbonne, Paris, the Joint Declaration on Harmonization of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System was adopted. The Declaration proposed to announce European Higher Education Area open, to enable students to continue their education in another European country and to do this through transferring obtained school credit-units. It also proposed two main cycles of higher education, undergraduate and graduate, where, after the first cycle, students would continue their education either towards a master degree or a longer-term doctoral study or research.**

**In order to transform this initiative of four countries into an all-European movement, a meeting of the Ministers of Education of 29 European countries was held on June 19, 1999, in Bologna. In that meeting, where the three Baltic republics from former Soviet Union also participated, the Joint Declaration of European Ministers of Education was adopted. It aimed at creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) that would be in a leading position in the global competition by 2010. To achieve this, the following were proposed (grouping of objectives here is different from the original Declaration):**

- 1. Implementation of easily readable and comparable degrees, applying Diploma Supplement for this purpose that is composed of two cycles. First cycle shall last a minimum of 3**

- years, and second cycle should lead to masters and/or doctoral degree.
2. **Providing free movement of students, faculty, researchers and administrative staff between countries; application of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in the case of movement of students.**
  3. **Establishment of European dimension in higher education. Cooperation in the field of preparing criteria and methodologies for the purpose of quality assurance in higher education.**

Approaching with respect various national education systems, a lingual and cultural differences, and autonomy of universities, while implementing this program, was specifically emphasized in the document.

After this the process of creation of the European Higher Education Area was called the **Bologna Process** [in my opinion, Sorbonne-Bologna would be a more correct name].

In order to provide coordination in successful implementation of Bologna Process and admit countries those are willing to join the Process, Ministers of Education decided to meet within two years. Through the Prague meeting of May 19, 2001 and Berlin meeting of September 19, 2003, a number of European countries joining the Bologna Process reached 40. It is expected that as a result of the Bergen (Norway) meeting on May 19 this year, Azerbaijan and all

remaining European countries, except Belarus, will join the Process.

It has been recognized by everybody that **higher education institutions and students are** not objects but **the main players in the Bologna Process**. The ministers also noted the necessity of keeping close contacts and working in cooperation with such organizations as the European University Association (EUA), European Association of Higher Education Institutions (EURASHE), European Association of National Student Unions (ESIB), and European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA).

As an advancement of the Bologna Joint Declaration, it was proposed to create **European Research Area** in addition to the European Higher Education Area and to prepare **joint masters and doctoral programs**. It was accepted that doctorate degree was the third cycle of higher education after the two cycles indicated in the Bologna Process. The ministers decided to attach a Diploma Supplement to the graduate diplomas from 2005 onward and took the commitment of creating access to education for everybody, using all available resources and means.

The main demand of European universities, on the other hand, was **autonomy with responsibility**. Universities demanded independence for formulating their strategies, prioritizing fields of studies and programs, and choosing faculty members and students in accordance with their own criteria. Application of tightly cent-

ralized administration hinders dynamic development of higher education institutions and impedes their capability to compete and respond rapidly to the needs of the changing environment.

The Bologna Process indicates that in the selection of the higher education model Europe is looking to the United States and is adapting the American experience. In other words, the Bologna Process in some way indicates the **Americanization of the European Higher Education System.**

**The Higher Education and Research Area was established on the basis of three-cycle degree system and comparative and accumulative features of credits units which come from the United States - the global leader in higher education. The Regional Accreditation, which deals with the evaluation of the entire institutional quality, and Program Accreditation, which deals with the evaluation of the quality of separate fields of studies, both of them also belong to the American traditions in higher education. Unfortunately, Europe still cannot come to a common decision on the issue of evaluating quality. If all 45 countries approach the evaluation of their higher education institutions separately, will it be possible to achieve harmonization at all? In the United States only 6 regional associations fully undertake this work. Will regional or other types of broader-scale accreditation agencies be created in Europe too?**

From another perspective, whereas independence of US universities and the achievements brought about by this independence are evident, Europe does not seem to be ready to act in American way on this issue; centralized administrative management often puts obstacles on European higher education institutions' assuming autonomy with full accountability. Is Europe completely ready for connecting the issue of accreditation solely with the presence or absence of the state financing and its amount? Also, in evaluating and funding individual projects, Europe seems to be lagging behind America. If these crucial issues are not solved, the idea of transforming Europe into the leading economy as well as highly competitive education and research area globally will sound like an old Soviet motto related to the Soviet-American competition - "*Dognat' i peregnat'*" (to catch up and leave behind).

*What is the situation in Azerbaijan with regard to the Bologna Process?*

However paradoxical it may seem, although in the period of collapse of the Soviet Union Azerbaijan was going through severe political, economic and military crises, in several areas, including education, new ideas were spreading and new discourses and models were emerging. The first private university in Azerbaijan - Khazar University - opened and paved a new way for itself and for Azerbaijan in the field of education by offering a new substance and adopting a new form. Applying American-style credit accumulation model and offering programs leading

to bachelor, master and PhD degrees since its establishment in 1991, Khazar has played the role of the field for an experiment and clearing-house for reforms in the higher education system of Azerbaijan. For the first time in Azerbaijan, Khazar University has applied a student-centered teaching model, prepared and put into implementation a 100-points grading system (with 60 points being the minimal satisfactory grade) and took Grade Point Average (GPA) as the criterion for granting various distinguished diplomas (honors, high honors and higher honors).

As a result, in 1992, Milli Majlis (the parliament) of Azerbaijan passed the Law on Education, which was prepared a special working group with participation of the author of this report. The Law constituted a legal basis for the establishment of the two-cycle higher education system in Azerbaijan, namely the system composed of bachelor and master degree studies. Later on all higher education institutions and programs in Azerbaijan, with few exceptions (for medical studies and the like), adopted this system.

However, as transformation to the two-cycle system was not carried out carefully and stage-by-stage, and instead was done in the form of a quick national-scale campaign, the purposes, context and differences between bachelor and master programs have not been grasped by many higher education institutions up until now, and remnants of this “incompleteness” can be observed even

today. In addition, the contents and form of studies after masters degree, has not been explicitly established yet. Some people talk about a third cycle of higher education, that is PhD; some others argue for continuation of the old Soviet model of third and fourth cycles, which lead to the degrees of **Candidate of Science** and **Doctor of Science**.

As mentioned above, Khazar has been offering and an implementing PhD program for a long time now and is the only university in Azerbaijan in doing this. But in general, the country is still keeping the system of Candidate of Science / Doctor of Science. Not enacting the new bills on education keeps this issue and other related vital matters in a frozen condition.

**Usually, in countries undergoing transitional period, important laws need to be amended and/or renewed periodically (for example, every 5 years). Otherwise, inconsistency and contradiction between rapidly changing environment and growing demands, on one hand, and old, obsolete laws, on the other, act as obstacles and hold back development. Unfortunately, the attempts towards promulgation of a new bill on education, which started in 1997, have completely failed [and it is to my great chagrin that that draft law under discussion consists predominantly of such stipulations as “under the full authority of relevant executive bodies”].**

As a result, governance in the field of education is regulated not by laws, but through personal networks and connections with high-ranking executive officials. Furthermore, the success of an initiative mostly depends on the degree of closeness of the initiator to these high-ranking officials. What is awaiting us tomorrow? As long as this question remains unaddressed, it renders useless all strategic development and action plans prepared by higher education institutions.

Endemic corruption and bribery in the education system is another factor leading to strengthening of central administration and strictly diminishing the autonomy of higher education institutions. The role of higher education institutions themselves in proliferation of the problems is quite large. Moreover, lack of working relations between universities and the Ministry of Education as well as the absence of their joint struggle for quality in education has seriously damaged the autonomy and reputation of both.

The saddest point here is that some higher education institutions that do not 'deserve', so to speak, this kind of treatment are also subject to it. The few universities that possess exemplary moral environment, offer high-standard study programs, implement modern teaching methods, maintain broad international relations, and whose graduates' skills and abilities are appreciated highly by the industries and businesses, have also become victims of the general situation prevailing in the

Azerbaijani system of education and depend on destiny and fortuity.

Although Khazar University is considered one of the most serious and high-standard universities both according to the public opinion and in the seldom pronounced words of government officials, it has no autonomy in such important issues as student admission, selection of specialization programs, issuing diplomas to its own graduates, etc. The question here is what private rights do private universities enjoy? What are the things that make them *private*, after all? Private universities pay taxes to the government, but do not receive anything from the state, except for the obstacles to their development...

Among 47 higher education institutions in Azerbaijan, only two universities - Khazar University and a Turkish-sponsored Qafqaz University - apply an education model based on credit accumulation. That is, students study courses which have certain credit value and they receive a corresponding number of credits for each course they pass. The credit unit applied in Khazar University can be considered as two European credits (ECTS).

Credit accumulation model is based on prioritization of individual study trajectories for each student. That is, study schedules are not determined for groups of students, but for each student individually, and accordingly, each student accumulates

the necessary number of credits through his/her own way – This is a student-centered model. To see at what point a student is in his/her study program, it is enough to know how many courses that student has successfully passed and how many credits he/she received for the passed courses [in order to evaluate overall performance of a student, it is also important to see his/her Grade Point Average].

But it will not be so simple for higher education institutions in Azerbaijan to move towards application of this student-centered credit system. It is an issue of education or university culture, and therefore, it is not easy to implement it quickly, starting it from zero. One of the factors that create difficulties in transition to the credit system is excessive central administration, which is characteristic of most higher education institutions in Azerbaijan. Autonomy of universities and relative autonomy of intra-university units, such as schools, colleges, faculties and departments, is one of the most necessary conditions in application of the credit system, just as in many other things. On the other hand, existence of individual study trajectories for each student may create differences in study periods of various students. If we add the existing broad-scale bribery and nepotism to this, it becomes clear that real transition to the credit system will not be an easy technical issue in Azerbaijan.

A main acting document of Khazar University is the University Catalog, which gives information on academic policies and rules

of the University, programs leading to various degrees, short description of each taught course, requirements necessary for graduation, as well as on teaching and research bodies, facilities and resources, student support services, etc. The catalog and the fulfillment of its requirements are also important for student mobility. Unfortunately, among Azerbaijani higher education institutions, only Khazar University publishes, on a periodical basis, a standardized comprehensive catalog, which includes all necessary information [information brochures are sometimes published by other universities but are not similar in content to a catalog].

When Azerbaijan becomes a member of the Bologna Process, various Azerbaijani universities will likely join student mobility programs at different times. One of the first and foremost aspects of Azerbaijan's participation in educational programs of European dimension can be preparation of joint degree programs, especially masters and PhD programs, by European and Azerbaijani higher education institutions, which have experience in ECTS and international partnership programs. Of course, autonomy of higher education institutions is an important pre-condition for achieving success in this direction. But in Azerbaijan, as I mentioned earlier, even high-reputation private universities are deprived of their right to issue their own diplomas.

As far as the issue of assuring and increasing the quality of education is concerned, at the moment, discussions on determination of common European criteria and rules as well as activities of corresponding accreditation agencies are going on, and a certain consensus is expected in this area. It is not excluded that the role of certain pan-European accreditation agencies may be increased and new ones may be created. Azerbaijan will have to consider the results of these discussions.

Quality in education is a system of values, a position, and a culture. Quality is changing of the existing form, and permanence of the evolutionary effort. Quality is a process and therefore, the concept of quality enhancement is something more important than quality assurance or quality control.

Who measures quality in higher education institutions and why? There are evidently three candidates that are ready to undertake this responsibility - the education institution itself, the government and independent authorized accreditation agencies. Higher education institutions in Azerbaijan almost do not conduct any serious internal evaluation themselves; but here again, Khazar University is an exception. Khazar regularly conducts internal evaluation with active participation of students, and results of the evaluation are published both on paper and electronically. The experience of the motherland of accreditation - USA - shows that there is no need for direct participation of the state in accreditation; state interference, in fact, can only cause

**harm. In transition countries, like Azerbaijan, this issue is even more complicated. As a well-known maxim goes sometimes a child forgets that hammer is for hitting a nail, and starts to hit everything with it. The state, when it controls something, like accreditation, behaves like a child with a hammer. That is why the most expedient form of it after internal evaluation is external evaluation carried out by independent authorized accreditation agencies.**

**This independent quality agency can be a national agency staffed with prominent international experts (if the national government recognizes and registers such an agency) or a regional agency (intra-European) or even pan-European organization.**

Accreditation based on impartial evaluation of quality and showing the ways to increase it should mainly result in state assistance to higher education institutions and formulation of the government's policy for this assistance. Open discussions should be carried out on whether there will be financing from state budget allocated to public universities, and if yes, what will be the amount of it. The main result of accreditation for private higher education institutions should be the right of that private institution to obtain credits or loans from the state on very favorable conditions and the right of students of that institution to receive loans from the government also on favorable conditions for paying for their tui-

tions and fees. Of course, as a result of a successful accreditation, both public and private universities can receive other types of assistance as well. If the accreditation uncovers the weaknesses or incompetence of a program at an institution, that institution will be ineligible for state credits for development of that program, and accordingly students in that program will not be eligible to receive any state funding for their studies.

**One of the crucial implications is that, in Azerbaijan, the state accreditation (the objectivity of which is doubtful) will define whether a private university can accept students to a program or not. Although the government does not extend any financial assistance to private higher education institutions, it has monopolized student admission to them at all levels of studies and tries to restrict admission to private institutions by any means. In terms of the access to higher education, Azerbaijan's rating is one of the lowest not only in comparison to developed countries, but also among former-Soviet republics. Despite this apparent shortcoming, the government strictly prohibits prospective students to get admission to any university they want at their own expense!**

On the other hand, public education institutions, fully funded by the government, either are not subject to accreditation at all or their accreditation is only formal. In reality, the government should first of all think about expedience and effectiveness of its budget

allocations, and in so doing, should act in accordance with the results of accreditation.

**There are Rectors Conferences in European countries, which act as main bodies uniting heads of higher education institutions. They actively participate in the discussion of problems in teaching, research, student and faculty exchange, and in general, on correct formulation of academic policies and development. In Azerbaijan, this body exists only on paper. Each rector is trying to keep his head safe, but keeping one's head safe is getting more and more difficult or more and more expensive. The main reasons for rectors (and universities) not undertaking joint efforts in this direction are differences between their aims and purposes. Thus, Azerbaijani higher education institutions are not able to act as players and are rather played with, like toys.**

The Institute of Education Policy is starting to function at Khazar University. The main aim of the institute is to study international practices in education, work on quality enhancement of education and problems related to its evaluation, find out ways of development of educational policy and education system in Azerbaijan, and particularly, closely watch the Bologna Process and assist those interested in its furthering.

# **E-Interview with prof. Hamlet Isaxanli**

**The Caspian Crossroads, volume 6, Issue 2, summer 2002**  
The US-Azerbaijan Council, Washington D.C.

*Professor Isaxanli is the founder and president of Khazar University located in Baku, Azerbaijan. Khazar University was founded in 1991 and was the first private university to be established in the former Soviet Union. Khazar University is a research-oriented university with strong and innovative programs geared towards educating a new generation of leaders for a new and open model of society based on a market economy.*

*The Caspian Crossroads magazine recently submitted a series of questions to professor Isaxanli concerning the state of education and education policy in Azerbaijan.*

***(Q) Prof. Isaxanli could you please give us an overview of the state of the education system in Azerbaijan (a) prior to independence and (b) in the aftermath of independence?***

An overview of the state of the education system in Azerbaijan during the period defined as "prior to independence" leads us to look back at Azerbaijan's history. Before the division of Azerbaijan between the Russian and Iranian empires that occurred in 1828 there was basically one Azerbaijan, and its educational system was like that in much of the Middle East - most schools were religious. The main languages of instruction were Persian and Arabic.

During the late Middle Ages Azerbaijani Turkic was introduced in some schools. Starting in the 14th century Azerbaijanis began composing poetry in Azerbaijani, which vied with Farsi for dominance in Azerbaijani culture, progressively achieving the leading role. Around that time in Maragha, near Tabriz, a university, research and training center with an observatory existed that distinguished itself in non-Euclidian geometry, trigonometry, astronomy, physics, and ethics.

However, a general decline in scientific research and education began in the Muslim world during the 14th century, just as religion became more central in school curricula. The number of high quality schools declined, and higher learning institutions continued to exist only in important urban centers of the Muslim East. Later, in the period of the Azerbaijani khanates (principalities) in the 18th and first decade of the 19th centuries the role of the Azerbaijani language became more visible in schools.

After the Turkmanchay treaty of 1828 between Russia and Iran, the northern section of Azerbaijan became part of Russia, and South Azerbaijan remained with Iran (Northern Azerbaijan is where the modern Republic of Azerbaijan is located today). Educational development in Northern Azerbaijan from 1828 to 1918 was defined by Russia's policy to replace Persian with increased use of the Azerbaijani language, while at the same time making Russian the primary language of instruction.

Academic programs and curricula were developed in a cooperative effort between Azerbaijani intellectuals and Russian educators.

The following types of schools arose:

- Religious, but with introductory courses in secular subjects;
- Secular, but with compulsory religious subjects;
- Russian-Tatar schools, secular and bilingual; these schools contributed to the rise of the modern Azerbaijani intelligentsia.

For higher education, students would mainly go to Russia and Europe.

Azerbaijan's two-years of independence (1918-1920) before the country became part of the Soviet Union was not long enough for it to develop a national system of education, but three things were established:

- 1. A strong presence of the Azerbaijani language;
- 2. Minority rights education policy;
- 3. Azerbaijan State University (founded in 1920).

About one hundred students were sent to Europe for higher education.

The Soviet period brought rapid advances in literacy, which rose to almost 100% within 10-15 years. Under the Soviet Union, there were two types of higher-learning institutions:

1. Universities offering 5-year programs resulting in something like an M.A. or M.S. degree - each Soviet Republic had at least one University, comparable to an American college of arts and sciences (in many cases with Law);

2. Specialized higher learning institutions (such as institutes of Fine Arts, Economics/Finance, Civil or Petro-Chemical Engineering, Agriculture, Pedagogy/Teacher Training, etc.); some of these offered 4 or 5-year programs leading to something like a B.A. or B.S.

After graduating from these universities and institutes, scholars could continue with a 3-year graduate program ("aspirantura"), leading to the Candidate of Science degree, akin to the American Ph.D. and then, a few of them could continue in pure research for a degree-doctor of science in certain fields.

One of the most important reforms of the Soviet period was the progressive language policy. Most students could get educated from start to finish in their own language. A student, say, with native Azerbaijani language in Georgia could attend primary and secondary schools in Azerbaijani, study Russian as a second language, English/French/ German as a foreign language, and have classes in Georgian.

The language of instruction in higher learning institutions in Azerbaijan was mostly Azerbaijani, with Russian in second place. For every 100 students majoring in Mathematics and studying in

Azerbaijani, there would be a group of 25 or 50 math students studying in Russian. In the five Central Asian Republics, in comparison, the language of instruction at higher education was primarily Russian.

The learning process was otherwise uniform across the Soviet Union: there was one textbook in each subject for the entire country and one curriculum for each course of study (Physics, Calculus, etc.) in the primary and secondary schools. The positive aspect of this system was that the textbooks were of high quality and often updated. On the negative side, it was difficult to inspire initiative and impossible to make changes. National identity (non-Russian) was not reflected sufficiently in the curriculum. In the 1970s and 80s especially, corruption and bribery penetrated educational activities, for example in entrance examinations.

In the aftermath of independence the education system in Azerbaijan has experienced changes, particularly in higher learning.

*(Q) Similarly could you give us an overview of where the education system stands today in Azerbaijan?*

Post-Soviet Azerbaijan's education system has experienced changes, particularly in higher learning. There are now 28 public universities (with Soviet like structures) and 15 private universities. Public universities get about half their money from the state

budget, and the other half from tuition. Private universities do not get any public funding.

There are a number of factors at present that have had a negative impact on the educational system, these include:

- An economy in transition, plagued by corruption and bribery;
- A poor tax system, at least as it concerns the educational system;
- Poor libraries, weak access to knowledge and the development of knowledge;

On the other hand, globalization has had a positive impact on education.

*(Q) What are the main strengths of Azerbaijan's education system?*

The current features of Azerbaijan's education system are twofold- inherited from the Soviet past are quality curricula in fields like Natural Sciences, Applied Sciences, Engineering, but in general it is a strongly centralized educational system. The main strengths are:

- Compulsory 11-year high-school education;
- Existence of private universities along with the state (public) ones;
- Ongoing reform in Education.

*(Q) Similarly what are the main weaknesses in the education system and what is being done or should be done to address it?*

The Azerbaijani education system is undergoing important changes. Independence by Azerbaijan demands that we have a modern and quality educational system. The main weaknesses, which impede the process of change, are rooted in a strongly centralized system, which suffers from corruption and the influence of kinship.

Private universities are controlled by the state and regulated heavily even though regulation is not based on the established rule of law.

The notions of an "Independent University" as well as "Academic Freedom" are almost not present. Political biases are still strongly considered and do influence the success of an educational institutions development. There are now many centers providing training in information technologies for librarians, students, etc., organized by individual universities as well as international foundations.

*(Q) How would you compare the system of education in rural areas to urban areas in Azerbaijan?*

High schools in the rural areas of Azerbaijan compared to the urban ones are deprived of certain basic conditions, including the lack of textbooks, teaching materials, poor facilities, power cuts, etc. Rural areas with concentrated Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) are provided with some support by the international humanitarian institutions.

Out of a total of 43 Azerbaijani public and private universities, more than 30 are located in Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan. The rural population would mainly come to Baku to apply to the university and thus they suffer a disadvantageous level of preparation for state entrance exams.

*(Q) With the Russian Cyrillic alphabet no longer in use what transition issues have Azeris encountered as the education system has passed onto using the Latin script?*

Transition issues Azeris have encountered as the education system switched onto using the Latin script are concentrated around the local book industry. The core issue here is publishing, including the development of books. Lack of textbooks and other resources still occur both at high schools and universities. Library collections are missing books in Latin Azeri.

Important undertakings have been made through funding by US and European organizations, which bring money into the country to translate and publish the most important titles in different fields of Social Sciences, Law, Education, Journalism, Economics, Business, etc.

*(Q) What is the state of affairs concerning state funding for education in Azerbaijan and is it adequate to meet current and future needs?*

Funding is done by the state at the high school level with very few private schools. Generally it is very low and does not cover even basic operational and maintenance expenses. State universities get about half of their money from the state budget, and the other half comes from tuition. Private universities do not get any public funding. To meet current and future needs of the education system in Azerbaijan funding for high schools should be a priority for the state.

*(Q) Are any international organizations such as the World Bank involved in Azerbaijan's educational system today? And if so what are these organizations doing to help Azerbaijan?*

Since early 1990s when Azerbaijan got its independence many international organizations have been contributing to the reform of education in Azerbaijan. Among those the World Bank, European Union, UNICEF, Soros Foundation, IREX, Eurasia Foundation should be mentioned. Their involvement in today's educational system varies from direct grants and/or credits for technical assistance to launching research and training programs focusing on different issues of reform.

*(Q) Are Azeri students today being taught the skills that will enable them to compete in the international economy?*

Different educational institutions provide different curricula. While some universities are still using out-of-date programs, texts

and materials, there are many providing their students with contemporary knowledge and skills? Some private universities, like Khazar University, invite international professors to help in curriculum development and special skills training. Modern cases are being developed with the use of authentic local data.

*(Q) How would you rate the state of training in information technologies in Azerbaijan?*

Both state and private educational institutions are paying a good deal of attention to training programs in information technologies. The most recent success to mention is the launching of the AzNet – Azerbaijani Academic Institutions Network, which is founded by five public and private universities under the auspices of the American Public Affairs Section Internet Access Training Project, IREX and Soros Foundation. This network provides connectivity, local content Web development, and intensive training programs. Another important benefit is that AzNet is working on providing connectivity for rural educational institutions. So far Internet centers have been started in 6 different regions of the country. There are now many centers providing training in information technologies for librarians, students, etc., organized by individual universities as well as international foundations. Another benefit of this activity is making possible new projects in distance education.

*(Q) As the founder of the first private university in the former Soviet Union, you clearly believe that the private sector has a*

*great role to play in the education system and in education policy, what would you identify as key elements for cooperation between governments in the FSU and the private sector as they seek to strengthen the education system of their respective countries?*

Current development of the education policy in some FSU countries is in fact influenced by the private sector. Thus, the public sector in education in Azerbaijan has become a less direct producer on the education market. Almost 50% present higher education institutions in Azerbaijan are newly established entities. Though currently there is almost no cooperation between government and the private sector (few exceptions can be mentioned, like Khazar University internships with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) it is very important.

The private sector should act as a clearinghouse for projects intended to have a wide impact on education in Azerbaijani primary and secondary schools and institutions of higher learning. The current change is embedded within different stages of the education system. Quality inconsistencies affect all layers of performance from individual to institutional. The development of new curricula, textbooks, teaching methods, special training programs, testing processes, evaluation mechanisms, accreditation system, etc. could be undertaken by private institutions. At the same time these activities should be run in close cooperation with the government under state support and assistance.

*(Q) Could you tell us how you came to found Khazar University?*

Starting in the middle 1980s I was teaching as a visiting professor in Western Europe, Canada, Turkey, and then in the US and other countries. My experience helped me to compare different systems of education. I understood that reform in Azerbaijan's system of education was necessary and could be done in two ways: (1) by enacting gradual reform of the entire higher education system or (2) by starting from ground zero – establishing a small university with new models. The latter could have been done as a kind of a synthesis between an international perspective and national values. Government officials liked the idea of starting a new university. Although the government could not *offer* money, it did give permission to try.

For details please refer to my article "In Search of Khazar", Journal of Azerbaijani Studies, Khazar University Press, 1998, vol. 1, N 4

*(Q) What were the main challenges you encountered in setting up the university?*

Starting a new private English language research and educational institution under the Soviet regime was a big challenge. Among the main challenges I would mention attaining the following: academic freedom, strong student and faculty body, quality academic programs, no corruption, cooperation with North

American and West European academic institutions, resistance to cultural imperialism, and university industry relations.

*(Q) It has been ten years since Khazar University was founded what would you say have been your biggest achievements?*

The challenges we encountered in setting up the University turned to be our achievements. The biggest ones are recognition, including at the international level, and respect.

*(Q) Finally professor Isaxanli could you kindly tell us what your aspirations are for the future of education in Azerbaijan?*

As my country Azerbaijan brings together West and East, I would like my University to serve as a leading research and educational institution, a center for excellence in education for the Central Eurasia region and of course the same goes for Azerbaijan.

Thank You.

# Current Trends in Education in Azerbaijan

Caspian Studies Program, Harvard University  
A discussion with Professor Hamlet Isaxanli  
April 25, 2001

Summary by Emily Van Buskirk

On April 25, 2001, [Professor Hamlet Isaxanli](#) spoke about current trends in Azerbaijani education in a Caspian Studies Program seminar at Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Professor Isaxanli is president and founder of [Khazar University](#) in Baku, Azerbaijan. Established in 1991, Khazar is one of the first private universities in the former Soviet Union, and the first in Azerbaijan. Khazar University ([www.khazar.org](http://www.khazar.org)) is dedicated to reinforcing the idea of an open, pluralistic, democratic, market-oriented form of social organization.

Professor Isaxanli, a mathematician by training, began with a lesson in Azerbaijani history. Before the division of Azerbaijan between the Russian and Iranian empires that occurred in 1828, he explained, there was basically one Azerbaijan, and its educational system was like that in much of the Middle East--most schools were religious. The main languages of instruction were Persian and Arabic. During the late Middle Ages Azerbaijani Turkic was

introduced in some schools. Starting in the 14th century Azerbaijanis began composing poetry in Azerbaijani, which vied with Farsi for dominance in Azerbaijani culture, progressively achieving the leading role. Around that time in Maragha, near Tabriz, a university, research and training center with an observatory existed that distinguished itself in non-Euclidian geometry, trigonometry, astronomy, physics, and ethics. However, a general decline in scientific research and education began in the Muslim world during the 14th century, just as religion became more central in school curricula. The number of high quality schools declined, and higher learning institutions continued to exist only in important urban centers of the Muslim East. Later, in the period of the Azerbaijani khanates (principalities) in the 18th and first decade of the 19th centuries the role of the Azerbaijani language became more visible in schools.

After the Turkmanchay treaty of 1828 between Russia and Iran, the northern section of Azerbaijan became part of Russia, and South Azerbaijan remained with Iran. Even now, said Isaxanli, the Azerbaijani people are divided between two countries, the Republic of Azerbaijan (or "North Azerbaijan") with a population of nearly 8 million, where speakers of Azerbaijani form about 7 million, and Iran, where there are 20-30 million ethnic Azerbaijanis (population estimates differ from source to source). The education systems in these two countries diverge. Isaxanli decided to focus on

educational development and trends in northern Azerbaijan, where the modern Republic of Azerbaijan is located today.

From 1828 to 1918, Russian policy sought first to increase the use of Azerbaijani to replace Persian and then to make Russian the primary language of instruction. Academic programs and curricula were developed in a cooperative effort between Azerbaijani intellectuals and Russian educators. The following types of schools arose:

- Religious, but with introductory courses in secular subjects;
- Secular, but with compulsory religious subjects;
- Russian-Tatar schools, secular and bilingual; these schools contributed to the rise of modern Azerbaijani intelligentsia.

For higher education, students would mainly go to Russia and Europe.

Azerbaijan's two year independence period (1918-1920) before becoming part of the Soviet Union was not long enough for it to develop a national system of education, but three things were established: 1) a strong presence of the Azerbaijani language; 2) minority rights education policy; and 3) Azerbaijan State University (founded in 1920). About one hundred students were sent to Europe for higher education.

The Soviet period brought rapid advances in literacy, which rose to 100% within 10-15 years. Under the Soviet Union, there were two types of higher-learning institutions: 1) universities offering 5-year programs terminating in something like an M.A. or M.S.--each Soviet Republic had at least one University, comparable to an American college of arts and sciences (in many cases with law); 2) specialized higher learning institutions (such as institutes of fine arts, economics, civil or petro-chemical engineering, pedagogy, etc.); some of these offered 4 or 5-year programs leading to something like a B.A. or B.S. After graduating from these universities and institutes, scholars could continue with a 3-year graduate program ("aspirantura"), leading to the Candidate of Science degree, akin to the American Ph.D.

One of the most important reforms of the Soviet period was the progressive language policy: any student could get educated from start to finish in her own language. A student with native Azerbaijani language in Georgia could attend school in Azerbaijani, study Russian as a second language, French as a foreign language, and have classes in Georgian, said Isaxanli from personal experience (being born in Georgia). The language of instruction in higher learning institutions in Azerbaijan was mostly Azerbaijani, with Russian in second place. For every 100 students majoring in Mathematics and studying in Azerbaijani, there would be a group of 25 or 50 math students studying in Russian. In the 5 Central

Asian republics, in comparison, the language of instruction at higher education was primarily Russian.

The learning was otherwise uniform across the Soviet Union: there was one textbook in each subject for the entire country, and one curriculum for each course of study (physics, calculus, etc.). The positive aspect of this system was that the textbooks were of high quality and often updated. On the negative side, it was difficult to inspire initiative and impossible to make changes. According to Isaxanli, national identity was not reflected sufficiently in the curriculum. In the 1970s and 80s especially, corruption and bribery penetrated educational activities, for example entrance examinations.

Post-Soviet Azerbaijan's education system has experienced changes, particularly in higher learning. There are now 28 state universities (with Soviet-like structures) and 17 private universities. State universities get about half their money from the state budget, and the other half from tuition. Private universities do not get any public funding. Isaxanli named several features of the current Azerbaijani situation that have a negative effect on education:

- An economy in transition, plagued by corruption and bribery;
- A poor tax system, at least as concerns the educational system;
- Poor libraries, weak access to knowledge and its development;

On the other hand, the globalization phenomenon has had a positive impact on education.

Finally, Professor Isaxanli discussed Khazar University and its conception. When Professor Isaxanli taught as a visiting professor in Western Europe and the United States, he wrote an article comparing different systems of education. At that time, it occurred to him that reform in Azerbaijan's system was necessary, and could be done in two ways: 1) by enacting step by step reform of the entire higher education system or 2) by starting from ground zero, establishing a small university with new models, as a kind of a synthesis between an international perspective and national values. Government officials liked the idea of starting a new university, and although the government could not offer money, it did give Professor Isaxanli permission to try.

Professor Isaxanli hired out of his own pocket 6-7 professors and opened the doors of Khazar (which means Caspian) to 20 students. He decided to establish English as the principal language of instruction so that his students could participate in exchanges, benefit from visiting professors, and use Western textbooks. He was searching for the appropriate model of education, and decided that the school should use a credit system (in comparison, in the Soviet system, a student that failed one class had to repeat the whole year). Khazar gets much of its funding from international foundations, including USIA. It has partnerships with many universities, in Europe and the U.S., including UCLA.

## Discussion

- **Q. What are the basic requirements at Khazar University?**

- **A:** Students must take advanced English, Azerbaijani studies, and then they must fulfill distribution requirements in the social sciences, humanities, and sciences. It is similar to the American system, according to Isaxanli.

- **Q. How many students are there? How are they funded?**

- **A.** There are now about 1000 students at the university, 25% of who are graduate students (some from abroad). The school has need-based and merit-based scholarships. About 15% of students have financial aid.

- **Q. Who are the teachers?**

- **A.** Many are some of Azerbaijan's well-known professors (who teach at more than one University at once). Khazar also has many visiting professors teaching social sciences, which is advantageous compared to the state schools, where social scientists are mostly former Marxist-Leninists.

- **Q. What is the admissions process?**

- **A.** Even private universities cannot choose their own students. We have to sign up for central state exam system and request a certain number of students (and then sometimes bargain with the

government). The system breeds corruption, as some private universities pay for students.

**- Q. What do Khazar graduates go on to do?**

- A. Most are employed by multi-national companies; some are employed by the state. Some continue their education in the U.S. or Europe. The most popular degree at Khazar is the M.B.A.

**- Q. Are there some subjects that it makes more sense to teach in Azerbaijani than in English, for example ones that depend on local context?**

- A. Yes. For example, in the legal field, international law, human rights and humanitarian law are taught in English. Criminal law and other kinds of law that are more country-specific are taught in Azerbaijani.

**- Q. Does Azerbaijan have a system of accreditation?**

- A. Yes, but it is not well established, not independent. Universities can be accredited by the Ministry of Education or Council of Ministers but this process is not always standard. It's very important, according to Isaxanli, to have good partners in Europe, and the U.S., which may act also as external evaluators.

# **Our Education at the Cross Roads**

**The Conference**

**"The Education Reforms in the Republic of Azerbaijan"**

Baku, January 27-28, 1995

Hamlet Isaxanli

(Khazar University, Baku, Azerbaijan)

Azerbaijan is one of the countries which is at the cross roads of old paths and new directions, i.e., the transition from so-called socialism to capitalism, and yet we are uncertain of the new life style most people will accept. From an economic and political point of view the key issues of the transition period are closely connected with privatization and a democratic structure. And what about our science, culture and education?

Our economical and political pasts have been described and analyzed in many research volumes. As a result of these investigations the necessity of new directions toward economical and political freedom and definite actions and game rules have been found and determined.

The past, the present, and the nearest future of our science, culture and education are particularly important questions and need thorough discussions. These questions, especially school problems, are a grave concern for our experts in education.

One of the primary characteristic features of the Soviet educational system was the over centralized and single-model system of education. On the one hand, it provided the students, with various knowledge which had been tested for many ears. On the other hand, because of that over centralization it radically stopped all initiatives and efforts to fashion new educational changes and experience. Education depended on the socialist ideology and it set the social sciences and humanities into a fixed framework. Russian language was merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication, text-books, curriculum and the whole education system. A national point of view, native culture, history, geography and literature were not sufficiently found in the school's curriculum and instruction; they were compiled (sometimes naturally, but mostly on purpose) to benefit the Russian style.

Because curricula, programs, and textbooks were universal in the Soviet Union there was a decreased role of our Azeri language, habits and traditions (another cause was the absolute authority of Russian).

Great attention was paid to the pupil's activities joining the Pioneer and Komsomol organizations. The students were brought up under the guise of the Soviet ideology, patriotism being well-bred, and were given opportunities to go in for sports, music and art. It's impossible to deny the fact that the Pioneer organizations had

some advantages in forming a good school climate among primary and secondary school pupils.

When Azerbaijan became an independent country, changes took place in our education system.

The Azerbaijan government maintained the same centralized system (the Ministry of Education) which carried out only slight changes. First of all, this office had to accept the necessity of innovative ways and transitions in education. The other fact is that because of an unstable political situation in our country, a centralized system of education cannot function effectively. The last reason is the economic crisis which has caused inflation, salary problems, lack of text-books and economic support to schools and non-effectiveness of the administrative-command regime. It seems a paradox that all the attempts of the State University or Institutes, to seek ways, wherever possible, to enrich the curriculum by offering new methods of teaching in education are blocked by the centralized government.

The important first step in education was the foundation of private higher learning institutes. Despite the fact that economic conditions, initial teacher's staff and social belief in private institutions were not at a required level, they could compete with state institutions due to their attempt toward educational reforms and innovations, effective financial policy and broad relationships with the foreign educational centers. They proved their capability

to be rivals of the state institutes. Unfortunately, we can't say anything about strong private secondary schools at this point in time.

Right now, there are no substitute institutions that have taken the place of Pioneer organizations. The priority of national pride, some signs of atheism in people's conceptions, educational activities based on some elements of Islamic traditions, are due to teacher's spontaneous action which leads to confrontation. It's a known fact that there isn't my development of a social and academic climate that gives a student a strong feeling of belonging to his own world.

Secondary schools still have a single-model traditional system of education. The programs and text-books are traditional with only slight changes.

Budget support to schools has decreased day by day, and it destroys the material base of schools, causes withdrawal of the experienced teachers from schools. The level of education is getting low, it increases the taking of bribes, presents and gifts from the parents. The Latin-based alphabet has been one of the main organizational steps in our education. But the problem of books and publications has not been solved. In fact, the problems have increased. Generally, the supply of text-books should be considered to be one of the most important problems. What is the problem of publishing and new text-books?

First of all, the publication of national text-books (on literature, linguistics, history, geography, human beings and society, etc.) was considered to be a first priority. In a short period of time, many qualified specialists took part in this serious work and numerous textbooks have been already published. But the effectiveness and the pedagogical level of these textbooks will now be tested in practice. Students should understand the rationale of the methods by which they are being taught. The translated textbooks are supposed to supply our needs on this sphere. We shouldn't forget foreign language instruction (as Russian, English, German, French, Persian, Arabic) and the importance of the new textbooks. There is little question about the quality of these textbooks. On the other hand there's a great necessity to teach different subjects in foreign languages. In this field, Khazar University has done much work and we can already speak of some significant results.

The refugee problem influences all our lives as well as education. The displaced persons from the occupied areas were located primarily at schools. So, the number of closed schools increased and affected the entire educational system. Refugee Camps and education in these camps are in the worst level.

What principles are our educations based on? What standards do the schools have in comparison with our previous Soviet-Russian orientation?

Are we somehow going to follow the American or European Education system?

Or perhaps are we able to self-consciously prepare our own system of education?

What educational system do we need?

Shall we have enough time and patience?

Azerbaijan is in a transition period.

Our education is at a cross roads.

# Minority Education Policy in Azerbaijan and Iran\*

**IREX supported research project**

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The world is moving in the direction of a new era. Great changes are occurring in almost every section of the world, and schools are in the middle of these difficulties, for it is the schools that are being called on to prepare youth for a future society, a society that will certainly be very different from yesterday's society. Among the changes occurring throughout the world is the requirement that social justice is gained on the part of minority groups in societies. This is particularly difficult in countries such as Azerbaijan and Iran, where recent political revolutions have stressed a high degree of nationalism and national allegiance. The implications these revolutions have for schooling are particularly difficult because schools are expected to draw young people into their national mainstreams, but if social justice is to be served, schools must also

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\* Journal of Azerbaijani Studies. Vol.5, № 3-4, p.3-64, 2002. Khazar University Press.

provide minority groups within society with a sense of cultural identity and equity. Often, however, the agenda set for schools focuses almost exclusively on nationalism and cultural homogenization. This is what has happened in both Iran and Azerbaijan, where education has been instituted to ensure that all young people develop a sense of identity and allegiance to the nation state.

#### THE DEFINITION OF MINORITIES

In this project we have undertaken to examine minority education policies in Azerbaijan and Iran. Our focus has been on indigenous ethnic minorities. That is, we have chosen not to deal with refugees in Iran or Russians in Azerbaijan. One complication in our project is the different ways Azerbaijan and Iran define minority groups.

Azerbaijan, on the one hand, focuses on national and ethnic minorities within its borders; however, that straightforward view is complicated by the fact that Azerbaijan is not a conventional mono-national state but is a multi-national state. In most nation-states, a dominant culture and/or ethnic group is found with one or more subordinate ethnic groups. However, Azerbaijan as a multi-national state with other important nationalities within its border. There are Russians and an extensive number of schools that continue to use Russian as the language of instruction. There

are pockets of Georgians in Azerbaijan and Azeri-speaking people in Georgia. A complicated arrangement has been carried over from Soviet times where Georgians can follow the Georgian curriculum in Azerbaijani schools and be taught by Georgian educated teachers, although Georgian pupils must study Azerbaijan history (from textbooks translated into Georgian). And Lezghian pupils can study the Lezghian language through all eleven years of schooling in Azerbaijan in preparation to attend the university in Dagestan (Russia).

To gain some glimpse of what it means to be Azerbaijani, we reviewed the textbooks on the history of Azerbaijan. It is taught in all grades of secondary school, but information about the Azeri people is given only in the sixth and seventh grade textbooks. In the sixth grade pupils learn about "The birth of the Azeri nation," while in the seventh grade they learn about "The formation of the Azeri people," which describes the formation process of the Azeri people and becoming Muslim. The texts indicate that Azeri nation originated from the local ethnic Turks and from the other Turkish speaking ethnic groups located in this region. There is a map showing where ethnic Turks lived, and it is very large, starting from Anatolia in the West and extending to the Chinese borders in the East. Though the names of the ethnic Turks were different, their origin was the same. Today's Azeri Turks are their heirs. The texts also indicate that all the important ethnic groups in Azer-

baijan have some ethnic connection with each other. However, Azerbaijanis constitute the major ethnic group among them.

In Azerbaijan, it is only the Azerbaijanis who make claim to the label "Azerbaijani." Talish, Lezghian or Udi citizens would not identify themselves as being Azerbaijani, even though they are full citizens of the Azerbaijan Republic. In other words, there remains some separation between ethnicity and national identity.

Iran, on the other hand, focuses on religious minorities. The only reference to ethnicity in the Constitution is Article 19: "All people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong, enjoy equal rights; and color, race, language, and the like do not bestow any privilege." But this is interpreted in a negative sense, in that no reference to ethnicity has been allowed, although we shall see that this practice is beginning to change. With the 1979 political revolution, the state of Iran was transformed into a theocracy, with the state religion being Shi'ite Muslim, although there are some Sunni Muslims as well as Bahá'ís, Assyrian and Armenian Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians in the country. For the past three decades the revolutionaries in Iran have attempted to rearrange that country's institutions, including its education system, in order to implement Islamic ideals and values. The new regime wished to change the old system's values and institutions in a short period of time, and so the focus on minorities in schools has been on religion rather than ethnicity.

It is significant to note that, according to Article 13 of the Constitution, "Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities, who, within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education." Iranian policy toward most religious minorities does not excuse the excesses that are apparent regarding certain religious minorities. For example, the Bahá'í religion is subjected systematically to persecution, because those in this religion refuse to compromise their beliefs in the face of Iranian officials.<sup>1</sup>

For the purposes of this study, we operationally define minority education as that pertaining to ethnic minorities. Our concern in this project is to find the extent to which schools have gone beyond their nationalistic task and have begun to address the needs and interests of the ethnic minorities within their borders.

To this point, little is known concerning ethnic considerations in education in either Azerbaijan or Iran. Both countries are multicultural in terms of their respective demographic profiles. Azerbaijan has Jewish, Armenian, Georgian, Russian, Kurdish, Talish, and Lezghian minority groups, while Iran has Azerbaijani, Kurdish, Bakhtyari, Baluchish, Jewish, Assyrian, and Arabian minority groups. In recent years both countries have experienced radical political change. In 1991 Azerbaijan became an indepen-

dent republic after the collapse of the former Soviet Union, while in 1979 the Shah was deposed and an Islamic republic was established. In both countries education has become a servant in efforts to build a unified nation state.

## TWO-PRONGED APPROACH

Our task in this project has been to engage in a two-pronged assessment of education for ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan and Iran. First, we wished to determine what direction state policy is going regarding education for minority groups in the two countries. Second, we wished to look at a small number of schools, both at the primary and the secondary level to see what is actually happening in the schools themselves. Our assumption has been that in periods of great change, national policy is translated differently in particular schools, so it is not enough to look only at formal state policy.

### ***1. State Policy Data Collection***

Scholars in both Azerbaijan and Iran analyzed documents reflecting state policies regarding the education of minority groups to determine the degree to which state policies have evolved in the past one to two decades. We have relied on Azerbaijani scholars to

investigate Azerbaijani policies and Iranian scholars to investigate Iranian policies.

The researchers have addressed specific issues. Have policies changed in the recent past? In what direction have policies changed? In operational terms, the scholars have looked at specific educational dimensions:

- Policies related to the Language of instruction
- National Curriculum Developments
- Textbooks Developments
- Guidelines for Teacher Training Programs

## ***2. Specific School Data Collection***

Our plan was to look at schools at the primary level and schools at the secondary level in each country. Researchers visited primary and a secondary school in various communities in each country, where relatively large numbers of the community belong to ethnic minority groups. For example, in Iran we visited a city where Azeri speaking people dominate, and another community where Kurds are located. In Azerbaijan we visited a community in Lenkoran and another in Kuba, which have sizeable numbers of minority members, though no single minority group dominates in these areas.

Each school was visited by a team of researchers. Researchers were trained over an entire week in the month of March, 2002. The trainer was the Director of the project, Val D. Rust. The team spent several days visiting schools. We chose to take qualitative approach to the study on the grounds that it would best serve the purpose of this investigation, namely: to understand the behavior of teachers in the context of the specific institutional context, to understand this context in relation to the local educational directorate, and to understand how the provisions for minority students either support or deviate from the national educational agenda. Interviews were conducted with local educational directorate leaders, school leaders, and teachers. They were open-ended and respondents were asked for information and opinions concerning curriculum, instructional programs, language issues, and textbooks. However, researchers were careful to avoid leading questions or to reinforce participant responses. Questions were grouped around policy and practice related to minorities in the local directorate and the school. A second group of questions revolved around the curriculum, language issues, and textbooks. A third group of questions were related to their perspectives on the conditions that exist related to minority students and teachers. Observations were made of classrooms with the intention of getting some sense of the interactions of teachers and students with members of minority groups.

We shall deal first with Azerbaijan, followed by Iran.

## I. EDUCATION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN AZERBAIJAN

### THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The country of Azerbaijan stretches from the Caucasus Mountains in the northwest to Iran in the south and the Caspian Sea in the east. To the west lies the disputed Nagorno-Karabagh territory. Azerbaijan covers an area of 86,600 square kilometers of which some 20 percent constitutes the Nagorno-Karabagh and neighboring territory occupied by Armenia. The country is divided into 61 administrative regions and five cities. There is a significant difference in the quality of life, schools and teachers between the rural and urban regions. The country has good deposits of natural resources which in time might change its economic position.

Azerbaijan has a long history of minority groups, although in the past half century the status of minority groups has changed dramatically, in that the country has moved toward mono-ethnicity.<sup>2</sup> Analysis of the 1939, 1959, 1970, 1979, 1989, and 1999 census data shows the dynamics of the growth of the Azerbaijanis in the total population of Azerbaijan has shifted from 58.4% in 1939 to 90.6% in 1999:

1939	1959	1970	1979	1989	1999
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58.4%	67.4%	73.8%	78.1%	82.7%	90.6%
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While various committees on nationality affairs exist at present in the Azerbaijan presidential administration and in the Azeri Parliament, minorities are seen as susceptible to manipulation by outsiders. At the same time, the state does give financial and political support to officially sanctioned minority organizations. Currently the State radio broadcasts are in the Azerbaijani, Russian, Georgian, Lezghian, Kurdish and Talish languages. State television programs are in Azerbaijani. There are two Russian television channels. There are some newspapers, magazines, books, dictionaries, and textbooks published in languages of various ethnic groups. Some are funded by the State, while international foundations or NGOs contribute a good deal to publishing.

Data below is given according to the report published by the Azerbaijani State Statistics Committee on the 1999 Census of Population, which was held in accordance with the UN recommendations.

**The dynamics of change in the ethnic composition of the Azerbaijani Republic's population**

	1979, thousands of people	1979, %	1989, thousands of people	1989, %	1999, thousands of people	1999, %
<b>Total population</b>	6,026,500	100	7,021,200	100	7,953,400	100
<b>Azerbaijanis</b>	4,708,800	78.1	5,805,000	82.7	7,205,500	90.6
<b>Armenians</b>	475,500	7.9	390,500	5.6	120,700	1.5
<b>Avars</b>	36,000	0.6	44,100	0.6	50,900	0.6
<b>Georgians</b>	11,400	0.2	14,200	0.2	14,900	0.2
<b>Jews</b>	35,500	0.6	30,800	0.4	8,900	0.1
<b>Kurds</b>	5,700	0.1	12,200	0.2	13,100	0.2
<b>Lezghians</b>	158,100	2.6	171,400	2.4	178,000	2.2
<b>Russians</b>	475,300	7.9	392,300	5.6	141,700	1.8
<b>Sakhurs</b>	8,500	0.1	13,300	0.2	15,900	0.2
<b>Talish</b>	-	-	21,200	0.3	76,800	1.0
<b>Tatars</b>	31,400	0.5	28,600	0.4	30,000	0.4
<b>Tats</b>	-	-	-	-	10,900	0.13
<b>Turks</b>	7,900	0.1	17,700	0.2	43,400	0.5
<b>Udins</b>	5,800	0.1	6,100	0.1	4,100	0.05
<b>Ukrainians</b>	26,400	0.4	32,300	0.5	29,000	0.4
<b>Other nationalities</b>	40,200	0.8	41,500	0.6	9,600	0.12

Note: The current population of Azerbaijan is 8,141,400 (January 2002) [Unfortunately we don't have information on the number of nationalities by 2002]

These figures show that the number of *Azerbaijanis* has grown over the past 20 years.<sup>3</sup> The major reasons for population growth in Azerbaijan are the followings.

1. The birth rate
2. The refugees from Armenia
3. Azerbaijanis from Georgia for education or business

The number of minorities has dropped increasingly after the Armenians left Azerbaijan due to Nagorno-Garabagh conflict.

The number of *Russians* has dropped; over the past 20 years more than 330,000 Russians chose to return to their historical homeland. The number of *Turks* has grown following the events of violence against Meskhetian Turks in Uzbekistan in 1989. There is a minor change in the number of *Tatars* and *Ukrainians*. The number of those who registered as *Talish*, has increased as well, although many members of this nationality now regard the Azerbaijani Turkic language as their mother tongue. The dynamics in the growth of numbers of *Lezghians* over the past 20 years must be considered usual. There are persistent rumors that Lezghians have emigration north of the border into Dagestan, Russia, where the main body of Lezghians is located, but the figures indicate this is not happening. One can observe a drop in the number of Christian *Udins* people. A drop in numbers is also observed among the

*Jewish* population; however, there has been a drop in the number of emigrants to Israel in recent years. There are fewer emigrants among “other nationalities” as well. The number of *Kurds* has grown from 5,700 to 13,100 since 1979.

Like most countries the population in Azerbaijan is concentrated in the larger cities such as Baku (around 40 percent of the total population of 7.5 million). A slightly smaller percentage of ethnic minorities live in Baku (8.7 percent) than in the Republic in general (9.4 percent).

About 900,000 people or 12 percent of the population are refugees or internally displaced persons, who have been pushed out of Nagorno-Karabagh and neighboring regions. Such a dislocation of the population has caused an overload on the provision of education in areas where the refugee camps are located. There were approximately 450 schools (primary and secondary) in operation in the occupied territories. Now part of them have been reorganized in refugee camps.. There were other educational institutions such as technical institutes and universities. It must be noted that the numbers only indicate the quantity. The quality of the infrastructure, in many cases, is in need of urgent attention.

The collapse of trade among the republics of the former Soviet Union and the conflict with Armenia have been the main sources of continuous economic decline. Independent Azerbaijan now faces serious problems with employment opportunities in certain

sectors of the labor market. Traditional areas such as manufacturing and agriculture that serviced the Soviet market are no longer viable.

#### THE AZERBAIJAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The government of Azerbaijan, since the devolution of the Soviet Union, has been trying to develop an education system that will complement the government's plans to move toward a market driven economy and become a player in the emerging global economic system. Prior to 1992 Azerbaijan was a state of the old Soviet Union and during that period Azerbaijan education was planned and delivered from Moscow with little regard for local issues. At that time, curricula (i.e., the subjects to be taught and the time devoted to teaching them) were developed by the Ministry of Education of the USSR in Moscow and sent to the republics. In the republics, the local ministries could make minor changes to the received curriculum. For example, the Ministry of Education for Azerbaijan added to the curriculum time to allow for some study of the history of Azerbaijan and the Azeri language. The curriculum could also be translated into the Azeri language. Schools were available using both Azeri and Russian as the language of instruction. The Minister of Education then approved the curriculum, and funding for the implementation of the curriculum was provided following the endorsement of the Azerbaijani Ministry of Finance.

Implementation of the curriculum was the responsibility of educational institutions. All children in Azerbaijan had to learn Russian language and culture.

Generally, there were a few controlled variations of the curriculum, and what was taught in schools did not differ throughout the Soviet regions. However, during the Soviet period there were a few reforms to this general pattern. In 1980, educational institutions were granted more freedom and independence to resolve some educational problems, which enabled some innovations to emerge. For example, institutions provided for more in-depth studies of particular subjects and supported the establishment of studies that had a particular focus or emphasis (e.g., in the humanities or in technical studies).

With the fall of the former Soviet Union, the Azerbaijan education system that had been closed from the outside world for the previous 70 years and depended significantly on Moscow to provide leadership, had to fend for itself. The search for a new education system is further complicated by the continued tension on some of the country's borders with Armenia, Russia, and Iran.

In 1992, the government passed the Law on Education, which outlined the purposes, tasks and directions for educational reform. New policy directions included a modification of the highly centralized system, the incorporation of national and market economy perspectives within the curriculum, and the encouragement of

parental and community participation in education. Even though schools using Russian as the language of instruction were permitted, Soviet ideology was removed from teaching and learning.

The reforms in the early 1990s resulted in a number of curriculum variations, and approximately 30 variations have so far been endorsed. For example, ordinary secondary schools in Azerbaijan start teaching English from the first year of secondary school, i.e., the fifth grade. However, some schools specialize in English or another foreign language and these schools start teaching a foreign language from the second grade of primary school. Additionally, there are new kinds of learning institutions: lyceums, gymnasiums and colleges.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, international agencies, particularly UNICEF and the World Bank, have been developing so-called pilot schools with the idea that these pilot schools reflect world standards. These pilot schools provide different curricula and instructional innovations, such as student-active learning. The pattern of study in these new institutions is initially agreed upon in the Scientific and Methodological Center on Educational Problems and presented

to the Minister of Education for approval. Schools could select which curriculum plan they wanted to adopt, and could adopt different plans for the primary and secondary years of the school.

The increased flexibility in relation to curriculum plans helped to generate discussions about education and curriculum (e.g., as schools could choose between a range of curriculum plans, there was extensive discussion about which plan or plans would best suit the needs of the school and its students). These discussions helped to stimulate some school reforms, as did the Ministry's acceptance of experimental schools (i.e., schools which were given approval to adapt curriculum plans). Azerbaijan's curriculum is almost entirely subject based, even at the primary level, and all pupils are required to take almost all subjects. Because there are too many subjects little flexibility and choice are possible. Further, many subjects begin very late in the program. Finally, many critical subjects are missing, such as civics, ethics, logic, health, business, psychology, ecology, religion, political science and government.

The 1998 reform proposals have been initiated to promote greater flexibility within the education system and to improve the learning opportunities and achievements of students. The proposed reforms are currently the subject of debate in the national Parliament. They are being advanced at a time when the education system is under a great deal of pressure. The fiscal restraints created by the economic

downturn have resulted in a reduction of funds available for education. Further, there is uncertainty as the system attempts to adjust to and implement the changes that are necessary to make the transition from ways of thinking and acting that were consistent with the Soviet system to those that are consistent with the new vision for the Azerbaijan education system. Nevertheless, there appears to be a deep commitment from the Minister of Education to press on with proposed reforms.

A draft reform concept was prepared in December 1998. It indicates that the planned reforms were to be phased in over a six-year period. Phase one (1999) was to be the planning stage. Phase two (2000-2003) was to establish the conditions for the implementation of the reforms, and phase three (starting from 2004) will cover the implementation of all the activities envisaged in the program.

The proposed reforms include:

- Establishing new educational institutions designed to cater for the full range of student abilities;
- Reforming educational programs to align them to the needs of Azerbaijani society and a market oriented economy;
- Establishing agreed educational standards and accountability measures;

- Promoting greater flexibility at the school level through the devolution of agreed responsibilities (including control over financial allocations);
- Reforming the financing of the education system.

The concept paper outlining the intended reform program indicates that a great deal has been achieved in terms of educational advancement in Azerbaijan. Literacy levels are high; there is a well-established and extensive schooling infrastructure, and education is open to all and there is universal basic education. Current reforms in the education system are thus guided by two imperatives. The first is to educate Azerbaijan youth about their own history, culture; and traditions; and the second is to attune education to the changes in the social, economic, political and governmental structures of the Republic. Although steps have been taken to improve various aspects of schooling, these reforms have not been systematic nor all-encompassing.

According to the latest Human Development Report 2001, Azerbaijan ranks 89<sup>th</sup> out of 173 countries of the world on the Human Development Index (HDI). Between 1992-95, the value of the HDI fell from 0.718 to 0.692. Thereafter, the country's HDI value has improved and so has its ranking.<sup>5</sup>

Azerbaijan's adult literacy rate is at 97.3 percent. (Male: 99 percent, female: 96 percent). Most people complete, on average, ten years of schooling. Azerbaijan's education system, run by the state, consists

of schools which provide education at the nursery, primary and secondary stage. The state also looks after professional schools, which offer general and specialized education. Private educational institutions, which offer higher and secondary special education, are being set up. Nowadays there are five private high schools three of them are affiliated with Universities. Lyceums and gymnasiums with their own curricula have also been established.

The country's education index is high but there are some disturbing trends.

The number of pre-school institutions has declined resulting in fewer jobs for teachers, who are mostly women. Although the number of secondary general schools has not changed, their condition has deteriorated. They have no money to renovate infrastructure, buy teaching aids, or upgrade curricula.

Since the beginning of 1996, the cost of textbooks, meals, and other services are being passed on to parents. Parents with low per capita income cannot afford to buy uniforms for their children or pay for school transport. Children are dropping out to supplement family income. International organizations and NGOs have pointed out that more girls than boys are not receiving an education. According to official statistics and the assessment of experts, fewer children are graduating from secondary general schools. Enrolment has declined for children and young adults in the age group 6-23 years. In 1998, 68.5 percent were enrolled. By 1999, this

proportion had fallen to 61.3. According to the State Committee on Statistics data, around 19,570 students were not enrolled in school during 1999.

The number of secondary vocational and technical schools and upper secondary schools has decreased substantially during the last decade. This is because these programs were always a part of state-run farms, businesses, and industry and as they have been privatized, the private firms dropped them. As a result there is increased pressure on general education to provide students with knowledge and skills that are marketable.

State-run schools, which prepare specialists in construction, transportation, and communication, have been reduced nearly four times, while agriculture courses have declined nearly five times. In contrast, private institutions, which offer quick courses in foreign languages and information technology, are thriving, though the quality of education they impart is questionable. Private higher education institutions have doubled their number of students in the last ten years.

The state controls 25 universities and 13 private universities. Enrolment for higher education has declined from 148 students per 10,000 in 1990 to 112 in 1999. Women constitute about 41 percent of students and men about 59 percent. At Baku State University about 39 percent of young people opt for law and 34 percent for studies related to service. More men opt for science. They form a majority

in courses on engineering, heavy industry, energy and mechanical engineering.

In 2000, about 67 percent of students studying at secondary special schools were female. Almost 95 percent of them opted for medicine, teaching, natural science and technology. More than 50 percent of girls chose courses in the arts, computer science, economics and management. Civil engineering, machine construction, energy, agriculture and fishery were not popular with girls at secondary level. About 76 percent of students who opt for teaching are women. Seventy four percent of medical student and 68 percent of students who choose courses on natural sciences are female. According to official statistics, out of 1,538 people with a doctorate of science degree, about 30 percent are women. Among post-graduate science students, nearly 31 percent are female. On the whole, science and mathematics receive low priority among students.

In every democratic society, the schools are a major mechanism to ensure social justice and help form feelings of cultural equality. And this mostly depends on the direction of the state policy about the education of the minorities in the country. During the research period we analyzed documents reflecting state policy regarding the education of minority groups, to determine the degree to which state policy have evolved in the past one to two decades.

## STATE MINORITY EDUCATION POLICIES

The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan says: “The Republic of Azerbaijan is the common and indivisible country for all of the citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan” (Article 5, II). The education principles of the Azerbaijan Republic are built on equal rights, national identity (Law on Education, article 5.1.3; 5.1.6.) guarantees equal rights to different nationalities. Article 44 of the Constitution states: “Every person shall have the right to preserve his/her national/ethnic identity.”

### 1. *Policies Related to Language Instruction*

One of the first national policy steps after the collapse of the USSR in Azerbaijan was the Decree of the President of Azerbaijan Republic of September 16, 1992: “On protection of the rights and freedoms of national minorities, small-minorities and ethnic groups living in the Azerbaijan Republic and on rendering state assistance to the development of their languages and cultures.” According to this document the government would gradually solve such issues as:

- State assistance for the preservation and the development of the cultural, linguistic and religious originality of ethnic groups;
- Maintenance of their own national traditions and customs;
- Protection of the historical and cultural monuments of all nationalities;

- Free development of the national handicrafts, the professional and amateur talent groups.

A preliminary comment about policies related to language of instruction is necessary. Policy is complicated by Azerbaijan's Soviet past in two ways. First, the Soviet policy continues in allowing Georgian schools to exist within the boundaries of Azerbaijan which could only be described as Georgian in orientation, personnel, and content. The main obstacle to overcoming this condition is that Azerbaijani schools also exist in Georgia, which have an Azerbaijani orientation, personnel, and content. Such a condition is not seen as desirable by the research team, at least in nationalistic terms, and it certainly does not reflect the policies regarding other ethnic minorities in the country. Second, Russian language schools continue to play a strong role in Azerbaijani education in Azerbaijan although that role has declined sharply since independence in 1991. Today approximately 25 percent of pupils in Azerbaijan study in Russian language schools, although there is some discussion about the possibility that Russian language schools will be abolished. In this project, we have chosen not to deal with these two complications; rather, we shall deal primarily with language as represented by the other ethnic minorities in the country.

On December 22, 1992 a law on the "State Language of Azerbaijan Republic" was adopted. It stipulated official status for the Azerbaijani language, but guaranteed the citizens of Azerbaijan the right to use any other national language on the territory of the

Republic. Choice of the language of education was paid special attention in the Article 3 of the law: "Every child has an inalienable right to mother tongue education." Another important quotation is "this right is ensured by the creation of a network of kindergartens and schools, with the language of education depending on the ethnic composition of the region's population."

A Governmental Committee for Internal National Relations was established by the Resolution of the Republican Parliament of September 20, 1993 (#712). A Governmental Service of the Counselor for National Policy was created by the President's Decree of March 12, 1993 (#486). This special consultative council acts under the jurisdiction of the Governmental Counselor's Service, which consists of the representatives of the various national minorities, small-numbered nationalities and ethnic groups.

In the new Constitution of the Azerbaijan Republic (November 12, 1995) the Azerbaijani language is decreed as the formal language, but at the same time Article 21 guarantees the preservation, free use, cultivation, and development of other languages of the Republic's population. With regard to the choice of the language of education, citizens of the Azerbaijan Republic have a right of free choice of the language of education. Article 45 provides for the right to use the mother tongue. Everyone may receive education in his/her mother tongue and use this language in his/her creative works. Nobody can be deprived of using the mother tongue:

“Everybody has the right to chose the language of education. Nobody can be deprived from the right to use his mother tongue.”

According to the 1999 census data representatives of different ethnic groups do use their own nationality languages.

**Ratio (per cent) between the population’s ethnic origin and mother tongue, 1999 census data**

	<b>The language of own nationality</b>	<b>Languages of other nationalities</b>
<b>Total population</b>	99.0	1.0
<b>Azerbaijanis</b>	99.7	0.3
<b>Armenians</b>	99.9	0.1
<b>Avars</b>	98.2	1.8
<b>Georgians</b>	98.0	2.0
<b>Jews</b>	87.1	12.9
<b>Kurds</b>	48.9	51.1
<b>Lezghians</b>	96.1	3.9
<b>Russians</b>	99.3	0.7
<b>Sakhurs</b>	99.3	0.7
<b>Talish</b>	89.6	10.4
<b>Tatars</b>	86.7	13.3
<b>Tats</b>	83.0	17.0
<b>Turks</b>	94.6	5.4
<b>Udins</b>	98.8	1.2
<b>Ukrainians</b>	32.1	67.9
<b>Other nationalities</b>	75.3	24.7

The situation plays itself out in different ways depending on the minority population. According to the data of the State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan Republic there are schools with three languages of instruction in Azerbaijan. These are the Azerbaijani, Russian and Georgian languages. However, other linguistic minorities' children, who reside in close together, are taught their own mother tongue.<sup>6</sup> Data below reflects situation of 1996-1997:

Talish language was taught to 23,919 pupils,  
Lezghian language was taught to 16,350 pupils,  
Tsakhur language was taught to 1,090 pupils,  
Avar language was taught to 4,082 pupils,  
Udin language was taught to 517 pupils,  
Khynalyg language was taught to 162 pupils.

Lezghians and Talish receive language instruction in their mother tongue at the elementary level (grades I-IV). This means they receive two hours a week for four years. There are presently 104 such preparatory classes, where 1,573 pupils learn Lezghian in the Gusar and Gabala regions. In the Astara region there are 78 classes, where 1,481 pupils learn the Talish language.

During our research we found that in the Soviet period Lezghians mostly chose Russian as a language of instruction. After Azerbaijan gained its independence the number of Lezghians receiving instruction in Azerbaijani increased. Because there is no state

policy directing them to do so, Lezghian's have simply decided on their own that their respect for the independent Azerbaijan Republic, its language and history, are sufficient to attend Azerbaijani language schools. At present 75-80 percent of all minorities chose the Azerbaijani language as a language of instruction (Georgians are the exception). The rest chose the Russian language schools.

Only the Georgians have secondary schools in their mother tongue (Georgian language). In the Balakan region there is only one secondary school where the instruction is both in Azerbaijan and Georgia. In the Georgian section there are 12 grades with 205 pupils. Out of 62 teachers, 32 are Georgians.

In the Zagatala region at 4 schools Georgian is used side-by-side with Azerbaijani. At all 4 schools there are 55 grades with 943 pupils, and out of 293 teachers 123 are Georgians.

In Gax we have yet another situation. At one school side by side with Azerbaijani and Russian, Georgian is used as a language of instruction, but at 6 schools the language is only Azerbaijani. Out of 386 teachers 252 are Georgians. In all of these three regions at schools where different languages are used as the medium of instruction, the school principals are Azeris, but at Georgian schools they are Georgians.

Thus, in the Zagatala, Balakan, and Gax regions there are 12 schools with 2,541 pupils, with Georgian as the language of instruction. (But in the Azerbaijani section there are 2,560, and in the Russian section 87 pupils). Out of 739 teachers, 407 are Georgians.

Region/ Language	Balakan		Zagatala		Gax		Total	
	School	Pupils	School	Pupils	School	Pupils	School	Pupils
Georgian	1	205	4	943	7	1393	12	2541

## 2. *National Curriculum Developments*

Azerbaijan adheres strictly to a so-called subject-based curriculum, which claims to be based on goals consistent with the Azerbaijan Constitution, Law on Education, and international agreements. The objectives of the curriculum include general and subject-specific efforts. General objectives transcend any specific subject field, and are related to life skills, democratic and other citizenship attitudes, critical thinking, learning how to learn, and problem solving skills. Subject-specific objectives include knowledge and skills in a subject field. We found there is almost no reference to ethnic minority groups within the curriculum of any subject.

**General education curriculum for 1999/2000 in the Republic of Azerbaijan (Instruction language: Azerbaijani)**

#	Subject	II	III	IV	VI	VII	VIII	IX	XI
1	Azerbaijani	10	10	10	4	4	3	2	1
2	Literature	-	-	-	2	2	2	3	3
3	Russian	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
4	Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
5	Information Science and basics of computer engineering	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
6	History	-	-	-	1/2	2/1	2/1	2/1	3/2
7	History of Azerbaijan	-	-	-	1	1	½	1/2	2
8	People and Society	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	1
9	Natural History	-					-	-	-
10	Familiarization with the Environment	1			-	-	-	-	-
11	Geography	-			2	3	3	3	1
12	Biology	-			2	2	2	2	2
13	Physics	-			-	2	3/2	4	4
14	Astronomy	-				-	-	-	1
15	Chemistry	-					3	3	3
16	Sketching	-			-	-	-	1	1
17	Foreign Language	-			3	3	2	2	2
18	Drawing	1			1	1	-	-	-
19	Music and singing	1			1	1	1	-	-
20	Physical Training	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

21	Initial Military Training	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
22	Vocational Training	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
23	Constitution of the Azerbaijan Republic	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
24	Basics of Economics	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Total	25	25	25	29.5	32.5	34.5	37	36.9-
	Free Electives	1	1	1	3	4	4	2	4

There was occasional reference to ethnic minorities in geography and history curriculum guidelines.

Example: History (Grade 4, Section 4)

Albanian Kingdom (Caucasus)

1. The origin of the Albanian state. 1(2) hours. Territory, population, geography, ethnic content groups. Occupations. Social structure.
2. The Albanian culture. 1 (2) hours. Cultural. Alban writing. Sculpture. The Spread of Christianity in some regions of Albania. The formation process of the Azeri people.
3. Turkish tribes and their role in the formation of Azeri people.

In the above example, teachers are directed to use one to two hours to discuss the population, geography, and ethnic groups in the early Albanian Kingdom, and another one to two hours to deal with the early Albanian culture and Turkish tribes and how they contributed to the formation of the Azeri people.

Example: Geography (Grade 8, Section 3)

The social – economic geography of the Azerbaijan Republic.

The ethnic content of the population of Azerbaijan. Migration.

In this section the students are exposed to the social, economic geography of Azerbaijan, including the ethnic content of the population of Azerbaijan. The textbooks, as we shall see, provide almost no information about the ethnic groups under discussion.

In the curriculum for the school where instruction is in the Georgian language, Azeri language is taught as a secondary one. Georgians who attend the school with Georgian instruction have an opportunity to continue their education in the Georgian language only in Georgia.

In the regions where Lezghians live there are schools where instruction is either in the Russian or Azeri languages. In these schools the Lezghian language is taught as well. Lezghians also have an opportunity to continue their education at the higher levels in the Lezghian language in Dagestan. But the only options available to the Talish, Tats, Kurds, Avarz, and Udins are to enroll in schools where the instruction is either in the Russian or Azeri language.

The Curriculum of Georgian language schools is worked out in the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Georgia, and it is then formally approved by the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan

Republic. All textbooks for Georgian schools are brought from Georgia. It must be noted that Azerbaijani is taught in these schools as the official language of the Republic. The history of Azerbaijan is not taught in these schools since there is no book on the history of Azerbaijan in the Georgian language. Article 8, (Item 2) of the Law on Education notes that at schools where Azerbaijani is not a language of Instruction the History of Azerbaijan must be taught. To solve this problem the Ministries of Education of the Georgian Republic and Azerbaijan Republic have plans to publish *The History of Azerbaijan* in Georgian in two volumes, so that the Law on Education can be satisfied.

As to university education of minorities, we must note that during the Soviet period, groups of people on the margins of the Soviet Union were given privileges at the entrance exams. Though no special seats were given to them, during the entrance exams they were given every assistance to pass the exams and gain entrance into higher education. After the independence of Azerbaijan the entrance test exams were centralized and smaller ethnic groups in Azerbaijan were not given any special privileges. Today, ethnic-group pupils take their test side-by-side with other Azerbaijani citizens under the same conditions and terms.

### 3. *Textbook Developments*

Government policy regarding minorities is most clearly seen in the textbooks, because these contain the explicit information that is to

be transmitted to the students. In the last several years a completely new set of textbooks have been published for all subjects in primary and secondary schools. Thus, in 1996 Ministry of Education published ABCs in six minority languages:

Talish - 15,000 copies,

Tat - 5,000 copies,

Kurd - 2,000 copies,

Lezghian - 8,000 copies,

Udin - 1,000 copies,

Tsakhur - 2,000 copies.

At the same time, there were several textbooks in minority languages published. All textbooks are small consisting of less than 100 pages and they are designed in similar formats:

Udin language for the 3d grade - 1.000 copies,

Tat language for the 3d grade - 5.000 copies,

Lezghian language for the 2d grade - 8.000 copies,

Talish language for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade - 10.000 copies.

We did a content analysis of all the most recent textbooks that have been prepared by the Ministry of Education for the junior and senior classes to see what references are made regarding ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan. If we were to put all of these textbooks together they would add up to 4,000 pages of text. In all of these

4,000 pages we found references to minorities that amounted to less than two pages of text. And this is a generous calculation, as will be seen in the following comments.

In the readers for primary school the only references to minority groups are stories and poems by Russian writers and poets, but these do not deal explicitly with the Russian people. No other references to other minorities were found in the readers.

Textbooks for the higher grades are divided into subject fields. The textbooks on literature used in higher grades present a similar picture as the textbooks for the primary students. There is occasional information about a small number of Russian writers and their works in the textbooks for the seventh and tenth grades, although this information is presented as part of the foreign literature sections of the textbooks.

The textbooks on geography list information about minorities in the eighth and eleventh grades. The appropriate passages in the books are in the section: "Population and Its National Content." The following is the most extensive discussion of minority groups in any of the texts. It is taken from *The Social and Economic Geography of Azerbaijan* (Grade 8):

According to the population census (1989), 17 percent of the Azerbaijan population are the representatives of more than 80 nationalities, including 5.6 percent Russians, 2.4 percent Lezghians,

5.6 percent Armenians. In addition, Tats, Talish, Avarz, Udins, Tatars, Jews and others live in Azerbaijan as well.

Most of them are very ancient people of Caucasus. From an ethnic, cultural and psychological point of view they are related to the Azeris.

Russians came to Azerbaijan in the second half of the XIX century, Armenians were imported after 1828.

The above quotation represents the most extensive discussion about minorities in Azerbaijan textbooks, and it amounts to less than ten lines of text, and tells almost nothing about the people themselves.

The textbooks on history make more references to minorities than any other textbooks, although these references give minimal information about the ethnic cultures. We interviewed the writers of several of the textbooks and they indicated that their intention was to teach more general issues and not focus on minority issues in the texts. It must be pointed out that during the former Soviet Union there wasn't any information about the history of Azerbaijan in history texts produced by the USSR. Today the history of Azerbaijan is taught in all secondary school classes beginning from the fifth grade. Azerbaijan history textbooks make occasional references about the origin of the minorities beginning from the earlier stages of the history.

Example: *Azerbaijan History* (grade 6):

Azeri Turks developed as a nation having a very ancient territory, language, culture, political formations and settled in larger territories in the early middle ages (III – VIII). These territories started from the north of Derbent and continued till Zenjan – Gazvin – Hamedan, the south region of Iran.

Azeru turks originally came from Turkish ethnic groups called Azeri, Gargar, Alban, Hun, Khazar, Sabir, Oguz. The history of the Persian language (Talish, Tats, Kurds) and the Caucasian language (Udins, Avarz, Lezghians, Sahurs, Khinaligs, Budugs, and others) nations is closely connected with the history of Azeri Turks.

In this passage there is some reference that various ethnic groups were the source of the Azeri peoples. In other words, the main emphasis is that the various ethnic groups are closely connected with the history of Azerbaijan culture and language.

Example: *Azerbaijan History* (grade 7):

There are similar ties that connect all the groups in Azerbaijan.

Firstly, they are under the influence of the same ideology. During different periods these ethnic groups had to fulfill the sacred texts of different religions, including idolatry, fire worshipping, Christianity, finally Muslim.

Secondly, they fought against the oppression of the empires (Sasani, Arab and other empires) together as Azerbaijan was their home.

Finally, they fought together against the attacks of external enemies.

In this passage, we see again the emphasis on the ties these various groups have and their importance in fighting oppression, both from within and outside Azerbaijan. There is no discussion of what the ethnic groups are, but instead how they contribute to being Azerbaijani.

#### 4. *Guidelines for the Teacher Training Program*

There is no mention of ethnic minorities in the guidelines for teacher training. We reviewed the program for future teachers, and all future teachers learn Azerbaijan history, but only as a part of their general studies in higher education. Some instructors have students read a textbook devoted specifically to minority groups, written by Gadamsah Javadov, entitled *Small Ethnic Groups and National Minorities in Azerbaijan*. Unfortunately, there is no provision in the professional development guidelines for dealing with ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan. We interviewed several lecturers at the State Teacher Training University, who had written textbooks, and they indicated to us that there are no provisions at the institution for sensitizing teacher candidates to minority populations and the teaching of the students of minorities. The sentiments of Irada Gasimova, from the Pedagogical University is

indicative of the general sentiments. She strongly favors attention be given to minority groups but maintains that all citizens of Azerbaijan ought to speak Azeri and have a commitment to the Azerbaijani nation and to being Azerbaijanis.

The teacher training for Minority schools is also a very crucial for Minority people. The situation at the Georgian schools and Lezghi schools is satisfactory since teachers from these schools are trained in the universities in Georgia and Dagestan. But for other minorities it is challenging. Beginning 2002 Lankaran State University will be training a couple of minority teachers at the Masters level for Talysh schools.

Teachers who teach in the schools where Georgian is the language of instruction are mostly graduates of institutions of higher learning in Georgia. In other words, they receive training to teach in Georgia. We might note that similar provisions are available in Georgia where schools are available for Azeri-speaking citizens of Georgia. That is, they don't receive any instruction about minority populations in Georgia.

#### SPECIFIC SCHOOL DATA COLLECTION

We visited three different parts of the country where the minorities are the majority of the population. We had originally wanted to go

to two areas, particularly Lezghian and Talish regions, but found it important to include Udi schools. The reason for this is that we found important innovations in Udi schools that might serve as school models for other regions where minority populations live.

We have visited the following regions:

Guba-Xachmaz-Oguz region where mostly Lezghian live

Lankaran-Astara-Lerik region where the Talish live

### Udi schools

Our plan was to look at schools at the primary level and schools at the secondary level in each region. Besides we visited the communities in these regions to establish a sense of rapport with administrators and teachers of the schools and attended classes to become familiar with the institutions. Our visits were informal and we did not communicate to the teachers that our specific aim was to look at education policy as it related to ethnic minorities. Our inquiries were done within the context of a much broader frame about schooling in Azerbaijan. We used a qualitative approach to the study on the grounds that it best served the purpose of our investigations namely:

- To understand the behavior of teachers in the context of the specific institutional context;
- To understand this context in relation to the local educational directorate;

- To understand how the provisions for minority students either support or deviate from the national educational agenda.

We conducted interviews with local educational directorate leaders, school leaders and teachers. The respondents were asked for information concerning curriculum, programs language issues and textbooks as well as opinions about them. We tried to group the questions around policy and practice related to minorities in the local directorate and the school and issues, and textbooks. And the third group of questions the conditions that existed related to minority students and teachers.

We turn now to comments about the specific minority groups under investigation.

### *Lezghians*

The Lezghian ethnic group lives along the northern border between Azerbaijan and Dagestan in Russia. While most Lezghians live today in Russia, there are pockets of the population in Azerbaijan. They are Muslims and retain a devotion to this religious orientation. During the Soviet period those in Russia resisted Russification and with the fall of the Soviet Union, those groups became somewhat strident in their demands for independence from Moscow. In Azerbaijan, demands for

independence have not been strong, although they are a proud people. The quest for independence in Azerbaijan may be tempered by the fact that Lezghian people are represented in Azerbaijan's Parliament and the Government, but especially in the local towns, districts, villages and hamlets, where Lezghians live. Newspapers ("Samur" and "Gusar") and books are published in the Lezghian language, and there are cultural centers and communal organizations, supported with state funds, specifically organized to preserve and develop the Lezghian culture.

Schools serving the Lezghians conform to the school patterns of the rest of Azerbaijan. That is, there are Russian and Azeri language schools, and they provide the standard curriculum required by the Ministry of Education. However, most Lezghians choose to place their children in Russian language schools. Lezghian language instruction is available in all eleven grades of primary and secondary school, and a number of pupils take advantage of this possibility. This appears to be a transitional pedagogical approach, because the children would not succeed as well if instruction were in Azeri or Russian.

Our queries as to provisions that are made to deal with Lezghian culture were usually met with perplexed looks. Educators made it clear that they followed the curriculum as it was issued by the Ministry of Education. There did not appear to be strict sanctions against teaching about the Lezghian culture; rather, the attitude

among teachers was more that it was their professional obligation to follow the guidelines laid down by the Ministry.

Because information given to people in interviews does not always correspond with actual behavior, we engaged in classroom observations in Lezghian schools. Of course, it is possible that teacher behavior changed while being observed, but our observations were that teachers rarely mentioned the Lezghian minority group nor did they make any reference to cultural and historical events connected with their Lezghian backgrounds.

A substantial portion of the students in the schools we visited have Lezghian principals, teachers and pupils. Our general impression was that the teachers and pupils were proud to be Lezghian, but that there was essentially no place in the curriculum where the ethnic group received attention. We have seen that the curriculum and textbooks make no provision for a discussion of the culture and how it is to be distinguished from other groups in the Republic. In our classroom visits, we found references to local conditions, places, and events, but they were not tied to any cultural conditions of the minority population. One math teacher, for example, in an exercise on geometric designs, made reference to streets in the town and how they were laid out. In Kuba, the only incident we observed relating to Lezghian conditions was made by one teacher who was not Lezghian; she chided the

children who misbehaved on one occasion that their behavior did not measure up to the expectations she had of Lezghians.

We did inquire as to the attitude minority members have about themselves, and it was evident that they took great pride in who they were. By way of contrast, in talking with teachers who were not members of the minority group, they expressed some shock when we asked if they were part of that minority, as if such an identity were an insult to them.

How do Lezghians develop such a sense of pride? The local families and community apparently provide sufficient support and reinforcement for the young people. Some efforts are taken on the national level. Regular cultural events are available where the young people demonstrate their culture through dance, music, and costumes. These events provide an outlet for the young to feel that they are a part of Azerbaijan and its people. In spite of this, we wonder why the schools pay almost no attention to ethnicity. It might be because of benign neglect. That is, ethnicity may not be considered crucial enough as a factor of national pride to be taken into consideration.

In our conversations with educators we gained the impression that the Lezghians themselves do not want to have their own schools, and they preferred to participate in the national school system, because it provides more advantages to them than would separate schools. Because the national curriculum is so extremely

centralized, they apparently consider it inappropriate to deviate in any way from that curriculum by giving attention to local, ethnic issues. Even so, there is some unhappiness with some aspects of the national policies. For example, in a group discussion with teachers, they complained bitterly about the decision in 1991 to change the Azeri language from the Cyrillic script to a modified Latin script. They felt that the children would thereby eventually be separated from their ethnic kin in Dagestan, Russia, who continue to use Cyrillic.

### *Talishs*

Most of the 200,000 Talish in the world live in the south-east region of Azerbaijan, near the Iranian border in and around Lenkoran, Lerik, Astara. Lenkoran served for a long time as the capital of the Talish Khanate, which has enjoyed variable degrees of independence throughout history. Those in the mountains around Lerik are known for the longevity of their lives. The remainder of the Talish live across the border in Iran. They speak an Indo-Iranian language that is also called Talish. Of course, almost all of those living in Azerbaijan are bilingual or trilingual, in that they speak Azeri and/or Russian. They have lived in this region for thousands of years. They adhere mainly to the Shi'ite Muslim religion, but are also more secularized than many other traditional groups, because of their association with the Soviet Union since

1920. Their Talish traditions are connected with farming and the land, but a growing number are now skilled craftsmen. There is occasional talk of separatist intentions among the Talish, but it does not appear to be serious at this point.<sup>7</sup>

As is the case with other minorities, the Talish are represented in Azerbaijan's Parliament and the government, and in the local towns and districts. Newspapers ("Syado"), magazines ("Soz") and books are published in the Talish language, and there are cultural centers and communal organizations, supported with state funds, specifically organized to preserve and develop the Talish culture.

Schools serving the Talish are identical to those in the rest of Azerbaijan. That is, there are Russian and Azeri language schools, and the Ministry of Education dictates what the standard curriculum will be. However, as noted, Talish language instruction is available in the first four grades of primary school, and a number of pupils take advantage of this possibility. This appears to be a transitional pedagogical approach, because the children would not succeed as well if instruction were only in Azeri or Russian. Even though the schools we visited were populated almost entirely by Talish teachers and students, there is no place in the curriculum for a consideration of Talish traditions and culture in the schools, because the centralized curriculum mandates the same topics and content be provided throughout the Republic of

Azerbaijan. Elmira Muradaliyeva, an Azerbaijan history professor from Baku State University explained to us that the Azerbaijan policy is that people should not be divided and sorted out as separate groups. Their national identity is believed to be more crucial to be taught than is their local, cultural identity.

We pressed teachers to explain if and how they incorporated Talish culture into the school curriculum, and our queries indicated that the teachers took for granted that they would teach the curriculum that was provided to them by the central Ministry of Education. Teachers considered it their professional responsibility to teach what the Ministry mandated. The textbooks were followed almost as if they were the teacher rather than the individual teacher.

We devoted time in the classroom observing the instructional sessions. We anticipated that there would be some attention, however minimal to the local culture and local situation. Contrary to expectations, we found that teacher behavior was consistent with what they had told us. That is, teachers followed the prescribed curriculum very closely. The language of instruction is Azeri or Russian from the very beginning, but teachers who spoke Talish did not hesitate to help young children, particularly in the early grades of school, by explaining the meaning of terms and concepts in Talish. However, they used the Talish language as a means of communicating the prescribed curriculum. In other words, the

information provided in the textbook was binding for them, and they followed it closely and carefully. After a history class we inquired if the teacher ever pointed out local monuments, buildings or other markers of local history, and the teacher appeared surprised that she might do this, and it appeared to be an appealing idea the teacher had never entertained. In fact, some teachers expressed an interest in incorporating this kind of local artifact into their instructional program. Obviously, they had not been encouraged to do such a thing in their training program or by the curriculum guidelines that come from the Ministry.

It is clear that the Talish are a proud people. There apparently is enough support in the family and community for their culture to develop this sense of pride in their culture. The school is not at all hostile to Talish culture, but it takes for granted that its purpose is Azerbaijan nationalism and a sense of pride in being Azerbaijani.

We found that the Talish educators and the students are not interested in having schools that teach the Talish language and culture. They wish to participate in the national school system and see that it provides them with more advantages than a Talish school would provide. In fact, the Talish language is at times considered a dead end for pupils, because they are unable to go on to higher studies in the language. More than one Talish teacher dismissed the language issue, explaining that the children were not terribly interested in the written form of their native language. Other

teachers were more dedicated to the perpetuation of the language. We noted above that some sentiment has been expressed for Talish independence from Azerbaijan, but this did not manifest itself among the educators we visited. They were proud to be thought of as Azerbaijan citizens though with a Talish cultural background.

### *Udins*

The Udins are a small minority population living in the Gabala region of Azerbaijan, 350 km to the northwest of the capital city of Baku. On the whole, an estimated 10,000 Udins live in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia and Belarus today.<sup>8</sup> They identify themselves with the Christian Albanians who used to live in the Caucasus (B.C.). The modern Udins (Udi) are descendants of one of the 26 Albanian tribes, who are believed to be the original residents of this region. After the conquest of Azerbaijan by the Arabs most of its population was assimilated into the culture of the conquerors. However, some part managed to retain their distinctive identity. The Udins and Hinaligs belong exactly to these groups.

The Udins' religious belief was influenced by Christianity, Islam, Armenian Gregorian Church religions. There are a number of literature sources going back to 1840 by German researchers. They are devoted to the history of Udi people, including some language development problems.

Modern Udins have preserved themselves as a small ethnic group with its own language, material, and spiritual culture. There is a compact population of 4,000 people in the village of Nidge, in the Gabala region. They consider this place the only one where the language and cultural environment are preserved, as well as traditions and moral values are maintained. The main occupation of Udins is farming. Some people work at local enterprises, and there are also school teachers and local administrative authorities. According to the historical-ethnographical research devoted to Udins and published as a monograph by the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences in 1999, in Nidge there are 131 teachers, 2 physicians, 12 workers of culture, 10 educators in kindergartens who are Udins by birth.

The Udins speak Russian and Azerbaijani, but Udin is the main language of communication in families. People who live in this village but who are of Azeri or Lezghian origin would sometime also speak in Udin, which is the main language at a pre-school level, in 2 kindergartens for 150 kids.

There are five coeducational schools in this village centrally developed by the Azerbaijan Ministry of Education. Azerbaijani is the language of instruction in two schools, and in the three other schools the language of instruction is Russian. Udin children attend the latter 3 schools. One of these schools is still located in the building constructed in mid-1930s according to the USSR Central Government Decree of January 1934 on Measures for Udin

People Education. Currently the Udin language is compulsory for grades 1 to 3 in the elementary school. There has been a proposal made to extend the program up to the ninth grade and it is under consideration. Children from families who are not Udin, who attend these three schools do not have to take the Udin language lessons, although some non-Udins choose to learn the Udin language in school. Teachers and parents, whom we met, say though that all children study Udin with interest and motivation.

There is no textbook used for teaching the Udin language in the first grade. Language lessons are presented orally. Teachers sometimes refer to a pictorial language learning textbook developed six or seven years ago, although it was not intended specifically for Udin language learners. We understand that publication of that textbook is under the discussion with the Ministry of Education. There are two textbooks called *Udin Language ABC* used in grades 2 and 3. Both were published by the Azerbaijani Ministry of Education in 1996. Each title has a print-run of 1000 copies. According to the local school principal, the textbooks are distributed free of charge to schools and then to students. We met the author of the textbooks, the Udin writer Mr. Georgi Kechaari. According to him, the Udin Language textbooks do not present any specific national/cultural vocabulary or notions, but deal with the general lexicon only. The currently taught alphabet is formed on the modern Azerbaijani language alphabet, which in turn is based on the Latin script. Though there are 52 letters in the Udin alphabet

(compared to 33 in the Azeri language), no special symbols are developed, but only extra-signs are added to letters or pairs of symbols are used. As this alphabet has roots in the Azeri language alphabet, Udin people living outside Azerbaijan cannot use it.

Students of the upper grades of the middle school take Udin language weekly for 2-4 hours planned by the National Curriculum as an “elective” course. At the same time there are a number of choices children can make as part of extra-curricular activities run by all three schools in the village. These include “Study of Udin Customs”, “Udin Songs”, and “Udin drama” in the Udin language. There are additional materials available to the general public. In 2001 with the help of the Norwegian Humanitarian Enterprise Azerbaijan, which renders important help to the Udin minority group there were two books published. One is called “Orayin.” It’s a 144-page collection of poems, legends, and anecdotes published in the 52-letter alphabet of the Udin language. This anthology is compiled by Udin writer Georgi Kechaari. The second publication, “Waterspring,” is a 23-page booklet of Udin legends, humorous stories, and anecdotes in English translation. “We have waited 40 years to see our poems published in our own language,” says Mr. Kechaari.

Teachers who work with Udin children are mostly born in the same village. They come back and work here after getting their Degree at one of the Universities in the capital city of Azerbaijan.

## II. EDUCATION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

### THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The country of Iran is located south of Azerbaijan and Armenia and north of the Persian Gulf. It covers 632,457 square miles and has a population of 66 million people, approximately one tenth of whom live in Tehran. The country is divided into 24 provinces, and there is a significant difference in the quality of life between the urban centers and the rural regions.

According to Shahrokh Meskoob, Iran's cultural identity is built on four major factors. These are: "(1) the country's pre-Islamic legacy, which took shape over a period of more than a millennium, from the time of Achaemenians to the defeat of the last Persian dynasty (the Sasanians) by the invading Arab armies in the middle of the seventh century; (2) Islam, or, more specifically, Shi'ism, the religion of over ninety percent of the country's present-day inhabitants, with an all-encompassing impact on every facets of Iranian culture and thought; (3) the more diffuse bonds, fictive or real, established among peoples who have inhabited roughly the same territory, with the same name, faced the same enemies, struggled under the same despotic rulers and conquerors, and otherwise

shared the same historical destiny for over two millennia; and finally (4) the Persian language, currently the mother tongue of a bare majority of the population, but long the literary and “national language” in Iran (as well as in parts of Afghanistan, Central Asia, and parts of the Indian subcontinent).<sup>9</sup> In other words, the notion of being Persian goes beyond ethnicity, in that all ethnic groups are formally considered part of being Iranian. In Iran there are a number of ethnic minorities:

1. Azeri speaking (24-42 percent)
2. Kurds, (7-12 percent)
3. Arab (minor)
4. Baluch (1 percent)
5. Bakhtiyari (1 percent)
6. Jewish (.5 percent)
7. Ashoori (minor)
8. Talishs
9. Turkamans

Estimates of the number of Azeri-speaking people and Kurds vary widely. This can be explained in part, by the lack of solid information available on the minorities, but also because Iran does not want its minority population to appear too significant in the country. Many of the smaller groups descend from slave and Indian trade. Farsi is the official language and native tongue of over half the population. It is also spoken as a second language by

the majority of the remainder. Besides permanent ethnic minorities in Iran, there are also large numbers of refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq, who brought their own linguistic and cultural traditions with them.

According to the most recent Human Development Report on Iran,<sup>10</sup> from 1960 to 1995, Iran's human development index values increased 0.452, moving Iran from the group of countries considered to have low human development to join the ranks of those with medium human development. The transformation of the social environment has significantly affected income, education, and health (three basic components of the human development index). While it took three decades (1960-1988) for life expectancy to rise from 49.5 to 61.6 years, it took only one decade (1988-1997) for it to rise from 61.1 to 69.5 years. Adult literacy rose from 41% on the eve of the Islamic Revolution (1979) to 57.1% in 1988, and then jumped to 74.5% in 1997. Similarly, combined enrolment ratio (combined first, second - and third - level gross enrollment ratio) shot up from 46% in 1980 to 65.6% in 1988 and then to 75% in 1997.

Before the revolution, real GDP per capita expanded at a rate equal to 150% from \$1,985 in 1960 to 4,976 in 1976. After the revolution, the growth slowed registering an initial drop in the first decade after the revolution, but in the second decade it rose from \$3,715 to \$ 5,222. During the past decade, the female literacy rate rose from 46.3% to 67%, while the female rate of admission in higher edu-

cation also saw a proportionate increase. Female life expectancy increased from 62.7 years to 70.6. During 1988-97 under-five mortality rate declined from 85.3 to 37.3 in every 1000 live births. During the past decade human poverty decreased from 31% to 18%. Moreover, during 1988-97 the infant mortality rate was reduced from 63.5 in every 1000 live births to 30.7.<sup>11</sup> In Iran, the Azerbaijani or "Turkish People" participate in partnership in jobs with the majority Farsi-speaking people, though the key jobs are usually held by Farsi-speaking people.

#### THE IRANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The state school system was formally established with Iran's first constitution in 1905, although those in the cities were the main early beneficiaries of schooling. One way of promoting Iran's interpretation of Islamic ideals and principles is to use the public school system. Since the Islamic revolution, all of the educational material used in the schools has been changed or updated to make sure that there is no conflict with the laws of Islam. The revolutionary government recognized that the long-run consequences of the revolution depended on the transformation of the present school children by creating a new set of values. The old system's values and institutions were to be fundamentally altered. The schools were seen as major vehicles for change, so in the schools, the major educational variables available were to be altered.

Two of the most important factors in the improvement of human development levels in Iran from 1988 to 1997 were the improvement of the adult literacy rate from 57.1% to 74.5% and the increase in the combined enrollment rate from 65.5% to 75%. Adult literacy grew at a higher rate than combined enrollment. This can be explained largely by the fact that because literacy was a prerequisite for access to further education, training and employment opportunities, demand for literacy courses was high. The gross enrollment ratio at the tertiary level jumped from 6.89% in 1988 to 18.17% in 1997, while the ratio at the secondary level went up from 52.7% to 77.5% in the same period the ratio at the primary level, on the other hand, declined from 122.5% in 1998 to 119.2% in 1997. The significant increase in the number of universities and institutions of higher education and the growing presence of the private sector at this level explain why growth in tertiary education has been higher than in secondary and primary education.

The educational system is highly centralized, and the educational programs of the schools are highly uniform. The programs throughout the country look much the same as the programs in Tehran. The major difference with Tehran is that there are more facilities and a wider number of schools that are designed to provide education at a single level, such as pre-primary schools, high schools and pre-university schools. However, all schools are managed within a single system with no differences observed in the programs of these schools.

Although the composition of the population shows more men having an opportunity to become literate, women have shown a great interest in literacy. The index for the number of female students in higher education increased from 100 in 1988 to 322 in 1996. In 1998, 60.5% of students were in urban areas, while the remaining 39.5% were in rural areas. Of all learners covered by the Literacy Movement, 56.8% were in urban areas and 43.2% were in rural areas.<sup>12</sup>

Article 30 of the Iranian Constitution, which was drafted in 1979 after the Islamic Revolution, states that primary education is mandatory for children between the ages of 6-11, and in Article 30, the Constitution stipulates that, "The government must provide all citizens with free-education up to secondary school, and must expand free higher education to the extent required by the country for attaining self-sufficiency." One of the first measures adopted by the government after the Revolution in 1979 was the desecularization of the public school system. This was a three-pronged program that involved purging courses and textbooks believed to slander Islam and substituting courses on religion; purging teachers to ensure that only those who understood the true meaning of Islam (i.e., were not secular) remained in the schools; and regulating the behavior and dress of students. Only one Jewish school remains open and its Muslim director is appointed by the ministry of education. The school is forced to operate on the Jewish sabbath

and the teaching of Judaic texts is permitted only with Farsi translations of the Bible.

The revolutionary government recognized that the long-run consequences of the revolution depended on the transformation of the present school children by creating a new set of values. The old system's values and institutions were to be fundamentally altered. The schools were seen as major vehicles for change, so in the schools, the major educational variables available were to reinforce and conform with Shi'ite Muslim values.

Although the government reintroduced the study of religion into the public school curriculum from primary grades through college, it did not act to alter the basic organization of the education system. Thus, schools have not changed significantly from the pattern prior to the Revolution. Pupils can enter pre-school education at the age of five, where they receive training in the basic notions necessary to be successful in primary school. At the age of six, pupils then begin a five-year primary school cycle, which is both free and compulsory. They take examinations at the end of each year that determine if they move on to the next grade level. At the end of the primary cycle they have a major examination that determines if they are promoted on to the next cycle. At approximately age 11, most pupils then move on to the so-called guidance cycle, which might be considered as a three-year middle school or lower secondary school. Even though the education might be

considered more general in nature, it is during this time that the talents of students are assessed and a determination will eventually be made whether they move on to academic or vocational/technical education. At the end of this cycle students are examined to determine if they are allowed to move on to secondary education. Secondary education is a three-year program covering grades 9 through 11. It is divided into two main branches: academic and vocation/technical. The academic branch is divided into four streams, namely literature and culture, socio-economic, physics/mathematics, and experimental sciences. The vocational/technical branch is intended to train students for the labor market and has three main streams, namely technical, business/vocational, and agricultural. National examinations are held at the end of each year during the secondary cycle. If a student wishes to attend the university, the student must take an additional preparation year.

The new government put a high priority on education and invested money in adult literacy programs, new school construction, and expansion of public colleges and other institutions of higher learning. Tehran (Iran's capital) is considered to be the center of higher education and learning. Educational projects in the rural areas include expanded extension services and agricultural training as well as building and improving the primary schools.

A significant percentage of the population is school age, and although many people go on to further their education, many

others do not. The literacy rate for males is about 85 percent, while the literacy rate for females is about 70 percent. The most likely people in Iran to drop out of school after the age of 11 are girls who live in the rural areas. Many rural families still do not understand why it is important for women to be educated. These girls may stay home and help their families out financially by working and contributing to the family income. Rural families may also want to “protect” their girls from outside influences and instead keep them home to promote a more traditional female role and to prepare them for marriage.

The grading system of Iran is important to understand. It is based on a 0-20 point scale. The pupil must score at least a 10 to be promoted. The scale is roughly equivalent to the American A, B, C, D scales as follows:

A = 17-20

B = 14-16.9

C = 12-13.9

D = 10-11.9

F = below 10<sup>13</sup>

#### STATE MINORITY EDUCATION POLICIES

Iran’s minority education policies focus exclusively on religious minorities. However, we have chosen to deal operationally with

ethnic minorities. We mentioned above that the only reference to ethnicity in the Constitution is Article 19: “All people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong, enjoy equal rights; and color, race, language, and the like do not bestow any privilege.” In this project we investigated specific educational dimensions.

- Policies related to the language of Instruction.
- National Curriculum Developments.
- Textbook Developments.
- Guidelines for Teacher Training Program.

#### 1. *Policies Relating to Language of Instruction*

According to Article 15 of the Constitution, “the official language and script of Iran, the lingua franca of its people, is Persian. Official documents, correspondence, and texts, as well as text-books, must be in this language and script. However, the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools, is allowed in addition to Persian.” According to Amir Hasanpour, this is interpreted to mean that literature of a minority group that is taught in the schools can be in the native language, but the language of instruction is always Farsi.<sup>14</sup>

Clearly, Farsi is the national language and is closely connected with being Iranian. A negative consequence of connecting Farsi too

closely with being Iranian, is the tendency to suppress the other languages spoken in the country. Iranian policy makers are attempting to create a country with a single language and a single identity. This means that Azeri-speakers must give up part of their cultural identity in order to be considered Iranian. There is little allowance for Azeri or Kurdish to be spoken, even though they constitute so much of the identity of the marginal cultures of Iran. According to Shahrokh Meskoob, the "ideal state of affairs ... is one in which all these languages could exist and thrive alongside each other, each in its area of concentration and in accordance with its own capabilities, but with Persian continuing as the common language of communication among all Iranian ethnic groups."<sup>15</sup> To this point such a state of affairs has not been attained.

In areas dominated by minority groups, the school teachers usually come from the minority group. In the Azeri-speaking areas 99 percent of the teachers speak Azeri as a mother tongue, while in Kurdistan 95 percent of the teachers speak Kurdish as a mother tongue.

## 2. *National Curriculum Developments*

In the centralized system of education, the curriculum is everywhere the same. Even though in most countries teachers are not slaves to curriculum guidelines, in Iran, teachers are required to follow curriculum as outlined by the Ministry of Education. Of course, they are encouraged to choose the most appropriate

instructional practices. New initiatives are under way in Iran to develop interactive and participatory learning in the schools, but teachers are expected to cover the content entirely without any opportunity to deviate. In addition, the system of examinations and all kinds of assessments are powerful reasons for teachers to follow the curriculum as it is provided to them. We have provided here the curriculum in the first eight grades of the Iranian school.<sup>16</sup> The curriculum requires children to engage in religious teaching, and some religious minorities are able to participate in their own religious instruction.

We have refrained from including the curriculum for the upper secondary program, because it is not uniform. Upper secondary school students must complete 96 units within three years of which 68 to 70 units are obligatory and common for all streams; however, 26 units are specialized and elective. In mathematics, for example, students are able to specialize in three different kinds of mathematics in the final year of secondary school study. However, within each course of study, the curriculum is explicitly spelled out.

**Islamic Republic of Iran. Primary education: weekly lesson timetable**

**Subject # of weekly periods in each grade**

	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>			
The Holy Quran				-	-	2	2	2
Religious teaching				-	3	2	2	2

Persian composition	-	2	2	2	2
Dictation	-	3	2	2	2
Persian (reading and comprehension)	12	4	4	3	3
Social studies	-	-	2	-	-
Arts (painting, calligraphy, workmanship)	2	2	-	4	4
Health and natural sciences	3	3	4	3	3
Mathematics	5	5	4	4	4
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>

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### **Islamic Republic of Iran. Lower secondary education: weekly lesson timetable**

**Subject # of weekly periods in each form**

	<u>I</u>	<u>II</u>	<u>III</u>
Persian language and literature	5	5	5
Mathematics	5	4	4
Natural sciences	4	4	4
Religious teaching	2	2	2
History	1	1	1
Geography	1	1	1
Arabic language	2	2	2

Social sciences	1	1	1
Arts	2	1	1
Introduction to techniques and vocations	3	3	3
Foreign language	-	4	4
Defense preparation	-	-	1
The Holy Quran	2	2	2
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>

While there are healthy developments in some aspects of Iranian curriculum, the nationalizing element so dominates the scene that the treatment of minority groups remains almost completely absent from the picture. For example, the geography curriculum is a likely candidate to stress ethnic groups of a country, and it has been upgraded so that it no longer focuses exclusively on memorization of names and places. It has incorporated some of the ideas prevalent in international geography programs. These include the development of a wide range of geographic skills on the part of the student, and the ability to actually engage in geography projects and solve geographic problems. Unfortunately, these new developments do not include coverage of ethnic groups in Iran itself, beyond the learning of the names of ethnic groups and where they are located in Iran. In other words, regarding ethnic minorities, the Iranian geography curriculum remains as it

was in its most traditional periods in that it focuses almost exclusively on the learning of names and places.

No course or special curriculum modules are found that deals with specific ethnic issues. Kurdish or Turkish people and other ethnic minorities in Iran are not allowed to institute special programs dealing with the group; all programs are uniform throughout the country. All pupils in all of the areas of the country are judged on a uniform scale at the same level and there is no distinction among them. In addition, the entrance examination for university students cannot take local considerations into account. Authorities cannot consider the ethnic situation in their decision to admit students.

There is comparable treatment of ethnic minority groups in the Iranian curriculum as is found in the Azerbaijan curriculum, but it has a special value orientation, and this is best seen in the content of the textbooks.

### 3. *Textbook Development*

Because the system of education in Iran is highly centralized, textbooks, which are the main medium across the country, are centrally written and used in all schools. Each course at each grade level has its own textbook that is used in every school of Iran. More than a million copies of textbooks are used each year, and there are approximately 800 different textbooks produced for primary and secondary schooling. Teachers are instructed to use the textbook to

guide every facet of their instruction. The pupils are supposed to study and understand the textbook in each course. Finally, testing and evaluation are limited to the contents of each textbook. In other words, the primary vehicle for transmitting the curriculum is the textbook. Shorish has noted the following regarding textbooks in Iran:

It is through the textbooks that one sees the aspirations of the revolutionaries about the establishment of their ideal society expressed. This society is composed of men and women who are profiled in the pages of the textbooks as ideal citizens. It is hoped that children have, over the years, internalized the contents of the textbooks as well as other similar and reinforcing values inculcated by the other socializing agencies readily available to the revolutionary state like the news media.<sup>17</sup>

We have noted that constitutionally textbooks must be in the Persian language and script. And true to the focus of Iran on religion, the textbooks are focused on Islamic pedagogy through training and purification. The purpose of textbooks is to inculcate sacredness and the attributes that an Islamic person possesses into each child.<sup>18</sup> Thus, women always appear in the texts wearing a veil or scarf. Men do not wear a tie, which is a mark of a Western man. Pictures always display marks of Islam, including the Qur'an, religious leaders, a mosque, or some other symbol.<sup>19</sup>

Iranian education clearly addresses minorities, but it is done in the context of religious minorities. We have noted that Iran recognizes Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians, and it has sponsored textbooks specifically for these faiths, called *Teaching of the Sacred Religions and Ethics for the Religious Minorities*. The Ministry of Education produces the textbooks for the schools, but it claims to consult teachers and other appropriate groups as it develops the textbooks. In this context, the Ministry consults religious leaders of these minority religions in the production of the religious texts. The justification for creating such textbooks for religious minorities is the recognition that belief is not the major problem. It is disbelief that causes the difficulties. Those who don't believe anything cause more problems than do the Zoroastrians, Christians, and Jews. We might generalize that the textbooks for religious minorities in many respects push the ideas that all religions have in common with Muslims. In fact, the same textbooks are used for all three minority groups, so it must emphasize things in common to most religions. That is, there is a supreme creator, a God. There are prophets, such as Jesus and Moses. The order of the universe is a manifestation of God's hand in all things. There is a resurrection and an assessment of one's deeds on earth.

While there appears to be great efforts to recognize and address the educational needs of religious minorities, the textbooks give almost no attention to the fact that ethnic minorities are a part of Iranian national culture. And when they do, they are often

negative in character. For example, textbooks in Iran include anti-Semitic remarks relating to Middle Eastern history or religion. Of course, these are made in the context of Israel, but they pointedly degrade the Jewish tradition as being anti-social and against the family structure.<sup>20</sup>

The only references to Azeri-speaking people in the textbooks are found in geography. They are factual in nature pointing out where Azerbaijan is and where in Iran the Azerbaijani peoples are located. There are no supplemental materials in schools available that deal with ethnic minorities in Iran.

Textbooks define the content of the examination system in the country. In 2002, for example, the national examinations assessed performance of those in the fifth grade of elementary school, the third grade of the guidance or middle school and the third grade of high school. The content of these examinations was drawn directly from the textbooks. This means that teachers increasingly rely on the textbook to define what they teach. In addition, they resort to memorization of the content of the books.

#### 4. *Guidelines for Teacher Training Program*

As is the case in most countries, primary school teachers are trained in different institutions than are secondary teachers. Primary and guidance school (similar to general lower secondary school) teachers are trained in two-year Teacher Training Centers,

where they obtain something similar to an American associate degree. Secondary school teachers must pass the National University Entrance Examination and follow a four-year course leading to a bachelor's degree. The most important aspect of any teacher is to be the kind of morally and ethically oriented person that children can emulate. The ideal teacher is the ideal Muslim. Students that attend Teacher Training Centers, have diverse educational backgrounds. Most have completed upper secondary school, but some are admitted with less education. Even though, in theory, in order to teach at the upper secondary level, a university degree is required, due to a shortage of teachers, schools have been compelled to use teaching staff with other educational backgrounds. Teachers are trained in universities and higher institutes. There are seven teacher-training colleges in Iran. There are, of course, programs in higher education that deal in one way or another with ethnic minorities, particularly history and geography, but the pedagogical and professional aspects of the training of teachers do not include any content related to ethnic minorities in Iran. There is nothing similar to multicultural courses, the special pedagogical needs of children from ethnic minorities, or the need to appreciate cultural differences. All teachers must have a healthy background in religious studies.

## Specific School Data Collection

Our plan was to look at schools at the primary level and schools at the secondary level in each region. Besides we visited the communities in these regions as during the first days we established a sense of rapport with administrators and teachers of the schools and attended classes to become familiar with the institutions. As we familiarized ourselves with the schools, then became more systemic concerning data collection. The collected specific data concerning the ethnic background of teachers and students, their rate of success and specific provisions for them. Beyond this we, used a qualitative approach to the study on the grounds that it best served the purpose of our investigations namely:

1. To understand the behavior of teachers in the context of the specific institutional context
2. To understand this context in relation to the local educational directorate
3. To understand how the provisions for minority students either support or deviate from the national educational agenda.

We conducted interviews with local educational directorate leaders, school leaders and teachers. The respondents were asked for information concerning curriculum, programs language issues and textbooks as well as opinions about them. We tried to group

the questions around policy and practice related to minorities in the local directorate and the school and issues, and textbooks. And the third group of questions the conditions that existed related to minority students and teachers.

According to our research plan we visited two different parts of the country where ethnic minorities are the majority of the population. These are:

1. Azerbaijani regions
2. Kurdish regions

### *Azerbaijan Regions*

Azerbaijanis often speak of Southern and Northern Azerbaijan, to distinguish between those Azeri-speaking peoples living in what is today known as the Republic of Azerbaijan and those living in Iran. The territory where the Azerbaijan peoples live was divided almost two centuries ago in two major treaties, the Treaty of Gulistan (1813) and the Treaty of Turkmenistan (1828). The Azerbaijanis had little to do with these treaties; they were in fact decisions made between Iran, Russia, England and other powers who were attempting to establish control over the territory. In those treaties, the territory constituting what is now the Azerbaijan Republic was given to Russia, while the territory where the Iranian Azeri-speaking people live was given to Iran.<sup>21</sup>

Azeri-speaking people live mainly in three provinces which are part of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Eastern Azerbaijan, Western Azerbaijan, and Aradebil. A fourth province, Zanjan has a mixed population, although most of its population are also Azeri-speaking. Other provinces have small pockets of Azeri-speaking people. Tabriz is the major Azerbaijan city, and it is located in the Eastern Azerbaijan province. The Azerbaijani population in Iran speak the Azeri language, one of the dialects of the Turkish language. These people tend toward the Shi'ite branch of Islam, which makes them religiously similar to the mainstream Farsi-speaking population.

In Iran, the Azerbaijan "Turkish People" participate in partnership in jobs with the majority Farsi-speaking people, though most of the key jobs are held by Farsi-speaking people. However, one does find Azeri-speaking people in the top positions of education, the military, business and industry. One potential advantage of the educational system being highly centralized and the educational programs being highly uniform is that it provides more equal opportunity for the Azeri-speaking people. A growing number of Azeri-speaking people are moving to Tehran in an attempt to better their lot in life. Teachers complained that even though programs throughout the country look much the same as the programs in Tehran, there are better facilities and a wider number of schools that are designed to provide education at a single level,

such as pre-primary schools, guidance schools, and pre-university schools.

Our fieldwork took place in schools in and around Tabriz, including small villages. We had the good fortune of having on our research team teachers, university instructors and graduate students, most of whom spoke Azeri. There was therefore little hesitation on the part of teachers to share with us their feelings and attitudes.

From our discussions with teachers, it was clear that these people maintain a strong preference for the Azeri language, but unfortunately the language is not allowed in public schools. Farsi has been the official language of the country since 1906, although it was not until the so-called Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979) that the central government was strong enough to mandate Farsi in all public schools. As early as 1923 the Prime Minister prescribed Farsi in all schools attended by Azerbaijani children, and noted that provincial governor was to “notify all the schools under your jurisdiction to fully abide by this and to conduct all their affairs in the Persian language.” This tradition continued after the fall of the Shah, although enforcement of Farsi language policies has declined somewhat since that time.<sup>22</sup>

Some educators complained that because there is no legal place for the Azeri language in the public education system, different accents in the language have developed over time. This has

occurred in almost all villages and even in different areas of towns. And a situation has developed where distinctions are being drawn between different Azeri dialects. Tabriz Azeri, for example, is commonly recognized as being superior and commonly accepted among the more cultured, educated, and cosmopolitan Azeri-speaking people. Fortunately, recently the Azerbaijani language has been taught in a small number of private educational institutions and books in Azeri are now commonly published and an intention of this activity is to recreate a more uniform Southern Azerbaijani language.

According to the people we visited in the schools, prohibitions against Azeri are being relaxed. Whereas in the past, Azeri was spoken at school in a whisper, now teachers and children speak the language openly and comfortably. In the spring of 2003 Azeri language classes will be taught at Alame Tababeti Institute, a teacher training college, in Tehran. And in the fall of 2003 Azeri language classes will be taught at Tabriz University.<sup>23</sup>

In visiting classrooms, we were pleasantly surprised to find that teachers at the primary level occasionally used Azeri when the child did not understand in Farsi, even though Farsi was the formal language of instruction. We even witnessed a chemistry class at the secondary level where the teacher was giving instruction in Azeri. However, these were exceptional cases, although teachers candidly pointed out that if a teacher only

speaks Farsi, that teacher will have great difficulty as a teacher instructing Azeri-speaking children, particularly if the teacher is working in elementary schools and in the villages.

Traditionally, achievement levels among the Azeri-speaking peoples have been relatively low, mainly because of the language barrier. In 2000, for example, among the 24 provinces of Iran, the province of Eastern Azerbaijan ranked twentieth in terms of overall school achievement, while Western Azerbaijan ranked twenty-fourth, Aradebil ranked twenty-second, and the province of Zanjan, which is mixed, ranked twenty-first. In other words all four provinces where Azeri-speaking peoples live, ranked no higher than twentieth in terms of achievement.

Some experts in Iran would explain away this low achievement by suggesting that the Azeri-speaking peoples may not be as intelligent as Farsi-speaking peoples or that they come from a different social class. According to Younes Vahdati, our Iranian team leader, there has been some research on the issue. Younes explains that in one study, achievement tests in spelling, reading comprehension, science, and mathematics were given to children in four schools of Tehran, and the same test given to four schools in Tabriz and surrounding villages. The average Azeri-speaking child made 7 spelling mistakes, while the average Farsi speaking child made only 1.5 mistakes. Even though the Azeri-speaking children scored lower than did the Farsi-speaking children on the

science test, the differences in test scores were not dramatic. The mathematics test showed very similar results, indicating that language played a role in the outcome.

In another research project, Azeri-speaking pupils were given a test in Farsi and the same test was also administered to pupils in the Azeri language. The average Farsi language score was 11 but the average Azeri language score increased to 15.5, indicating a dramatic improvement in the performance level, even though the children had not even received Azeri language instruction in the school. We recall that the grading system is such that an 11 would represent a grade of "D" while a score of 15.5 would represent a grade of "C".

In our research project the head of one school we visited showed us some data he had collected. The previous year, the school enrolled 451 students, 440 of whom spoke Azeri as their mother language. Of course, all pupils were taught in Farsi, and the Farsi-speaking children experienced a higher degree of success than did the Azeri-speaking children. Only nine percent (less than 40) of the Azeri-speaking pupils passed the exams while almost all of the Farsi-speaking children passed. The average score of the Azeri-speaking pupils was between 10 and 11 (barely passing with a grade of "D"), but the average score of the Farsi-speaking children in this school was about 18 (high score with a grade of "A"). In examinations and competitions, Persian students were not only

more successful, in our visits to classrooms we found them to participate more actively in class discussions and to be more involved in activities such as the science experiments and demonstrations.

We were told that Azeri-speaking young people appear to have become quite competitive with Farsi-speaking youth, but the data on university admissions does not substantiate this claim. According to the Rector of Tabriz University, for every 10,000 people in Eastern Azerbaijan, where Tabriz is located, only 67 school leavers are accepted in the university, whereas the average admission rate in Iran is 109 students.

The textbooks, the teaching hours, and other aspects of the program in all of the areas are the same. Because the educational system is uniform, all children, whether they are Turkish, Kurdish, Baluch, Bakhtyari, Jewish, Ashoori, and Arab minorities receive this uniform education, and the language of instruction is in Persian/Farsi. Of course, ethnic minority groups have great difficulty with Farsi, and the people who live in villages are not familiar with it at all. As a result this uniform education tends to disadvantage ethnic minority groups. It is unreasonable to insist on a uniform education in terms of curriculum and textbooks, because the ethnic minorities are always at a disadvantage. The situation is so regulated that many children are embarrassed to

speak because they are laughed at by Farsi-speaking children, who make fun of their poor language skills and dialect.

From our visits to the schools, we observed that teachers were uniformly diligent in attempting to teach the prescribed curriculum and textbooks in Farsi. For many this was a difficult language and they were at a disadvantage in their ability to communicate, but they did so, in spite of the fact that in the schools we visited the Azeri-speaking children dominated the classrooms. In other words, both the teacher and the pupils were able to communicate better in Azeri, but they were both attempting to function in a second language.

We asked teachers why they were so diligent in using Farsi, and they simply responded that it was necessary to do so, because teachers were required to do so. To do otherwise might mean they would lose their job or they would be placed in a more undesirable school. Some teachers also found the information in the textbooks to be dated or not reflect the latest research findings in the various content areas. Obviously, Azeri-speaking teachers have access to information from a wide variety of sources and are in a position to make critical judgments about the materials available in the classroom and its suitability.

In elementary schools there are usually teachers' meetings once a month and in this meeting the teachers discuss the school and student problems and difficulties. The director of the meetings is

usually the headmaster of a school. But our observations were that the teachers, who were almost all native Azeri speakers, did not have courage to take part in the discussions, with the result being that the headmaster becomes very directive and imposes his will on the teachers.

In elementary schools, at the beginning of the year, a number of parents are chosen as representatives according to the number of students in the school. These representatives participate together in an attempt to reinforce the relationship and partnership between the school and the home and thereby help improve the quality of educational activities and expand the relations between parents and school. Members of this council are as follows: (1) Headmaster, (2) One of the assistants chosen by the head master, (3) Representative of teachers council, (4) Training teacher, (5) Representative of parents. All school expenses must be confirmed by the parent/teacher committee in monthly meetings. Teachers usually have good relationships with each other and respect to each other and rarely do they quarrel with each other. In some schools one finds Azeri, Kurdish, and Farsi speaking teachers, and our data indicate that there is usually high respect shown among these teachers and high respect shown by the pupils toward all teachers, regardless of ethnicity.

In Iran, all schools, either in Azerbaijan or in Tehran, Isfahan, Kurdistan observe the same holidays and periods that are held

dear by national leaders. For example, 22 February is celebrated as the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution throughout the country. Essentially no special days that are honored by the Azerbaijani minorities are observed in the schools. There are no formal cultural events related to ethnic minorities.

In some private schools, food is served but in all of the public schools of Iran there is no formal serving of food. In spite of this, in most schools the local community provides food services, without cost to pupils, so this is one means by which local foods are a part of the school. All classes and lessons are related to the whole country and books and lessons never discuss local problems. Teachers invariably hold to the curriculum and textbooks as they are distributed by Tehran. We might also note that research projects at Tabriz University are expected to focus on the whole country and are not expected to focus on local and racial problems. Researchers do not even acknowledge their understanding of differences in the country as a whole.

We inquired of the teachers about their attitudes about being Iranian and Azerbaijani. Almost all of them expressed some pride in being both, although there appears to be an age factor in the equation. That is, younger teachers appear to have a greater sense of pride in being Iranian than the older teachers. However, none of the teachers expressed outright hostility toward being Iranian, even though they were uniformly proud to be Azerbaijani. An

important element in the development of Azeri-speaking people concerning their self-identity is the presence of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which gained independence in 1991. In the past Azeri-speaking people in Iran had no place with which they could easily identify, but in the last twelve years they have had close relationships with a country with which they can identify and relate to.

In spite of this, the nationalistic educational mission of Iran has had a noticeable effect on the Azeri-speaking people. They constitute an important part of Iran and they identify strongly with the country of Iran. Significantly, Azeri-speaking people are not visible within the radical political movements of the day. We found some educators who said they were waiting in the wings until the right time, but others clearly were not interested in radical activities.

### *Kurdish Regions*

The Kurds are a transnational minority ethnic population that inhabit the region in northwestern Iran adjacent to Iraq. They reside in the provinces of Kurdistan, Kermanshahan, and the southern part of Western Azerbaijan. As of the late 1990s, there were estimated to be more than 20 million Kurds, about half of them in Turkey. The Kurds in Iran constitute some 7% of the country's people, about 4.2 million. Ethnically close to the Iranians, the Kurds were traditionally nomadic herders but are now mostly

semi-nomadic or sedentary. The majority of Kurds are devout Sunni Muslims. Kurdish dialects belong to the northwestern branch of the Iranian languages. The Kurdish population in Iran speak Kirmanji, which is a collective term in Iran for dialects spoken by Kurds. However, in conventional discourse we usually refer to the language as Kurdish. The Kurds have traditionally resisted subjugation by other nations. In fact, in 1946 the People's Republic of Kurdistan was established, under the leadership of Qazi Mohammad, although the Iranian army soon crushed the revolt. Despite their lack of political unity throughout history, the Kurds, as individuals and in small groups, have had a lasting impact on developments in Southwest Asia.

We visited Kurdish schools in and around the provincial capital city of Sanandi, in the Kurdistan province, where most of the Kurds of Iran are located. The schools were extremely poor, as were the young people attending them. But we sensed them to be honorable people, but people most of whom do not have extensive formal education. We observed Kurdish teachers in the classroom and talked at length with many of them. They were initially anxious about who we were and whether we might be affiliated with the central government. Fortunately, in our group were graduate students who were Kurds and others who were immediately identified as sympathetic with their situation, so we felt few barriers in our conversations with them.

In visiting classrooms, we found that Kurdish teachers were usually more open than were Azeri-speaking teachers about their Kurdish background. At the lower primary school level they often spoke in Kurdish to the children, if it appeared the child needed that additional input to understand a word or idea. We did not observe any classes taught in the Kurdish language, but we were told on several occasions that such classes are taught quite regularly when teachers feel that the children can achieve better if they are taught in Kurdish.

Achievement levels in the schools populated by Kurds is low. In 2000, for example, among the 24 provinces of Iran, Kurdistan ranked twenty-third in terms of achievement. Some experts in Iran would explain away this low achievement by suggesting that the Kurds are traditional peoples who have no interest in school and therefore they fail to achieve. According to Younes Vahdati, our Iranian team leader, there has been some research on the issue. In the study cited in the Azerbaijan section where 4 schools of Tehran and 4 schools of Tabriz were studied, an additional 4 school of Naghadeh and the villages it were also studied. Very similar results concerning Kurdish children came as was found with Azeri-speaking children. That is, the Kurdish children performed much lower than Farsi-speaking children on the spelling test, and their achievement in science and math was also lower, though not as dramatic as in the spelling test. The research project in which the same test was given in Azeri and Farsi was also given using

Kurdish and Farsi. In this case the Kurds scored 12.5 (giving them a grade of low “C”) in the test given in Farsi, but scored 16.5 (giving them a high “B” grade), when the test was given in Kurdish.

The textbooks, the teaching hours, and other aspects of the program in all of the areas are the same. Kurdish teachers were very critical of the system, because they felt it was based on cruel and unkind purposes. They were aware of scientific evidence that children must learn in their mother language, at least at the beginning of school, if the children were to optimize their chances for success. Teachers were open that it is unreasonable to insist on a uniform education in terms of curriculum and textbooks, because the ethnic minorities are always at a disadvantage.

In spite of the above criticisms, from our visits to the schools, we observed that teachers were diligent in attempting to teach the prescribed curriculum and textbooks in Farsi. For many this was a difficult language and they were at a disadvantage in their ability to communicate. As we observed the teachers in the classrooms, it seemed to us that even though the teachers taught the prescribed curriculum and held to the content of the textbooks, they were not always as dedicated to that content as Farsi teachers might be. Of course, one of the variables that mediates the influence of the curriculum and textbooks is the teachers. If teachers are sympathetic with the contents of the textbooks, their effectiveness

is obviously greater. However, if teachers are ambivalent or even hostile toward the content, the learning process will be negatively affected. This may even be unconscious on the part of the teacher, but we observed a lack of enthusiasm for some content that was unsympathetic to Kurdish interests, particularly as it was associated with the Farsi majority, the Shi'ite Muslim religion, and claims that the people of Iran are one people.

The same can be observed on the part of the children. Some content obviously contradicts what the children are learning at home. Believability in the content of the textbooks by the children themselves may prevent them from learning and internalizing matters dealing with political socialization and other kinds of learnings. The lack of reinforcement by very important actors in the children's lives such as the parents and the religious leaders of the community reduces the impact of teaching (and that of the textbooks) and sometimes forces children to compartmentalize in order to please the many significant advocates of conflicting values. That is, young Kurds obviously learn outside the school about their culture, their dress, special foods, their dances, etc. They learn to take pride in who they are, their religion and their condition as a minority population.

We noted in our discussion of Azeri-speaking peoples, that no special attention is given to ethnic minority holidays, no cultural events are celebrated, no attention is given to local problems and

issues in the schools. We asked teachers if they broke from these guidelines and did recognize certain events and special issues, but they made clear that they did not do this and took great pains to avoid mentioning local events and celebrations. In order for Kurds to rise to the point that they achieve higher education, they have to commit themselves to Farsi ways. It would be a great loss to them to challenge the course they had taken.

In our discussions with teachers, we concentrated largely on the materials that were supplied to them, that dictated the content of instruction, particularly textbooks. We explored general concerns of teacher, as teachers. As expected, even though teachers were critical of the textbooks and their ability to interest students, and they were even critical of the kinds of pictures found in the books, the covers, and the way they were formatted, they tended to accept the program and content with a sense that they probably could have been worse, but that they were what might be expected. Teachers were aware that there is great discussion in the country about the importance of giving a balanced view of ethnic groups, sexual issues, occupations, social class, and language, but they felt little of this was reflected in the textbooks themselves. And what was there usually reflected a negative picture toward the Kurds.

We also explored issues related to the degree to which the curriculum and textbooks addressed them as Kurds. There was consensus that the program of instruction was not intended to

address the concerns of the Kurdish population, and particularly the personal needs of the students. In fact, the only place in the program of studies that the Kurdish population is mentioned is in geography, and in this aspect of the program, some attention was given to the location of ethnic groups in Iran and particularly where the Kurds were located in the country. However, no attention is given to the Kurdish history, culture, values, and arts. The school is devoted exclusively to being Iranian and the creation of a Shi'ite Muslim state. It is the task of the school to help young people learn how to be good Muslims and please Allah. In fact, academic competency takes a seat behind commitment to the Islamic state. Some teachers complained that the pictures in the textbooks reflected a negative attitude toward them as Kurds. They made them afraid and angry.

We asked the teachers what their attitudes were about being Iranian and Kurds. They were quite open about their ambivalence. They live close to the Kurds in Iraq and feel a kinship as Kurds that has never existed toward being Iranian. In spite of this, they see themselves as Iranian although the sense of identity expressed by Azeri-speaking Iranians was not so evident among the Kurds. In spite of this, the nationalistic educational mission of Iran has had a noticeable effect on the Kurdish people. They constitute an important part of Iran and they identify with the country of Iran.

### III. OUTCOMES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

#### POLICY FINDINGS

The policy outcomes of our study can be stated in rather simple terms. In terms of the constitutions, school laws, curriculum plans, textbooks, and teacher training policies, we determined that in both countries the policies were clear and consistent. That is, constitutional articles and school laws pertaining to the education of minority groups were consistent with instructional policies, curriculum plans, textbooks, and teacher training policies, and they, in turn were consistent with each other. In fact, there is a conscious and deliberate attempt to meld them, by having the same people set policies and write the programs. In Azerbaijan, for example, the people who are asked to write the textbooks are the same people who serve on the curriculum councils charged with establishing curriculum programs. And these same people often teach at the teacher training university and they therefore participate in determining the content of teacher training programs.

However, the straight forward articulation of all of these things, at least in Azerbaijan, is only found in the standard program, and a wide variety of experiments, pilot schools, and new school types

are now to be found. Unfortunately, almost none of these innovations relate to ethnic minorities.

The policy in Azerbaijan is clearly that minority pupils be given the opportunity to be given instruction in the primary schools about their native tongue. The number of years in which the native language is used as the language of instruction differs, but the general policy is rather clear. Lezghian children are able to study the language as an optional subject in primary school to the end of secondary school, whereas for Talish the opportunity ends after four years of primary school. The rationale for this difference is that Talish is a dead end option in that there is no opportunity to continue in higher education, whereas Lezghian students are able to go on to higher education studies at Mahachgala University in Russia. Language provisions are generally seen as transitional in nature, in that they are not intended to help the children gain insight into the minority culture but to better prepare them to eventually succeed in schools where Azeri and Russian are the languages of instruction.

In spite of this rather generous and insightful language policy, there is no place in the standard curriculum for minority children to learn about the minority culture, customs, and arts. We did a content analysis of all the most recent textbooks that have been prepared by the Ministry of Education for the primary and secondary classes to see what references are made regarding ethnic

minorities in Azerbaijan. If we were to put all of these textbooks together they would add up to more than 4,000 pages of text. In all of these 4,000 pages we found references to minorities that amounted to less than two pages of text. In other words, there are almost no references to minority groups in the texts. In terms of teacher training, there is no provision in the professional development guidelines for dealing with ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan. We interviewed several lecturers at the State Teacher Training University and Baku State University, some of whom had written textbooks. History teachers indicated to us they deal extensively with ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan history. In fact, they use a textbook written by Gamersha Javadov, *Small Ethnic Groups and National Minorities in Azerbaijan*, that tells the history of these groups. However, they confirmed that there are no provisions at the universities for sensitizing teacher candidates to minority populations and the teaching of the students of minorities.

In Iran, the policies are also clear and straight forward. Farsi is the language of instruction for all children of Iran, without exception, and it is the language of instruction from the beginning of primary school to the end of compulsory schooling. In the centralized system of education, the curriculum is everywhere the same. Teachers are required to follow the curriculum as outlined by the Ministry of Education. Of course, teachers are encouraged to choose the most appropriate instructional practices, and new initiatives are under way in Iran to develop interactive and

participatory learning in the schools, but teachers are expected to cover the content entirely without any opportunity to deviate.

Constitutionally textbooks must be in the Persian language and script. And true to the focus of Iran on religion, the textbooks focus on Islamic pedagogy through training and purification. The purpose of textbooks is to inculcate sacredness and the attributes that an Islamic person possesses. Curiously, there is a place in the curriculum for approved religious minorities to learn a special kind of religious program, but the things they learn are general enough that they do not appear to foster a particular religion; rather, they foster religious belief in general. The only textbooks allowed are those produced by the Ministry of Education, and there is no place in the Iranian textbooks for the child to learn about his/her ethnic minority culture, history, and literature. We found occasional references to ethnic minorities in Iran, but they were largely negative in character. References to the Jews were inevitably in reference to Israel and the sympathy Jews had for anti-Muslim causes.

Teachers are trained in universities and higher institutes. There are, of course, programs in higher education that deal in one way or another with ethnic minorities, particularly in history and geography, but the pedagogical and professional aspects of the training of teachers do not include any content related to ethnic minorities in Iran. All teachers must have a healthy background in

religious studies. A new development is being initiated in 2003. The teacher training college at Tehran and Tabriz University are scheduled to teach the Azeri.

#### FIELD WORK OUTCOMES

From our visits to the schools, we observed that teachers were uniformly diligent in attempting to teach the prescribed curriculum and textbooks in the national language. For many this was a difficult language and they were at a disadvantage in their ability to communicate, but they did so, in spite of the fact that in the schools we visited the minority pupils were dominant. In other words, both the teacher and the pupils were usually able to communicate better in the ethnic minority language, but they were both attempting to function in a second language.

There were great differences between Azerbaijan and Iran. In Azerbaijan, schools serving the minorities conform, by and large, to the school patterns of the rest of Azerbaijan. That is, there are Russian and Azeri language schools, and they provide the standard curriculum required by the Ministry of Education. However, the minority language instruction is available in the first four grades of primary school, and a number of pupils take advantage of this possibility. In addition, Lezghian is available at the secondary level as an "optional" subject. Teachers treat language inst-

ruction as a transitional pedagogical approach, because the children would otherwise not succeed as well if instruction were in Azeri or Russian.

A substantial portion of the students in the schools we visited have teachers who represent the minority population. Our general impression was that the teachers and pupils were proud to belong to their minority population, but that they took for granted there was essentially no place in the formal curriculum for the ethnic group to receive attention. We have seen that the curriculum and textbooks make little provision for a discussion of the culture and how it is to be distinguished from other groups in the Republic.

Our queries as to provisions that are made to deal with the minority culture were usually met with perplexed looks. Azerbaijani educators made it clear that they followed the curriculum as it was issued by the Ministry of Education. There did not appear to be strict sanctions against teaching about the minority culture; rather, the attitude among teachers was more that it was their professional obligation to follow the guidelines laid down by the Ministry.

In our classroom visits, we found references to local conditions, places, and events, but they were not tied to any cultural conditions of the minority population. One math teacher, for example, in an exercise on geometric designs, made reference to streets in the town and how they were laid out. In Kuba, the only

incident we observed relating to Lezghian conditions was made by one teacher who was not Lezghian; she chided the children who misbehaved on one occasion that their behavior did not measure up to the expectations she had of Lezghians.

We did inquire as to the attitude minority members have about themselves, and it was evident that they took great pride in who they were. By way of contrast, in talking with teachers who were not members of the minority group, they expressed some shock when we asked if they were part of that minority, as if such an identity were an insult to them. How do minority members develop such a sense of pride? The local families and community apparently provide sufficient support and reinforcement for the young people, although they have taken efforts to meld the school and community. For example, students of the upper grades of the Udin middle school take Udin language weekly for 2-4 hours planned by the National Curriculum as an “elective” course. At the same time there are a number of choices children can make as part of extra-curricular activities run by all three schools in the village. These include “Study of Udin Customs”, “Udin Songs”, and “Udin drama” in the Udin language. There are additional materials available to the general public.

In Iran, teachers were unified in their sentiments that a potential advantage of the educational system being highly centralized and the educational programs being highly uniform is that it provides

a more equal opportunity. A growing number of Iranian minorities are moving to Tehran in an attempt to better their lot in life. Teachers complained that even though programs throughout the country look the same as the programs in Tehran, there are better facilities and a wider number of schools that are designed to provide education at a single level, such as pre-primary schools, high schools and pre-university schools.

Teachers recognized that the ethnic minority groups have great difficulty with Farsi, and the people who live in villages are not familiar with it at all. As a result this uniform education tends to disadvantage them. It is unreasonable to insist on a uniform education in terms of curriculum and textbooks, because the ethnic minorities are always at a disadvantage. The situation is so regulated that many children are embarrassed to speak because they are laughed at by Farsi-speaking children, who make fun of their poor language skills and dialect.

Classroom participation is also affected by language requirements. According to our observations and interviews with teachers, Azerbaijani children did not participate as actively as Farsi-speaking children in class discussions and they even failed to be as involved in science experiments and demonstrations. This difficulty is especially acute in the early years of schooling. By the end of secondary school, Azeri-speaking young people appear to have become quite competitive with Farsi-speaking youth.

All classes and lessons are related to the whole country and books and lessons never discuss local problems. Teachers invariably hold to the curriculum and textbooks as they are distributed by Tehran. We might note that research projects even at the university in Tabriz are expected to focus on the whole country and are not expected to focus on local and ethnic problems. Researchers do not even acknowledge their understanding of differences in the country as a whole.

We inquired of the teachers about their attitudes about being Iranian and Azerbaijani and Kurdish. Almost all of them expressed some pride in being both, although there appears to be an age factor in the equation. That is, younger teachers appear to have a greater sense of pride in being Iranian than the older teachers. However, none of the teachers expressed outright hostility toward being Iranian, even though they were uniformly proud to be Azerbaijani or Kurdish. An important element in the development of Azerbaijanis concerning their self-identity is the presence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In the past they had no place with which they could easily identify, but in the last twelve years they have had close relationships with a country with which they can identify and relate to.

In spite of this, the nationalistic educational mission of Iran has had a noticeable effect on the minority people. They constitute an important part of Iran and their identity is strongly with the

country. Significantly, Azerbaijanis in Iran are not visible within the radical political movements of the day. We found some educators who said they were waiting in the wings until the right time, but others clearly were not interested in radical activities. However, it is less clear how they are able to maintain such a strong sense of personal identity as Azerbaijanis.

#### THE CHALLENGE OF CURRENT MINORITY EDUCATION POLICIES

The school in Azerbaijan and Iran is a nationalizing institution. That is, the school and education are seen as prime agents for developing national consciousness and safeguarding national unity. In Azerbaijan, the focus on national unity is obviously necessitated by the fact that Azerbaijan only recently became an independent, autonomous nation state. Prior to the 1800s it consisted of a set of small Khanates, but then was brought under the umbrella of Russia in 1828. In 1920 it became a part of the Soviet Union. Independence is now only a dozen years old. There is a natural interest on the part of the state to forge a sense of being Azerbaijani. According to the Minister of Education, Misir Mardanov, a primary agent to accomplish this task is the school.

There is an additional explanation for the focus in the schools on helping young people become Azerbaijani. The first public schools

in the country were established by the Soviet Union about 1920. Consequently, the only public schools Azerbaijan has known are Soviet Schools, which were consciously and deliberately oriented toward the making of the "Soviet person." Azerbaijanis have no other models of schooling in their history on which to build, so they clearly have emulated the Soviet model by emphasizing the national model and neglecting local and ethnic issues.

Finally, the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis, which has resulted in the occupation of approximately 20 percent of Azerbaijan territory by Armenians, emphasizes the potential tragedy of severe ethnic divisions within a country. State leaders are doing everything in their power to prevent such divisions from leading to declarations of secession.

Azerbaijan takes pride in its multi-ethnic tradition, and even though its multi-ethnic population has waned in the last half century in terms of numbers, the people of Azerbaijan continue to see themselves as multi-ethnic. The nationalist focus of its schools might one day be brought into harmony with that perspective and one day recognize that its strength lies in its multiculturalism to the point that the schools focus their mainstream programs of instruction on this historical legacy.

In Iran, the focus on national unity is more acute. The mainstream Farsi population is barely dominant in terms of numbers. And the two major minority groups in the country, Azerbaijanis and Kurds,

pose a threat to break away from Iran, unless a sense of nationalism is constantly instilled in them. The charge of the schools is to give all citizens of Iran a similar schooling which gives the state subjects a similar sense of cultural heritage, history, and a common language. Finally, similar schools are intended to build a sense of patriotism and devotion to the country.

The policies of a nation state are only realized if fully implemented, and one aspect of our project was to determine if national policies played themselves out in the schools. The answer to this issue is simple and clear. In both Azerbaijan and Iran all of the teachers we interviewed and the schools we visited were dedicated to the national curriculum and instruction according to the textbooks. They maintained that they held to the program of the school and did not deviate in any way from it. There were clear differences in Azerbaijan and Iran in the reasons why teachers held to the mandated program of studies.

In Azerbaijan, teachers had learned from their own schooling and from their teacher training that it was their professional responsibility to adhere strictly to the curriculum and the content of the textbooks. They had learned their responsibilities well, and did not question doing so.

In Iran, teachers also felt a professional obligation to teach according to the national program of studies. They saw themselves as dedicated professionals, who were interested in the welfare and

growth of their pupils. However, teachers representing minority populations also indicated that their dedication to the state program was dictated not only by a professional responsibility but by a clear threat that if they did not they would suffer serious consequences and even lose their jobs. They felt a greater sense of state oversight and control than was the case in Azerbaijan. One consequence of such strict oversight is that teachers tend to become mechanical in what they do. They forget how to exercise their creative abilities and take students off in wonderful and wondrous directions not anticipated by the program.

There is consistency between central policy and practice in the field. Of course, this consistency is tempered by the use of the mother tongue in the schools, when it appeared appropriate to help the pupils better learn the content, but this was always in the context of wanting to communicate the national curriculum and textbook content more adequately, rather than try to instill a greater sense of appreciation for the local language and culture. Apparently, teachers in both Azerbaijan and Iran have learned the intended lessons of their own schooling well. They are not inclined to object to the school as a unifying and nationalizing instrument. And we sense that that the policies of both countries are working, in that ethnic minority groups are being drawn into greater participation and identity with the national culture. In this regard, the policies may be seen as a success.

However, success does not come without severe costs. We don't intend to begin an account of human rights violations rendered against those who object to the national policies. The autonomy of any state is difficult to challenge. We think Azerbaijan has the easier task. It already recognizes the pedagogical advantage of instruction in the mother tongue for the very young in its schools. The next step ought to be quite easy – building into the curriculum a way for minority groups to see themselves as a vital and integral part of the Azerbaijan nation. Iran remains so insecure in its nationalistic aims that it may find it necessary to continue to stress unity to the complete exclusion of diversity, but one day it must begin to forge a school system based on the strength of diversity as well as unity.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

We wish to make a number of specific recommendations to policy makers.

### **Azerbaijan:**

- We encourage the Azerbaijan ministries responsible for extra-curricular programs that enhance the cultural awareness of minority students, to support and develop them.

- Minority languages currently taught only in primary school ought to be taught in secondary school as well, and textbooks for secondary school instruction of minority languages developed.
- It would be necessary to provide appropriate higher education studies to prepare teachers to teach minority languages in secondary school.
- Textbooks prepared for minority languages are presently of much poorer quality than other textbooks published by the Ministry of Education. They ought to be made much more attractive and useful for young children.

IRAN:

- Schools where Azerbaijani and Kurdish children dominate the school population ought to provide language instruction at the primary school level.
- Textbooks for the teaching of minority group language instruction ought to be developed.
- Prospective primary school teachers ought to receive instruction that will assist them in teaching the minority language.

We would make some general policy observations:

- Current minority educational programs in Azerbaijan target children of specific minority groups and teach them their language and culture. The next step ought to be taken, to teach all Azerbaijani children about the rich multicultural environment in which they live and the important contribution all cultures make to Azerbaijan.
- The international community could benefit from insights about the consistency of the educational program of both Azerbaijan and Iran in its language of instruction, curriculum, language development, and teacher preparation program.

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# Appendix 1



SALZBURG SEMINAR

## Visiting Advisors Program

Summary Report of the Visit to  
Khazar University, Baku, Azerbaijan  
April 25–30, 2006

### Team Members:

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Khazar University (hereafter referred to as “KU” or “the University,” for more information see [www.khazar.org](http://www.khazar.org)) invited a Visiting Advisors Program (VAP) Team from the Salzburg Seminar to review an array of organizational issues selected by the university leadership. Key interests for the VAP site visit to KU in April 2006 included academic structure and governance; university administration and finance; and institutional strategies for sustainability, focused especially on a possible long-term affiliation between KU and the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC), an autonomous internationally-funded social science and business research institution located in Baku and run by the Eurasia Foundation ([www.crrc.az](http://www.crrc.az)).

Khazar University, founded in 1990–1991, and fully accredited by 1997 and then by 2002, has emerged as one of the leading private universities in Azerbaijan and has succeeded in establishing a well-deserved reputation for integrity, academic rigor, and sustained attention to international standards in both teaching and research. Since its origins and under the leadership of founder and Chancellor Hamlet Isaxanli, KU has aspired to create a comprehensive arts and sciences university. KU also aspires to become a model for “best practices” in undergraduate and especially graduate education, in research practices and knowledge management, and in international cooperation. The

current structure of KU includes six major academic units: a School of Architecture, Engineering and Applied Science; a School of Economics and Management; a School of Humanities and Social Sciences; a School of Law; a School of Medicine, Dentistry and Public Health; and a School of Education. KU also encompasses a number of specialized research institutes, as detailed below, and a general education school sponsored by the School of Education, "Dunya" (World) that is also intended as a model or experimental site. Instruction at KU is conducted primarily in English, with additional instruction and publications in Azeri and Russian. In fact, a key aspect of KU's mission has been to recover and sustain a humanistic and progressive conception of the Azeri national heritage while simultaneously working to embrace recent international innovations and methodologies from across the academic disciplines.

Nonetheless, for all of its accomplishments since 1991, KU clearly now faces some serious challenges as it works to consolidate its successes; to fill in the clear gaps that exist in its physical infrastructure, curriculum, and professional staffing; to establish functional autonomy vis-à-vis state structures and the Ministry of Education, especially regarding admissions policies; and most importantly to secure the University's long-term financial sustainability and to continue to improve its administrative capacity, faculty development policies, and student services. Continued progress in all of these areas, and a coherent and

consistent strategy to improve governance, management, and finance are urgently needed if KU is to fulfill its stated mission of excellence and innovation across the arts and sciences as well as to achieve long-term sustainability.

The VAP Team conducted its site visit through three working groups, as follows:

## Working Group A: Academic Structure and Governance

Chair: Mahammad Nuriyev, Professor and Vice Chancellor

Co-Chair: Tapio Markkanen

Dr. Rafiq Ahmadov, Dean, School of Architecture, Engineering  
and Applied Sciences

Dr. Jabir Khalilov, Dean, School of Law

Dr. Nigar Bagirova, Dean, School of Medicine, Dentistry and  
Public Health

PhD student Hafiz Aliyev, Coordinator for International Relations

Dr. Isakhan Isaxanli, Director, Admission Office, Assistant to the  
President

Dr. Eldar Shakhgaldiyev, Chair, English Language Department

Rauf Shahbazov, Program Coordinator, School of Medicine,  
Dentistry and Public Health

Tatyana Zaytseva, Director of Library Information Center

Sabina Kerimova, Coordinator, School of Education

Marufa Madatova, Deputy Director “Dunya” School

Lala Huseynly, Assistant to Dean, School of Law

## Working Group B: University Administration and Finance

Chair: Dr. Fuat Rasulov, Director, Center for Economic and Business Research and Education (CEBRE)

Co-Chair: Josef Hochgerner

Karim Karimov, Chief Accountant

Mahammad Nuriyev, Professor and Vice Chancellor

Nagi Bayramli, Head, Registration and Record Office

Working Group C: Sustaining the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC) Program in Azerbaijan

Chair: Hamlet Isaxanli, Founder and Chancellor

Co-Chair: Mark S. Johnson

Michael Choe, Acting Director and CRRC Development and Outreach Coordinator

Sabina Rustamova, Program Manager, CRRC

Muhammad Nuriyev, Professor and Vice Chancellor

The leadership of KU prepared documentation for the VAP Team in advance, although documents regarding internal budget and personnel processes were minimal, perhaps reflecting the seemingly informal or ad-hoc nature of many of those processes, as

analyzed below. All of the issues under review were then examined in detail during the site visit in a series of working meetings and seminars. The KU leadership, faculty and staff were exceptionally gracious in their engagement with, and support of, the Team during its visit to Baku, and we wish to extend our heartfelt thanks especially to Chancellor Isaxanli and Vice Chancellor Nuriyev for their hospitality. We also hasten to clarify that this report does not constitute a formal evaluation, but only a series of general impressions and recommendations offered in the collegial spirit of the VAP.

## 2.0 OBSERVATIONS AND PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

To summarize our observations as a VAP Team and the conclusions of this report, KU has achieved remarkable successes over the last fifteen years, and is poised to emerge as a model for higher education, both public and private, throughout Azerbaijan and the southern Caucasus. In fact, given the widespread reputation for corruption and nepotism in many state universities across the region, along with ongoing turmoil in the private higher education sector and recent state policy changes as detailed below, KU stands in a unique position to emerge as the most vital and viable university in Azerbaijan that truly upholds international standards. If able to consolidate itself, KU is positioned to combine

what is best from the legacy of Soviet higher education, perhaps especially in mathematics and the sciences; together with what is best from the Azeri national heritage, perhaps especially in the arts, humanities, and Azerbaijani or regional studies; and to blend that together in a sustained and rigorous way with what is best from Western higher education, perhaps especially in the social sciences, economics and management, education, medicine, and legal studies. Of course, the foundation upon which all of that innovation must rely is an “everyday” or “invisible” excellence in university governance, management, and finance.

Because if KU is to fulfill its ambitious and potentially historically significant mission, then it is the consensus opinion of the VAP Team that serious measures must be taken with real urgency to improve internal governance and make it more transparent; to implement a sustained program to train and continually retrain university administrators; to improve and clarify budget procedures and prioritize a more sustained and professional development or fundraising campaign; to construct innovative mechanisms to continually assess and improve the quality of faculty teaching and student learning; and to continue to build partnerships with business interests, policymakers, and with both local and international communities. Such partnerships are vital not only to enrich KU’s teaching and research, but also and especially to foster improved internship, service learning, and career opportunities for current students and alumni. Of course,

such partnerships will also allow KU to call upon corporate partners and successful alumni to financially and professionally support the University and its students.

### **3.0 THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT OF AZERI HIGHER EDUCATION**

Khazar (or “Caspian”) University was founded in 1990-1991 (initially as the English Language Azerbaijan University), and has emerged as one of the leading private universities in Azerbaijan, with a reputation for being free of corruption and maintaining consistently high academic standards, and currently enrolls about 1,600 students. As throughout the former Soviet Union, higher education in Azerbaijan since independence in 1991 has been characterized by contradictory trends. On the one hand, the sector has witnessed a rapid expansion in the number of institutions legally organized as universities (including many former technical and other specialized institutes that were, in some cases nominally, upgraded or renamed as universities), as well as the emergence of private institutions, especially around the fields of economics, business, and law. On the other hand, as is also true throughout the former Soviet Union, the post-Soviet educational systems have been marked by endemic corruption, and the rapid expansion in the number of universities and students enrolled in higher education has clearly been achieved to some degree at the expense of academic rigor and quality, as well as of systemic “coherence”

and mobility within higher education. While much progress has clearly been made in curricular change, instructional innovation, and the introduction of new information technologies, acute problems remain in faculty and staff development, in university management, in integrity and transparency within the sector, and especially around the neglected issues of student assessment, institutional research, and strategic planning. While ambitious World Bank and other international assistance programs have been launched that include higher education, it remains unclear whether the endemic corruption in the sector can be mitigated, whether the chronic inertia and lack of research capacity within the Ministry of Education can be overcome, and whether the professional will exists to embrace systemic change, especially in the state universities. Finally, while Azerbaijan joined the Bologna Process of European higher education integration in 2005, and at least rhetorically committed to the adoption of a two-cycle, credit-based system and alignment with European standards, it remains unclear whether either the Ministry or the leaders of the state universities are fully willing to embrace the transparency and comprehensive reform that such integration would require.

All of this is directly relevant to the status and mission of KU because it is the emerging higher education “market” within which KU operates and in which it must establish its comparative advantage, as well as the policy environment in which KU aspires to lead as a model for “best practices” in higher education. It is also

worth noting that two other private universities in Baku, Azerbaijan International University and the Independent Azerbaijan University, have recently been warned to close down by state authorities amid allegations of corruption and the “illegal” admission of students without the approval of the State Commission on Student Admissions (SCSA); and that another private rival to KU, Western University, looking for quality education has also struggled against allegations of corruption and low academic standards. In fact, KU’s only real competitor in the private sector with a comparable reputation for integrity and academic quality is the Turkish-funded Qafqaz (or “Caucasus”) University, which currently enrolls approximately 2,200 students ([www.qafqaz.edu.az](http://www.qafqaz.edu.az)), although Qafqaz’s mission is clearly distinctive in that it is oriented towards Turkish Islam and Turkish professional networks, and serves a more regional student population. Unfortunately, Qafqaz is also now, at least potentially, at risk in light of the May 2006 decision by collegium of Ministry of Education to close all affiliates of foreign-based higher education institutions, a move presumably targeted especially at Russian-sponsored (and often narrowly commercial) institutions.

Thus, given the chronic problems that persist in the state universities and the ongoing turmoil around private higher education in Azerbaijan, the unique role that KU can play in providing a model of professional integrity, transparency, academic rigor, and international curricular and instructional standards will only

become more important. However, it is also clear that the informality that often seems to characterize many governance and management procedures at KU will have to be rigorously analyzed and made more professional, with greater procedural regularity and transparency established throughout, if KU is to fulfill that extraordinary potential, and be in a position to truly make the most of Azerbaijan's entry into the Bologna Process and the other major policy changes that will inevitably come to Azeri higher education.

#### **4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

Again, it must be reiterated that this report does not constitute a formal evaluation but merely an advisory report, and that the recommendations that follow should be reviewed critically by the KU leadership as well as by key faculty and student interest groups with an eye to adapting and implementing only those suggestions that seem realistic and necessary within the institutional culture and evolving mission of KU. All members of the VAP Team were exceptionally impressed by what seemed to be a very high level of professional morale and institutional pride at KU, and that spirit and commitment to the institution can be called upon to help negotiate the potentially significant changes that will be required to successfully consolidate new policies and procedures for university governance, management, and finance.

While some passing comments are included below about academic issues and relations between departments and disciplines, such curricular issues were not the focus of the VAP site visit. There are, of course, legitimate and serious questions that must be asked about the larger mission and overall curriculum of the University. To look at all of this more critically, has KU attempted too much too fast? Has it pushed ahead into the creation of expensive and complex new programs in the technical sciences, medicine, and engineering which require a huge physical infrastructure, laboratory equipment, and computer resources, or the professional and paraprofessional staff needed to sustain such programs? While KU's mission of becoming a modern and fully comprehensive arts and sciences university is certainly admirable, how coherent and transparent are its internal processes for making the difficult choices that must inevitably be made between its six schools, or for deciding how the University will prioritize its scarce resources? How can the University best manage its relationship with the state authorities and the SCSA and especially the fact that it does not control its own admissions process? Should excellence in undergraduate education be focused on initially with graduate research and training to follow once the undergraduate core is well established? Or should a few key graduate programs be cultivated intensively in order to provide new faculty for the undergraduate program, to generate income through contracted research, and to cultivate relationships with business interests, international

donors, and government patrons within Azerbaijan? Of course, such decisions are ultimately and appropriately the responsibility of the University and its internal interest groups, and this report thus focuses only on possible new approaches to internal governance, management and finance that might better guide and support KU's institutional development regardless of the specific strategies that emerge from those internal decision-making processes. To summarize, while the informal and often highly personal nature of many of these processes have worked well to date, these procedures must become more professional and transparent if KU is to consolidate its gains, and to engage in the kind of serious fundraising and strategic planning that is now required to face both the challenges and the very real opportunities that lie ahead.

#### **4.1 Accountability and Transparency in Internal Governance**

As noted, KU does have reasonably well-established routines for internal governance, which seem firmly centered on the personal leadership and authority of Chancellor Isaxanli, and especially on weekly but seemingly somewhat informal meetings of an "inner circle" of decision makers, a group of about six or eight that includes Vice Chancellor Nuriyev and some or all of the deans of the six academic units. The precise functions of the larger University Council, a group of about thirty five, seem a bit undefined, and those meetings could perhaps be made more

regular, with regularly scheduled meetings open to the university community, an agenda that is distributed in advance, and more precisely delineated responsibilities. There are also two student groups, a student council (or *telebe meclisi*) for undergraduates and a council of graduate students (or *yukse telebe meclisi (sovet aspirantov?)*), and the president of the former is a member of the University Council. However, the precise role of student groups in decision-making also seems a bit undefined, and some students have complained in their responses to the annual written surveys that there are too few opportunities for them to participate in university governance in a serious and sustained way. In fact, such student participation is now integral to all of the reforms envisioned in the Bologna Process.

One area in which KU has truly innovated is in the creation of a Board of Trustees and Advisory Board, which was done initially only in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, with representatives from major Azeri and international corporations such as SOCAR, British Petroleum, AZEUROTEL, Halliburton, and others. In fact, this is the first functioning board of trustees at any university in Azerbaijan, public or private, and there are plans to introduce similar boards into the other schools of KU. However, in a relatively small institution, a more practical possibility might be to have one unitary Board of Trustees for the entire University, and to carefully delineate how its functions and responsibilities mesh with those of the University Council. Then, an array of six

Advisory Boards might be created that are oriented to the specific methodologies, needs, and professional networks of each of the six academic units. For example, those Advisory Boards might initiate and coordinate proposals as relevant to each school; the University Council could then act as a common forum to debate, prioritize resources, and establish relations between those programs and new initiatives; and then the Board of Trustees could have ultimate responsibility to approve major expenditures, rationalize investment priorities, and lead fundraising campaigns. In that regard, another key potential role for Trustees is to either “give or get,” in other words, to either donate financially themselves, or to ask their friends and professional colleagues for funds on behalf of the University.

Again, it must be stressed that it is the ultimate responsibility of the university leadership and its key internal constituency groups to make these kinds of decisions, but the larger point is that greater accountability and transparency in governance would serve several vitally important purposes. First, it would make both short-term planning and longer-term strategic planning more consensual, thereby ease tensions between the academic units and different constituency groups within KU, and add greater legitimacy to the allocation of scarce resources. Second, such regularity would raise the “comfort level” for both international and local donors, who might be more inclined to help finance specific campaigns or initiatives if they were assured that

mechanisms for accountability and transparency were in place to ensure that grants or donations are allocated as intended. Third, such mechanisms might overcome the tendency to operate from year-to-year on an ad-hoc basis, and create the flows of information and financial data within the University, and between KU and its external donors and partners, that could better inform long-term strategic planning. Finally, such governance policies would contrast ever more favorably with the often murky governance procedures, rumors of corruption, and nepotism that often seem to dominate the state universities, and that have severely compromised several major European projects (especially TACIS) and multilateral technical assistance projects (especially early World Bank efforts). In other words, KU could provide a model for the future of Azeri higher education not just in what it decides to do, but also, and perhaps more importantly, in how those decisions are reached and implemented within the University.

#### **4.2 External Relations with the SCSA and MOE**

Of course, greater accountability and transparency in internal governance might also provide greater leverage vis-à-vis key external actors, most notably the State Committee on Student Admissions (SCSA), the Ministry of Education (MOE), and the Cabinet of Ministers. A key obstacle to the future growth and functional autonomy for KU is its dependence on the SCSA and its

tight control of student admissions into each specific academic program and degree track, although it should be noted in that regard that each year since 2002 has seen a steady but controlled growth in admissions. Yet as VAP Team Member Josef Hochgerner stressed in his report during the site visit, it should be reiterated frequently to the state authorities that the “mobility of students and the autonomy of universities are indispensable obligations” for the Bologna Process, and that KU is uniquely positioned to model practices such as autonomous governance, a credit system, and quality assurance. Additionally, it could be argued that KU deserves, along with Qafqaz University, to be entitled to “Distinguished Status,” and given greater autonomy by the MOE to shape its own curriculum and management procedures. Another possibility might be to follow Qafqaz’s lead in working to secure an ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 9001-2000 Quality Management Certificate ([www.iso.ch](http://www.iso.ch)). By entering into such processes to embrace global standards for quality management and financial transparency, KU might not only generate skills and tools to improve its own internal procedures, but also have greater leverage and legitimacy vis-à-vis external decision makers, potential critics, and rivals from the state universities. Of course, all of this also suggests that it might be useful for KU and Qafqaz to overcome their institutional rivalry, and to work together to lobby on behalf of such policy innovations and the legal rights of private universities. Perhaps even more

constructively, in order to transcend what often seems to be an adversarial relationship with the MOE and the state universities, KU and Qafqaz might join together to share and help to demonstrate such policy innovations with the SCSA and other state agencies or ministries. In that regard, while tensions have persisted about the right of KU to issue its own diploma, a more practical strategy might be to continue to issue the state diploma (thus assuring graduates' entry into state university postgraduate programs and state employment), while lobbying for more autonomy in how to implement state academic standards, as well as more active participation in admissions into KU.

### **4.3 Management Training and Staff Development**

All of this points to the urgent need to also establish greater regularity, and to allocate real resources, to ongoing management training and staff development. Again, by Azeri standards KU has done exceptionally well in this regard, and publishes an annual *Staff Information Guidebook*, which lays out procedures for hiring, promotion, firing, pay, benefits, and the rights and responsibilities of employees. However, it also seems that many key administrative tasks at KU are done on a semi-voluntary basis by faculty and staff, presumably out of financial necessity. Yet such administrative tasks (for example running the career center, installing and maintaining ICT services, enriching distance learning, supervising student services, mentoring international stu-

dents, overseeing internships, running the budget office, ensuring compliance with grants and contracts, and ensuring accuracy in enrollments and student registration) are all serious professional jobs that require training, adequate pay, and continual retraining. Of course, such staffing and staff development is difficult and expensive, and yet these are precisely the “invisible” foundations upon which all else rests at a modern university, and without which research, teaching, and learning are simply impossible.

There are many different international models for this kind of management training and staff development, not only from various TACIS projects in Azerbaijan and the southern Caucasus, but also from organizations such as the European University Association (EUA, [www.eua.be](http://www.eua.be)), the Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, [www.oecd.org/edu/higher](http://www.oecd.org/edu/higher)), as well as from various US, British, and other universities. An interesting potential model for KU might also be a more targeted program such as the Faculty Development and Training (FDAT) program that was organized between Indiana University and the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) in Kyrgyzstan, in which exchanges and training focused not only on issues of curriculum and instruction for faculty but also on exchanges and training for key management staff and the improvement of their professional skills in budget

procedures, personnel policies, student registration, and information systems.

#### **4.4 Faculty Training and Professional Development**

Of course, management skills and staff training are only the foundations upon which the real work of the University rests, and in that regard sustained attention to faculty training and ongoing professional development are also vitally important. Clearly one of KU's greatest assets is the reputation of its faculty, although a key concern is that only 25 percent are full-time (on three to five-year contracts), with the remainder either drawn from other professional spheres or simultaneously employed at various state universities and academies out of financial necessity. In that regard, faculty salaries could be the focus of a special fundraising effort, and new procedures and policies put into place to cultivate faculty skills in research and teaching. For example, internal grant competitions could be held to allocate small grants to support faculty research, faculty-student collaborative research, course development, instructional innovation, and release time, provided that clear work plans are provided that show how those resources or that subsidized release time will be used to directly benefit the applicants' department or academic program. Such an internal "mini-grant" program could initially be modestly funded, could then be the focus of a targeted fundraising campaign or grant applications, and could also be used to "train" faculty in grant-

writing and research methodologies. Such a program could also include training to encourage KU faculty to apply more regularly and systematically for international research grants, fellowships, and exchange programs, as well as a special effort to systematically encourage the placement of Fulbright and other international or visiting faculty at KU. Furthermore, greater clarity and transparency regarding the hiring, promotion, and dismissal of faculty could be established and better publicized, especially if KU is to succeed in its desire to attract visiting or international faculty. Finally, KU could assist its faculty in systematic efforts to participate in large-scale or multi-national research projects, perhaps most notably through the Seventh Framework Program (FP7) of the European Community for research and technological development (2007-2013), and perhaps most notably around issues surrounding renewable energy and environmental sciences. Finally, there are several useful professional associations that draw together resources on these issues, such as the EUA ([www.eua.be](http://www.eua.be)); and the United States-based POD Network (Professional and Organizational Development in Higher Education, [www.podnetwork.org](http://www.podnetwork.org)).

#### **4.5 Internal Assessment, Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance**

Khazar has also been quite innovative in its use of internal assessment data, especially its per-semester student polls, and is also

relatively advanced in its collection of regular course evaluations. However, much more could be done, perhaps especially through KU's Center for Academic Quality Assurance, to systematically gather assessment data on the quality and techniques of faculty teaching as well as the nature and depth of student learning, and especially to train KU faculty and staff in the use of new survey methodologies and psychometrics. There are excellent models emerging in the United States, Europe, and even in Russia about how to use such assessment data to "close the loop" and to continually improve the quality of teaching and learning. In fact, this global "assessment movement" reflects the increased demand for efficiency and accountability in higher educational systems around the world. In the context of the Bologna Process, this has led to new collaborative mechanisms for "quality assurance" and transnational evaluation, especially through the EUA, the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA, [www.enqa.eu](http://www.enqa.eu)) in Helsinki, and the Transnational European Evaluation Project (TEEP). All of these efforts are also intended to cultivate the professional practice of peer review, as well as to strengthen management accountability and transparency by drawing faculty and student voices into the process of university reform.

There are also several excellent models for these processes in the United States, such as the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) out of the University of California at Los Angeles ([www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/cirp.html](http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/cirp.html)); the National Survey of

Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) out of Indiana University ([www.nsse.iub.edu/](http://www.nsse.iub.edu/)); and the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), sponsored by the RAND Corporation and the Council for Aid to Education ([www.cae.org](http://www.cae.org)). For example, the NSSE, FSSE and other related surveys are specifically designed to assess the extent to which faculty and students engage in effective educational practices, and to provide detailed data to assist and train faculty in how to improve their teaching and mentoring. In fact, the very act of responding to the surveys requires faculty and students to reflect on what they are putting into and getting out of their university experience. Finally, the availability of valid and objective assessment data will be of keen interest to the tuition-paying public, and could be incorporated into an array of new, more objective and relevant performance measures which would coincide, in European terms, with the emerging interest in “consumer protection.” Yet again, developing the skills and tools for sophisticated assessment and evaluation would be expensive, but could lead to collaborative research grants as well as generate vitally important data for KU’s own public relations and marketing, negotiations with state agencies, institutional research, and strategic planning.

Finally, it should also be noted that such assessment data on the student experience and the contours and depth of student learning could also generate information that would be invaluable to

improve student services, to enrich tutoring and the development of student study skills and time management, and to more fully and successfully engage students in university life. Such strategies and services could improve student retention and graduation rates, their academic success, KU's attractiveness for fee-paying international students, as well as alumni loyalty to KU.

#### **4.6 Budget Procedures, Fundraising and Development Strategies**

Of course, while such paid professional staff and increasingly complex techniques for governance and management are undeniably expensive, they should be considered as necessary investments in the "foundations" of any modern university. If KU truly does aspire to a leadership role, and to serve as a model for "best practices" in such areas, then it could apply for collaborative research and development grants to finance innovation in governance, management, and finance. Existing budget procedures at KU seem relatively simple and straightforward, perhaps because the bulk of the University's income is from student tuition, with only modest additional income streams from grants and services. The bulk of KU's expenses are in salary and scholarships, with continuously increasing annual expenses for infrastructure, community services, and technology.

However, it is also clear that KU has enormous financial potential and could undertake much more aggressive efforts to "market"

their comparative advantages, which include their reputation for honesty and ethical standards, the fact that most instruction is conducted in English, KU's relatively greater participation in international projects and exchanges, the University's reputation for critical thinking and creative teaching, as well as the leadership's very real dedication to cultivating a humanistic and progressive conception of Azeri national culture and identity. However, to realize the full financial potential of those "market" advantages, KU must aggressively invest significant resources in professional fund-raising, grant writing, and institutional development. When conceptualizing how to become this kind of "entrepreneurial" university, it must also be kept in mind that the essential idea is to generate new income streams for the institution as a whole, and not simply for individual faculty members or academic units in some narrowly proprietary or "commercial" way. Such leadership and focus might best be provided by a new Vice Rector or Vice Chancellor for Resources and Development, which would allow Chancellor Isaxanli and Vice Chancellor Nuriyev to focus on the core of the academic mission and faculty development.

An important first step might be to engage with an international accounting firm to conduct an independent audit of KU. For example, the American University of Central Asia (AUCA, at that time the American University of Kyrgyzstan or AUK) struggled for several years to improve its internal budget procedures, and then

contracted with Deloitte and Touche in 2000-2001 to conduct such an audit. The initial audit research uncovered some serious problems, which were corrected with the assistance of Deloitte and Touche and other international partners such as the Open Society Institute (OSI). The dramatic improvements in financial management and budget transparency that resulted then contributed directly to AUCA's successful campaign to create a \$15 million endowment for the University, with major contributions from OSI and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It is also worth noting that a key aspect of AUCA's endowment campaign was their stated goal to serve a regional mission as a model for university management as well as for excellence in undergraduate education.

While cultivating potential major donors for an endowment or capital campaign is critical, it is also vitally important for an institution like KU to demonstrate that it can develop viable revenue streams and income of its own. In this regard, it might consider a more aggressive effort to develop and market the Khazar University Press, not only for its own internal publication needs but for the broader educational market as well; and to expand its capacity and "services" in English language and other foreign language training. Another possibility might be for KU to "market" its own consulting services to other universities, both public and private, for example about how to innovate in curricular design, instructional methods, and university manage-

ment. Other possible entrepreneurial initiatives could be generated through more aggressive efforts to market the consulting and research “services” of units such as the Center for Economic and Business Research and Education (CEBRE), the Gender Studies Center, the Institute of Politics, the Khazar Legal Clinic, the Translation Studies Center, and the new Institute for Education Policy (IEP). Such efforts could not only generate revenue, but also provide “real world” research and study opportunities for faculty and students. Finally, KU might also undertake more aggressive efforts to recruit tuition-paying international students, provided of course that housing, mentoring, and additional language and other tutoring can also be provided to ensure that such international students succeed at KU. Such revenue streams, even if modest, can then be used to convince major donors that the university leadership has committed to strategies for institutional sustainability and financial viability, and possibly convince major donors to commit to an endowment or capital campaign, and not simply to provide day-to-day financial support.

Additional steps to improve KU’s finances and budget procedures might include hiring a professional chief financial officer (CFO); clarifying internal control and key accounts management; possibly hiring a full-time and professionally experienced fundraiser and grant-writer, as noted above; more intensive efforts to lobby together with other universities both public and private to exempt donations and grants from VAT taxes; and more systematic efforts

to cultivate philanthropic and corporate donations, perhaps linked to specific internships and programs. Stepping back from specific needs and programs, all of the recommendations in this report might also be better served not through a series of disconnected or temporary international partnerships, which often seem not to endure past the end of their grant funding, but through a possible new or permanent consortium of key university partners, with one or two partners carefully selected and cultivated in the United States, Europe, Turkey, and Russia.

#### **4.7 Partnerships with Business, Government and Community Groups**

As noted above, Khazar has done exceptionally innovative work in establishing new partnerships with business and corporate interests, especially around its Advisory Board for the School of Architecture, Engineering and Applied Sciences. Yet such efforts should be driven not only by financial necessity, or by the narrow needs of external or corporate partners, but developed as part of a coherent and university-wide strategy. Equally importantly, the University must develop a clear code of ethics to guide such partnerships, as well as clear guidelines on potential conflicts of interest and financial transparency to safeguard the integrity and centrality of the academic mission.

Of course, leading universities around the world are aggressively pursuing partnerships with business and industry for collaborative

research, employee training, and information technology, not only in order to generate funding but also to expand internships and career opportunities for students and alumni. KU possesses enormous potential for growth in this area, through all six of its academic units, and efforts should be made to accelerate the development of Advisory Boards for each school, precisely in order to cultivate links to business and other professional partners, to medical and public health agencies, to training program and agencies in the service professions such as social work and social pedagogy, and to teacher education institutions and with schools.

There is also significant untapped potential for KU in providing contract research and employee training to public and state agencies, as well as perhaps providing training in management, research, and survey methodologies to non-profit organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Vitaly important innovations in global education have emerged out of the service learning movement, which is now increasingly referred to as community-based learning and community-based research. In such courses, students simultaneously study economics while placed at a business, or study poverty or migration while simultaneously placed at a social service organization or non-profit that works with disadvantaged or migrant populations. Other examples include studying the sociology and psychology of domestic violence or women's issues in an academic course while placed at shelter or service agency, or studying translation and

linguistics while volunteering to provide translation services. Research has shown that such linkages and partnerships with community organizations can enrich student learning and deepen student engagement, but can also improve student retention and academic performance, as well as expand professional networks and career opportunities.

#### **4.8 Potential Partnership with the Caucasus Research Resource Center**

The final theme of the VAP site visit was to explore the possibility of an institutional partnership between KU and the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC), an autonomous policy research organization located in Baku. In fact, both KU and the CRRC seem to be moving forward reasonably well on parallel tracks, and there might be political value, at least in the short term, for both in remaining independent amid the rather volatile political and policy environment in Azerbaijan. There is, of course, also the critical issue of the longer-term financial sustainability of the CRRC once its primary donor, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, winds down its major grant support in two or three years. In other words, now would be a fruitful time to begin discussing expanded cooperation and then a possible formal institutional affiliation between KU and the CRRC. In such a relationship, KU would have much to offer: its broad base of academic programs across the humanities, social sciences, and into the life and physical

sciences, the latter especially in petroleum engineering and management. KU's strengths in medicine and dentistry could also be vitally important, which is linked to a network of affiliated clinics and hospitals around Baku, and has enormous potential if linked together with CRRC capacities into a broader public policy program around issues in demography, environmental studies, and public health.

The current acting leadership of the CRRC suggested a possible strategy of moving into corporate-funded marketing and other for-profit research, but the potential risks of such a move would be the difficulty of competing with the many businesses and consulting firms already providing such services in the Azeri market, as well as potentially fatally compromising the CRRC's reputation for scholarly objectivity and methodological rigor. What the CRRC and its staff could offer KU would be state-of-the-art capacity in social science research; real skills and experience in research management; advanced computer technologies and network capacity; advanced methodological training opportunities for faculty and especially for graduate students; and a network of relationships and contacts in the business and public policy communities. An ideal possible location for this formal institutional affiliation might be Khazar's downtown building, which would link the combined activities of KU and the CRRC directly into the heart of Baku's corporate, financial, and policy communities. Finally, a possible initial institutional link might be

between the CRRC and KU's Center for Economic and Business Research and Education (CEBRE), a semi-autonomous non-profit that would complement the CRRC's strengths in demography, sociology, and public policy.

## **5.0 FINAL THOUGHTS**

In conclusion, it was clear to all members of the VAP Team that Khazar University has made extraordinary progress in its goal of creating a modern, state-of-the-art university, and has achieved real successes in the face of significant financial obstacles, struggles over admissions and other policies, and occasionally threatening political obstruction. KU is also poised, should it be able to consolidate its governance, management, and finances, to become an example of "best practices" for all of Azeri higher education. This leadership role could be demonstrated in all areas, from curricular design and instructional innovation to institutional research and strategic planning.

More specifically, KU, possibly together with Qafqaz University, is uniquely positioned to lead the way into the Bologna Process, because Khazar and Qafqaz are clearly the two institutions in Azerbaijan that have made the most progress in modernizing their management, internationalizing their curriculum and instructional technologies, and leading the way into a student-centered credit system. One possible strategy for more constructive cooperation might be that Qafqaz leads the way into relations with Turkey and

Europe, and Khazar into relations with Europe, the United States, and through its strengths in regional and international studies, into the southern Caucasus, Russia, and Central Eurasia. Another possibility that was mentioned during the VAP site visit was to participate more directly in the “Regional Caspian Studies” MA degree project led by American University in Washington, DC, together with university partners in Georgia, Armenia, and Turkey. Furthermore, cooperation could be expanded with Georgia around its efforts to establish an independent agency for university accreditation, together with its US partner, the Academy for Educational Development (AED); or possibly with Russian partners in their efforts to establish a new system of student loans and tax-free university endowments or “resource capital;” or perhaps with the Aga Khan Humanities Program (AKHP) and other similar efforts in Central Asia. Such regional relationships could be the core of an expanded network of collaborative and institutional partnerships for KU, possibly even with selected units or departments of state universities such as Baku State University, and possibly with the Heydar Aliyev Foundation or other Azeri NGOs.

Finally, we would like to conclude by thanking the leadership, faculty, and students of Khazar University for their sustained engagement and hospitality during our visit to Baku, and to wish them the greatest possible success in their future endeavors. Because of the skills and dedication of its leadership, faculty, and students, KU has the potential to become the most innovative and successful

university in Azerbaijan, and to thereby not only secure its financial viability and institutional sustainability, but to also create a new paradigm for the future of Azeri higher education.

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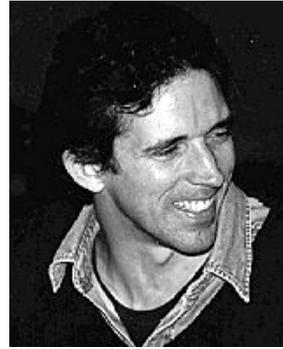
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Mark Johnson is associate professor of history and director of Russian and Eurasian Studies at Colorado College in Colorado Springs, where he teaches courses in history, the history of education, and comparative and international education. His recent projects and publications include "Trends in Secular Educational Development in Azerbaijan and Central Asia: Implications for Social Stability and Regional Security," for the National Bureau of Asian Research Analysis; "The Legacy of Russian and Soviet Education and the Shaping of Ethnic, Religious and National Identities in Central Asia," in *Challenges for Education in Central Asia*; and an assessment prepared for the U.S. Department of State in 2001-2002, *Creating a Regional Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Education: A Development Strategy for the American University of Kyrgyzstan (2002-2005)*. Dr. Johnson has also prepared policy analyses and evaluations for a variety of foundations and agencies, and is currently working to draw all of this work together into a book-length study, *Globalization and the Transformation of Russian and Eurasian Higher Education*. Dr. Johnson holds a B.A. from the University of



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Josef Hochgerner is founder and scientific manager of the Center for Social Innovation in Vienna, Austria and is also a visiting professor at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Vienna as well as



at numerous other Universities in Austria and abroad. He served as the secretary general of the International Forum on Work, Information Society and Employment (WISE) from 1998 to 2003 and from 2001 to 2005 as president of the Austrian Sociological Association. A specialist on issues of the information society, Dr. Hochgerner has in-depth knowledge of national and European policies on innovation, science, and technology development and also on issues such as employment, trends in business organization and eWork, Technology Assessment, and education and training. He has participated in a variety of European Union sponsored projects including the *Multilingual Urban Network for the Integration of City Planners and Involved Local Actors* (MUNICIPIA); *The European Charter for Telework* (DIPLOMAT); and the *Voluntary Industrial Code of Practice for global eWork* (VIP). Dr. Hochgerner was also highly active in the Austrian contributions to the European

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Tapio Markkanen has served as the secretary general of the Finnish Council of University Rectors in Helsinki since 1992. In this capacity he has been involved in both national and European policies of



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**Helene KAMENSKY, Austria**



Helene Kamensky is program director of the Salzburg Seminar, where she is responsible for the development and direction of academic programs on education and related issues. Before joining the Salzburg Seminar, Dr. Kamensky served as an adjunct professor of philosophy at the Institutes of Philosophy at the University of Salzburg and the University of Vienna. Previously, she was research fellow at the Institute of Scientific Theory at the Salzburg International Research Center. From 1985 to 1989, she was dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University in the Russian Federation, where she previously served as associate professor and senior lecturer in the department of philosophy. Dr. Kamensky's area of research interest is higher education policy and management. She holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from the Department of Logic and Epistemology at the Russian Academy of Sciences, which was authenticated by the University of Salzburg, Austria, in 1993.

## THE UNIVERSITIES PROJECT OF THE SALZBURG SEMINAR

Universities throughout the world are undergoing systemic changes in their governance, academic design, structure, and mission. From 1998 to 2003, the Salzburg Seminar's Universities Project focused on higher education reform in Central and East Europe, Russia, and the Newly Independent States as universities in these regions redefined their relationships with governments and try to become more integrated into the global intellectual community.

The Universities Project was a multi-year series of conferences and symposia convening senior representatives of higher education from the designated regions with their counterparts from North America and West Europe. Discussion in the Project's programs focused on the following themes:

- University Administration and Finance
- Academic Structure and Governance within the University
- Meeting Students' Needs, and the Role of Students in Institutional Affairs
- Technology in Higher Education
- The University and Civil Society

## **THE VISITING ADVISORS PROGRAM (VAP)**

The Salzburg Seminar launched this enhanced aspect of the Universities Project in the autumn of 1998. Under the VAP, teams of university presidents and higher education experts visit universities in Central and East Europe and Russia at the host institutions' request to assist in the process of institutional self-assessment and change. To date, seventy-six visits have been held at universities in Central and East Europe and in Russia. The addition of the Visiting Advisors Program brought to the Universities Project an applied aspect and served to enhance institutional and personal relationships begun in Salzburg.

## **THE RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM (RHEP)**

In 2003, in response to the need for continued engagement, the Salzburg Seminar and the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation initiated a five-year partnership (2003-2008) designed to promote the exchange of knowledge and best practices between the higher education leadership of the Russian Federation and their counterparts from North America, Western Europe and Central-Eastern Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States countries and Eurasia. The Russian Higher Education Program consists of two symposia per year, which take place in Salzburg and in the Russian Federation. Each symposium convenes

representatives of universities, higher education organizations, service organizations, governmental structures, and stakeholders. The Russian Higher Education Program centers around five main topics:

- Russian Program of Modernization in the Context of Global Education Reform
- Higher Education Governance Reform: Issues and Challenges
- Strengthening the Role of Russian Universities in Service to Society
- Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Sharing International Experience
- Higher Education and Research (Networks, Linkages, Best Practices)

The Salzburg Seminar acknowledges with gratitude the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which provided funding for the Universities Project, the Visiting Advisors Program, and the extension of the VAP in Russia, respectively.

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## Appendix 2

# Using Distance Learning Methods For Petroleum Industry Technical Training In Baku, Azerbaijan\*

David Maggiori

BP, Drilling and Completions, Learning and Development  
Coordinator

BP Exploration on behalf of its partners through the Azerbaijan International Oil Company, have been tasked with developing several world-class petroleum fields in the Caspian Sea. These fields contain billions of barrels of crude oil and trillions of cubic feet of natural gas. Activities incorporated into this development cover construction of offshore drilling and production facilities, pipelines, storage facilities and the drilling and completion of hundreds of wells.

As can be imagined, there is a great fiscal responsibility placed on BP to manage such a project. To do this effectively, many expatriate engineers, geoscientists and business support specialists have been brought into Azerbaijan to help deliver this project within budget and on time.

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\* Baku, 2004

A major role of these expatriate staff is to ensure that BP develops the workforce of the future to keep in line with aspirations of 90% nationalisation by the year 2013, as outlined in the Production Sharing Agreement. Organisational Capability Development is the term used for this and covers activities such as Recruitment, Training, Personal Development, Succession Planning etc.

Recently it was recognised that the source of staff needed to fulfil our requirements came mainly from recent graduates. With this in mind BP has focussed efforts on maximising the benefits from this resource pool. A rigorous recruitment process is in place, focussing on areas of interest such as English Language skills, technical awareness, mathematical skills etc., followed by technical and behavioural interviews.

Education in Azerbaijan, especially in the Petroleum sector, has historically been very strong. In fact Azerbaijan trained most of the Petroleum Professionals in the Former Soviet Union. However, in recent years since independence, funds for further education have been minimal especially in the Petroleum sector of tertiary education. BP has recognised there may be limitations to the foundations of the more technical disciplines and has introduced several measures designed to target some of these limitation for young employees in the fields of Drilling & Completion Engineering.

The following article attempts to describe how a new approach to Distance Learning is being offered to our Challenge and Early Development stage engineers in Baku.

### **BP - University Links**

At an early stage of this project the need for a strong, quality driven, Azeri university partner was paramount to the success of this project. Khazar University was chosen as it was perceived that it had strong leadership and an expansionary goal based on International Relations, International Standards and a willingness to deal with industry in less bureaucratic manner than most.

In fact Khazar University has identified quality assurance as a cornerstone of its development since its foundation in 1991. Programmes of co-operation with the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA), Georgia State University (Atlanta) and the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) have led Khazar to adopt the American accreditation procedure and indicators, including the internal evaluation system. Additionally the University has also studied the accreditation experiences of the Middle East Technical University, which is recently accredited by the European University Association (EUA) and the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET). The University has already conducted two internal evaluations and currently developing the third internal evaluation system.

This international exposure set Khazar University up to be a successful partner going forward with a programme of enhanced learning for BP Drilling & Completions Engineers.

### **Distance Learning**

Distance Learning is a requirement for the Challenge Pathway (an early development plan) and a decision was made in Baku to apply this with more rigor than solely utilising available Web/CD-rom based teaching methods. All too often these methods are not utilised or followed through, as it's easy for other distractions to influence the learner. This scheme involves class room training followed by 3 months of "Supported Problem Based Learning" culminating ( if desired ) in an official exam offering credits from a UK based University MSc. in Petroleum Engineering.

The proposal is to offer BP Petroleum related Engineers the opportunity to replace previously accepted training in specific discipline relevant material with similar material from a Distance Learning MSc but affiliated and accredited to Heriot Watt University in Scotland under the guidance of both Khazar and Heriot Watt for ongoing tuition of the engineers.

### **Issue**

The MSc. In Petroleum Engineering historically offered as a 1 year in-house course by Heriot Watt University covers many of the compulsory modules of training for the following disciplines:

- Drilling Engineering
- Completion Engineering
- Petroleum Engineering
- Reservoir Engineering

Modules covered by the post-graduate degree are as follows:

- Drilling Engineering
- Petroleum Geoscience
- Production Technology ( 2 modules )
- Reservoir Engineering ( 3 modules )
- Petroleum Log Analysis
- Introduction to Petroleum Economics
- A Group Field Development Project
- An individual Research Project

These modules cover at least 5 of the required learning activities within each of the Challenge Pathways. Heriot Watt, in conjunction with it's officially recognised Approved Support Centre ( Khazar University ) now offers a more sophisticated method of teaching within its Distance Learning MSc course to BP on a local Azerbaijan basis.

This approach can be encompassed into the working routine of the Challenger / Early Development engineer without having to attend specific training at the Heriot Watt University, so

complementing their on the job training experience. Assessment is an integral part of any Tertiary Institutes approach to learning and is offered through an end of module exam in Baku under the auspices of Heriot Watt University in conjunction with the British Council.

However, for the Challenger, once embedded into a working team, assessment of training is not a normal part of learning. In fact for a drilling engineer, the only assessed part of training, on an on-going basis, is the Well Control examination, required every 2 years. Many modules of training are offered and courses attended without BP being fully aware of levels of understanding and potential competency following this training.

This MSc. method offers the opportunity for young engineers to commence their learning within BP via on-the-job training in combination with a University approach to assessed learning which delivers not only the assurance of learning to BP management but could lead to the attainment of a Western accredited MSc. within the early years of employment with BP (the remainder of modules will be supported by BP, but completed following Challenge Graduation - to be explained later in this document).

## **Feature**

Heriot Watt University has recently developed a Problem Based

approach to MSc. in Petroleum Engineering for Distance Learners. The format under trial for BP Azerbaijan is as follows:

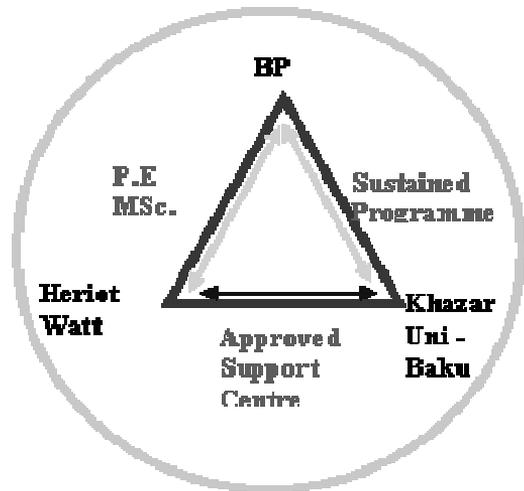
- A 1 week course of lectures given by a Heriot Watt lecturer in Baku
- Full Module course notes for each engineer.
- 6 sets of Challenge exercises to be completed in teams and assessed through a Web Board linked to a Heriot Watt Tutor in the UK.
- Heriot Watt module exam in Baku.

This approach offers more intensive education in the given module while assessing the student's understanding of the subject matter through the Challenges and the end of module exam. The students need to work as a team during the Challenge period, effectively networking and communicating approaches focussing on the delivery of the required material. Engineers take turns submitting the required information so that communication with Heriot Watt is spread amongst the team.

The following is an example of the Challenge Requests and a Mind Map that are utilised to encourage the engineers to think about all associated processes, equipment and calculations that may go into a given topic of enquiry:

## Benefit

Benefits to the engineers are obvious as described above. However, another benefit comes with the link between BP, Heriot Watt University and Khazar University (Baku). Given the mainly narrow focus and theoretical nature of many of the tertiary



education courses BP, as described previously, wanted to create closer ties with a chosen university to ensure we access students with a more rounded educational background. Khazar was chosen to complete this triangular link for several reasons mentioned below:

- A well managed University
- Has introduced western standard curriculum
- Teaches all subjects in English
- Has an Petroleum Engineering & Business undergraduate and MSc. programmes currently running.
- Has a managed Quality Assurance Programme for all University Administration & Curriculum Management.

This University is 13 years old and still in an expansion mode. The Rector - Hamlet Isaxanli - is recognised within the country and internationally as a forward thinker and is open to such opportunities.

The ultimate goal of this triangular relationship is to utilise the Heriot Watt curriculum with lectures and ongoing tutorial support provided, at a much cheaper cost, by Khazar lecturers. Exams will still be organised and marked by Heriot Watt University and award will be through the same institute.

The current status of this project is that BP has two contracts with the aforementioned educational institutes. BP - Heriot Watt for provision of initial Lectures, Web-board Tutorials and MSc. Module Training Material. BP - Khazar for provision of Tutor Support via the Web-board and face to face with the Baku based engineers and additionally BP currently pays for expenses for a two-week train the trainer experience for those Khazar Lecturers chosen to support the programme.

It is envisaged that sustainable delivery of this educational method will be reached in 2005 where Khazar lecturers will take over the delivery of the Baku based Lectures and the Web-board tutorials, while Heriot Watt will continue to provide the training materials and exams, with a quality assurance overseeing role to ensure that this Distance Delivered MSc. continues with the same quality as it is delivered in the UK.

## **Proof of Success**

10 BP Drilling Engineers have undertaken 3 modules of this MSc. with good results from the assessment exams. Most feel pretty upbeat about their performance. Within 3 years we hope to see the first BP - Heriot Watt - Khazar MSc. degree awarded to a BP engineer. Additionally we hope to see positive influence from this process in a continually modernising degree in Petroleum Engineering at Khazar University.

BP is currently entering into a relationship that should see up to 20 Petroleum Engineering scholarships at Khazar University linked to a continually improving educational process, which up to now they have proven highly achievable.

## **Scholarship Programme**

Following on from the success of this trilateral relationship, BP has decided to utilise Khazar University in the first true Industry Sponsored Scholarship Programme in Azerbaijan. BP will pay for up to 16 undergraduate Petroleum Engineering Scholarships per annum. Khazar will take the role of administrator of the monies and deliverer of a high level education programme. Khazar will also find the top performers in Azerbaijan-wide high schools and jointly we will enter into an initial assessment programme prior to choosing the successful candidates. Through Khazar's proven

approach to Quality Control, a method of performance management will be developed for all parties involved to ensure the success of this programme going forward.

### **Additional Khazar University - Industry Links**

The university has been a pioneer in Azerbaijan in prioritising the nourishing of relations with industries as an integral part of its development. These help the university to uphold the quality of its programs, faculty, support services and students.

The Centre for Economic and Business Education is intended to support Khazar University in developing relations with industries. The Centre periodically conducts various training seminars and workshops in Economics, Finance, Marketing, Small Business and alternative disciplines, for small and medium entrepreneurs in Baku and other regions of the country.

In October 2003, the School of Economics and Management at Khazar University and the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER) under the auspices of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (Japan) launched the project "Corporate Governance in Azerbaijan." The project sets a wide range of goals and purposes, such as: to study the situation before and changes after privatisation in a system or corporate management and objectives of managers in new settings; to compare efficiency of state and private governance at enterprise; to analyse ownership principles

and forms; to analyse development of corporate governance; to study the experience of public enterprise management; to study the principles and methods of the public entrepreneurship.

As a result of this joint research project Khazar University and MIER undertook to prepare recommendations on improvement of management for midsize and large businesses and government entities in Azerbaijan. The project will contribute to the strengthening of relations between Azerbaijan, Malaysia and Japan and promote development of corporate governance in Azerbaijan.