

Historical Development of Azeri Education System and the Effects of the Private Azerbaijani-Turkish Schools

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Abstract *The foundation of Azerbaijan education system laid down thousand years ago. Azerbaijani Education System has taken shape by various elements until it comes to its today's case. One of these significant elements is the private Azerbaijan-Turkish (Gulen-inspired) schools. These schools have a major role on the passing from the Russian Traditional school education to modern one. These schools have positively affected the Azerbaijan culture, the economy and the policy by their outcomes in last 19 years. The students they raised have come to important classes in community, both inside outside of the country. By this way the positive effects of these schools have increased day by day. The private Azerbaijan-Turkish (Gulen-inspired) Schools have contributed to development of Azerbaijani education system. As a result they have formed a model for education organization and schools model of modern world.*

Keywords: *Azerbaijan, education system, Turkish schools*

Introduction: History of Azerbaijan Education System Development

Azerbaijan education system laid down thousand years ago. It has been taken shape by different elements until it becomes like today's case. One of these significant positive elements is, clearly, Private Foreigner Schools. It has been touched at the in details.

According to Azerbaijan history, the education system of country originated in III century B.C., and the first educational system was found during VIII century. As it is know that the modern education system of Azerbaijan includes of three chronological periods: the first system being from 1918 to 1920, and the next period from 1920 to 1990 forced by the Soviet Union, and the present education system maintained since country became self-governing from the Soviet Union in 1991.

According to Dr. Jafar Jafarov , Rector of Azerbaijan Tourism Institution, after the end of the Soviet Union, in all post-soviet countries there launched processes directed to generate the origin for independence in all the parts of the social life and beginning it by reason of the modern world standards. One of the most vital duties for them was to get rid of old educational structure, modernize it to new socio-economic circumstances and combine into developed worldwide standards.

As it is a seen that in collapse of socialist socio-economic systems, the establishment of the basis of the country's education in a new socio-economic and political environment turned into one of the critical problems of today. Researches began that era changed country's direction to the modern world standards, counting integration to Europe in educational field.

Main Problems of System During the Transition Period

- 1) Azerbaijan and Armenia war
- 2) Preparing new textbooks,
- 3) Lack of modern curriculum,
- 4) Training aids
- 5) Learning and reading materials with transition from Cyrillic to Latin Scripts. Formation of new economic relations
- 6) Limited financial resources

Minister's Suggestions for the Trouble

The ministry of education shares his ideas about overcoming the current problem of education with these words: *I wish we had private high schools in Azerbaijan to compete with the public high schools. If Azerbaijan wants to move ahead with its market economy and integrate itself into the world economy, it needs more private schools. When the government sees that talented students choose to attend private schools, it will increase the quality of its public schools.*

He continues his speech with the followings: *For example, there are many Turkish schools in Azerbaijan, and the level of education in those schools is very high. Graduates from Turkish schools are accepted in many different universities.*

As it has been seen, "Private Turkish Schools" are always on the table as a good alternative to make reform on the education system of Azerbaijan. During last decades, Azerbaijan receives support from various companies and international humanitarian organizations such as UNICEF, EXXON, and BP Amoco as well. It means that country is seeking solutions for the reform at all times.

Why do we Work on Mainly Secondary Education?

As it is known that general secondary education is the largest portion of the Azerbaijan education system in terms of coverage and the education reform in Azerbaijan has been mainly concerned with the general secondary education. Therefore, this area is one the fields need to be studied.

Educational Reform Attempts of Country

According to state officials, there are three main objectives for educating Azerbaijani youth. Primarily, Azerbaijani students need to be taught the Azeri language and their own country's history and culture. Following this, they should gain knowledge of at least one foreign language. Then, they should be able to use modern technology, especially communicational devices.

It is a reality that Azerbaijan had succeeded praiseworthy progress in educational reform and developments in the face of many difficulties in the country. In contrast, Azerbaijan still, like any other countries including the most developed ones, meets troubles in education. However, the things have done till now are not good enough for reaching at educational goals.

Road Map of Reforms In the Last Decade

Educational reform program held by international organizations such as UNESCO and World Bank in 2003 follows three stages. The first stage preparing the reform plan has been completed. Many specialists have been sent to the U.S., UK, France, Japan, Turkey and central European countries to study the educational systems in those countries. For this stage, The World Bank provided \$295,000.

The second leg of reform would be carried out from 2000 to 2003. 20 schools had been chosen throughout the country to be completely repaired and re-equipped. Those schools' programs would be completely changed, and their teachers would join special training seminars. The World Bank had offered \$5 million credit to obtain this program underway. All of Azerbaijan's first-grade teachers have already attended two-week training seminars to learn about the new programs. Now they are implementing what they've learned in their classrooms.

One of the major problems with the schools' existing textbooks is that they are written in very difficult language. Most were written by academics and college professors who had never set foot inside an elementary classroom. Therefore, there is a necessary to touch this issue as well. The salaries of teachers

are so low right now; some of them are behaving in unethical ways, taking bribes. The system has just recently started a program to combat this. The last stage was analysis of the results of this trial period. However, it can be said that all of the attempts are moving so slowly.

Looking for New Ways to Improve the Quality of Education System

It should be known that taking part in this reform processes will not automatically resolve existing problems in high education in a short period. It charged those countries with the responsibility of solving many problems. And, let Azerbaijan faces the realities of their serious problems.

The other fact is that the potential staff of a state and its inadequate structures is not enough for solving this serious dilemma. It is a certainty that reforms being implemented in country's high education system wholly depend on the active participation of public society, especially high school teachers and students in the processes. However, not to waste huge time, experienced programs such as Turkish schools could be implemented as soon as possible. Since, they have been applied in this region in last 18 years.

Views of the Society for the Education Reforms

According to the survey done by Azerbaijan Tourism Institution, 70 per cent of the teachers and 74 per cent of the students declared that the level of education is not high for the present day and needs sweeping reforms. Only 14 per cent of the students agreed with the idea that the level of education meets today's demands. The hopeful point in this survey is that the majority of the secondary school community conceives the necessity of increasing the quality of education and is morally and psychologically ready for the reforms in this respect. This survey results are an obvious proof of the necessity of radical reforms and of the moral support for the educational reforms. According to the results of the survey, it becomes clear that either students or teachers are not satisfied with the speed of the reforms which are being carried out.

Basic Secondary School (From Grade 6 to 11) Problems:

According to some researches done by important international institutions, the most common problems of Azerbaijan Education system can be outlined like:

- 1) financial and technical basis of educational institution, which do not meet modern requirements;
- 2) outdated curriculum;
- 3) inadequate content of textbooks and training aides for modern standards;
- 4) poor financing;
- 5) lack of ICT provision;
- 6) inefficient staff preparation for labor market requirements.
- 7) insufficient financial and technical resource basis;
- 8) 76% of schools located in non-standard buildings;
- 9) 500 school buildings in unsatisfactory condition;
- 10) unavailable heating system in 85% of schools;
- 11) 74% of schools working in 2-3 shifts, 32.5 % students attending 2nd or 3rd shifts;
- 12) overload of schools by 3/4 times in comparison with the projected capacity;
- 13) high density of students in classrooms (40-50 students per classroom).
- 14) low rate of computers per student at 1 computer/1,047 students;
- 15) only 4.4 % of schools have access to internet;
- 16) shortage of teaching staff for different subjects in rural areas;
- 17) no foreign language teaching in 10.3 % of schools;

- 18) outdated system of assessment of students' learning achievement;
- 19) inadequate curriculum to meet modern requirements;
- 20) insufficient teachers' professional skills;
- 21) inefficient funding mechanisms.

Some Solutions Implemented for the Problems

Since then till now some works have been implemented to improve the quality of this level of education, such as:

- 1) construction of 205 new schools during the past 3 years;
- 2) new refurbishment and equipment of 23 schools for children in need of special care, by the initiative of the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva;
- 3) 143 schools to be constructed by September 2005;
- 4) modernization of 152 (83%) out of 182 textbook titles, new design of 52 teaching guides;
- 5) free provision of textbooks for I-XI grade students, by September 2005 (117 books and 8 million copies);
- 6) publication and provision of encyclopaedic dictionaries in Latin scripts (18 titles; 846,000 copies, total \$ 1.7 million);
- 7) publication and distribution of 50 books of classic and modern Azerbaijan and world literature in Latin scripts;
- 8) Azerbaijan's past performances in World Olympiads in chemistry, biology, and physics, informatics;
- 9) implementation of a 5-day academic week in pilot schools;
- 10) the government's acceptance of State Standards of general secondary education and basic study plan in 1999.

Things Should be Done:

In connection with future perspectives, the following key points are thought to be implemented:

- 1) development of a new curriculum;
- 2) development of new textbooks and reading materials;
- 3) materials;
- 4) creation of equal opportunities in general education and usage of innovative methods;
- 5) innovative methods;
- 6) change in the structure of general secondary education (5-4-2);
- 7) complete transition to a 5-day academic week in all schools;
- 8) development of new mechanism of in-service teacher training;
- 9) development of a new system of students' learning assessment;
- 10) improvement of the managerial mechanism;
- 11) provision of ICTs in schools up to the computer/student ratio of 1/33;
- 12) usage of new funding mechanism in schools;
- 13) improvement of financial and technical basis in schools (realization of the school construction programme) and provision of modern equipment;
- 14) reduction of the number of shifts and student density in classrooms.

The Followings are Expected from Reform Results:

- 1) improvement of the content of secondary professional education;
- 2) creation of the staff development system in accordance with labour market demand and

- development perspectives;
- 3) intensification of ICT;
 - 4) optimization of the network of secondary professional educational institutions;
 - 5) improvement of management and planning in educational institutions;
 - 6) establishment of marketing services in educational institutions.

Resource: UNESCO's report

Education Reforms in Azerbaijan: World Bank Project on Education Reform

As it is known, education has been reformed in Azerbaijan. The Education Reform Project was implemented in general secondary education on the basis of the World Bank Project on Education Reforms from 1999-2004 at a cost of \$ 5.5 million. This education reform project includes the following components:

- 1) reform in the field of curriculum development and provision of methodological materials;
- 2) reform in the field of in-service teacher training;
- 3) monitoring and evaluation.

Possible Areas of Cooperation with UNESCO

Concerning the outstanding issues of all levels of education and the priority areas in which Azerbaijan wishes to engage in further cooperation with UNESCO, the Minister mentioned the following key areas: sustainable human development, equal rights to education, improvement of legislation, education quality, introduction of ICT in education, improvement of education management, curriculum development, in- and pre-service teacher training, accreditation of educational institutions, introduction of new funding mechanism, improvement of the mechanism of transfer from one tier of education to another one.

Aim of Studying Abroad with a Government Scholarship

One of the solutions is specified as sending clever students abroad with government scholarships for master and PhD programs. The state officials thought that these high-qualified staff group may accelerate the reform process after coming back. It is expected that the change of the general secondary education structure by withdrawal of some subjects from a basic education plan, and addition of new subjects and issues of subject integration in the preparation of curricula.

Challenges of Reforms

Achieving academic freedom, strong and vigorous student, quality of education system programs, corruption, cooperation with international institutions, battle to cultural imperialism, and school-industry relations are the most important problems.

Private Turkish Schools are the starting of a new period towards unity in the international Education System, covering such important issues as access to Azerbaijan education, term of education, and recognition of secondary school education documents as well as creation of appropriate mechanism for these goals. Quality is changing of the existing form, and stability of the evolutionary effort.

As Another Alternative: Private Schools

While government-supported schools are the model for students in basic education at the turn of the millennium, increasing efforts are being made by international organizations and other private funders to create private educational opportunities in the country, especially at upper levels.

With the private Turkish schools, it has begun in 1993; special attention was directed toward revising and

improving Azerbaijani textbooks and the curricula used in Azerbaijani schools. As already mentioned, noteworthy problems existed with the textbook situation in the 1990s. Textbooks were neither sufficiently plentiful nor of adequate quality to provide students with the necessary instruction in subjects that would have direct applicability in their lives, nor were students given the type of instruction that would enable them to transfer school learning to everyday situations or to competently solve problems in the real world.

Even though in some schools officers and staff were ready to put into service a more student-focused and active-learning style of teaching by the late 1990s, the lack of appropriate resources on modern teaching methods delayed progress in modernized teaching style in the country. Accordingly, one of the most important reforms attempted by the private Turkish schools in tandem with the Ministry of Education 1993 centered on training teachers in more student-focused, active styles of teaching involving student projects and activities.

According to some scientists that reform in Azerbaijan's education system was necessary, and could be done in two ways: 1) by enacting step by step reform of the whole secondary education system or 2) by starting from ground zero, establishing a small institution 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 private model, and although the government could not offer money, it gave private Turkish Schools permission to try. Its eye-catching results are in front of us with tens golden medals from different part of the world.

History of Turkish Schools in Azerbaijan

Turkish Schools are the private schools opened in Azerbaijan in 1991 after the collapse of Soviet Union. Those are exactly non-governmental organizations.

They provide better education and bringing Western education system to this country. The characteristics of Turkish schools making contribution to national education can not be ignored.

The Ministry of Education especially states the same think openly. Additionally, due to lack of public schools in number compared to the population, many citizens could not have schools to study. The Turkish schools, with positive or negative aspects, were closing the gap in this field.

These schools led the way to start a practical training in the science instead of theoretical. These schools have made positive impact on Azerbaijan structure of society, cultural structure, even economic and political life. They have greater impact on, especially, enrolment issue, secondary school management understanding, technical training, classroom layout, modern methods in education and techniques, bringing new disciplines and professional training.

In this study, I have tried to examine the effects of private Turkish Schools on Azerbaijan Education System. It has occurred that these schools have prepared a program by taking into account of sensitive points of the region's political situation in Azerbaijan.

Properties that make them different or superior schools are teacher-student-parents relationships, equipment, technical equipment and the fact that they were advanced in terms of publication. It can be said in a different way that the modernization of education in Azerbaijan has been renewed with the positive contribution of these schools.

The crucial importance of these schools' education management style formed a difference with their approaches in education, to behave in a plan and systematically, with the difference of student relationships.

According to another view, private schools are preparing more advanced ground for the opening of other schools with their equipment, and technical structures, and their renewing power structure. Additionally, they make Western Education be more attractive with their new methods and techniques. The results of these studies are reflected in the education system.

These schools, the new address of principled and targeted education, are carrying the modern understanding of education and training systems of their original countries into Azeri Education System.

Effects of Turkish School on Education System

If an educational system is in relation to with other countries for student, technology, tools exchange, these countries' related systems with the education are in the environment of education system.

Turkish Schools have brought new methods in Azerbaijan's western concept of education in a period in which country was nearly a century behind the developments. Schools are, at least, the institutions have been notified scientific and technological developments in the West on the basis of information stage.

New systems of education that start with Private Turkish Schools grow up students who are researcher, experimenter, questioning, and analyzing. Schools implement their works in an enviable care. All the details have been thought out related to today's conditions such as library and laboratories, modern classrooms, meeting and exhibition halls, residential buildings, canteens.

The goal is to complete the student's every need here. Even if the family does not find support for their students, teachers are interested in them as close friends. Schools are not only the places learned information but also reinforced the practical training information.

Possible Positive Outcomes of Turkish Schools

There is a reality accepted by everyone else in this country that these schools have impacted the Azerbaijan culture, economy and policy by their attractive workings positively since they have been founded. Their graduates have come to main classes in the state and community. In this way the impacts of these schools have increased. At the same time, they have started to clearing out the Soviet integrity by their systems, curriculum, management types, and works.

At the first stage it can be say clearly that Private Turkish Schools have contributed to advance of Azerbaijan education system positively. With these, they have shaped a representation for Azerbaijan education organizations and schools as a modern of model. How it happened is going to be analyzed below in details.

In private foreign schools, management team, teaching staff and school organization developed better than the local schools. All the details response to the needs of the students is thought out in the schools such as culinary, dormitories, bathrooms and others.

In these schools, learning is easier and more permanent with the modern classrooms, laboratories, and libraries; in these application areas, theoretical knowledge can be transferred in daily life easily.

These schools resemble western Schools with textbooks and other educational tools. Extremely well-trained instructional staffs are different from local school ones with having a different the student-teacher approach. The use of multi-award system rather than punishment encourages loyalty to school. The graduates of these schools do not live employment problem. Due to having been employed with the most important tasks of the state and society has increased the demand for schools.

The impact on the characteristics and formation of Azerbaijan education system: Private foreign schools have effected to education system in Azerbaijan before with their purposeful of the principle. They were caused entering the educational understanding similar to Western Education System instead of traditional in the Education of Azerbaijan.

Initiation and spread of foreign language education in secondary schools: In the past, languages were Russian and Persian to learn for Azerbaijanis other than worldwide language, English. These languages were not also considered to be part of foreign language. Especially, scientific and technological developments were increased the importance of learning Western languages.

Providing modern education: These schools as a model of western education systems are conveying all the innovations in the West. They, acting according to their respective countries' education systems, are carrying new teaching techniques, methods, the information and tools to the students as soon as possible.

Integrity and continuity in education: Turkish Schools became an example by extending their institutions from kindergarten to university and continuing as a whole. From a view, they are the pioneers for starting continuous and compulsory education. The understanding of starting from the fundamental consciously instead of top becomes a proliferated in the society by helping of private schools.

Student-centered Education Model: These schools developed various ways to be loved and accepted by the students with the reality of being in a foreign country. Some days, they strive to recognize their students as their friends. At first, they try to explore different aspects of students' abilities; skills, intelligence and emotions, then they tried to give course to them. They took into consideration of the student wishes at first, and tried to point the students as a player in the education. By bringing the student in the center of education, they have started student-centered course.

The importance of high-qualified teacher in education: In these schools being literate is not enough for being teachers. Teachers generally studied all the teaching profession to be teachers. These schools' teachers must be skillful and knowledgeable in many areas. they are taking office with approaches by learning how treated to students. Students who graduate from schools began to compare Turkish Schools with the Azerbaijan schools, and then the importance of teachers' pedagogical training also emerged. Newspapers, magazines publish articles including praise of teacher who are good at children's psychology. Thus, this issue was entered the Azerbaijani educational system, with the example of private Turkish schools.

Setting up fully-equipped schools: Schools with their developed management team, teachers and school organization help sciences, and opened modern classrooms, laboratories, and libraries. All the other requirements were considered such as kitchen, dormitory, and bathroom in these schools serving as boarding schools as well.

Starting of field Education: They have followed a path separated different fields instead of following a single style, and types of education in accordance with the nature of schools. They have followed an educational road to develop students according to their ability and achievement.

To bring new solutions to the issue of financial resources in education: Taking regular budgets and a share of certain amounts from their respective countries revealed a new understanding of the foundation in the education. Most importantly, they demonstrated the need that the state is the main owner and supporter of public education. By opening mercenary schools, they have formed a sample to meet the costs of education by parents instead of the state as well.

Making changes in the concepts of punishment and reward: They have taken the Western schools' system of denying from the award used in Azerbaijan education. They have pointed to the importance of multi-award instead of punishment in education. Without forgetting being a foreign country, they have tried to gain more sympathy while teaching. Students have been encouraged by small gifts, certificates of honor, medals. School meals, moral entertainment, picnics, contests boosted their demand.

To demonstrate the importance of school-parents cooperation: They are in cooperation with parents instead of being in a harmony only students. Family visits and various informative meetings were held for this

aim. It has been provided a pleasing establishment of closeness to the schools by helping of activities done for the parents. It has been increased their influenced by taking support from parents.

To demonstrate the importance of review in Education: The founders of the schools, principals are taking care about the review of the works seriously. The staffs that do not follow the objectives of the school or not meet aimed behaviors are being dismissed immediately. School staffs have made a habit of accountability by acting in controlled responsibility.

Environmental education orientation: Private Turkish Schools are also interested in the school environment at a time the public schools gradually withdraws and moves away from the society. Brochures are printed; conferences and seminars are held.

Exposing the concept of a private school: Differences are brought to education and the graduates have acquired roles in the society attract the attention of their parents. Families are ready to pay money in order to educate their children in these schools. The schools are the pioneers of the concept of private school education in Azerbaijan.

Brining the concept of competition in the education: They prepared a suitable environment for opening other qualified private schools unconsciously with their high standard equipments, technical structures, and structures of renewing themselves in advanced. Turkish Schools had to compete with other private schools and local schools to improve their efficiency. As a result of each race, they have increased the quality, diversity, and their conditions of being sought after. Today, Turkish schools still preserve their existence is among the most preferred schools. It is accepted the purpose of growing up "universal qualified students" with these schools, especially, with the opening of the Baku Turkish College. Turk College has chosen a secular educational method. Graduates of the school were involved in an important place both in society and state structure. Despite all changes in the education system, the graduated students of this school create the positive changes in the society.

In conditions of globalization in the world, can they be used as a counter-model to reduce the negative effects of globalization?

Without losing their national identity, can these schools be set up the student educating model but growing with "**school spirit**" to ensure benefits of universal nature of globalization?

What is the role of private schools in regard to reducing "**brain drain**" which is one of the important issues of Azerbaijan? Numeric data can also be helpful to investigate this issue?

All these questions' answers can be addressed as the subject of a new research project. Only a few researches have been done about development of Azerbaijan education system after the collapse of Soviet Union. Internationally, only UNESCO and World Bank are interested in this subject. When it is taken into account of the geopolitics situation of the country and its hot topics, a high qualified education staff is necessary to overcome all of these problems. Thus, this topic is so vital to have a bright and clear view about Azerbaijan's future. As it is known that only high qualified people can make positive differences.

As conclusion, Turkish schools are pioneers about occurrence of systematic expansion of schooling and literacy and education. In addition, they have been role models for the providing the provision of financial resources and budget plans, schools' teaching staff, accurate selection of textbooks and curriculum as required by professional educators. Briefly, these institutions made a huge contribution on Azerbaijan education system. For these reasons, private Turkish Schools entered into Azerbaijan Education System as the new model school. In this way, they have begun to take a change the current schools by increasing the basic attributes of the system in this direction.

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