

1. Title: International Educational Reform for the 21st Century: A Case Study

2. Name: C. Bobbi Hansen

3. University of San Diego

4. Address: School of Education
University of San Diego
5998 Alcalá Park
San Diego, CA 92110

5. email: chansen@sandiego.edu

6. Abstract

The beginning of the 21st Century has sparked educational reforms not only in the U.S. but on a global level as well. Recently the Republic of Kazakhstan, the largest and most influential of the former Soviet Republics, embarked upon a bold journey. This nation, with a geographical size that makes it the ninth largest in the world, decided to reform its public schools by starting a new system of schools called MIRAS.

To launch the new educational reforms President Nursultan Nazarbaev invited teacher educators, administrators, and teachers from around the world to collaborate with educators from the Republic of Kazakhstan in the implementation of a new educational environment which will promote academic excellence throughout the country. This collaboration began in 1998 and will continue into the future with continual exchanges of personnel to actively participate in the creation of a new system of schools.

The Republic of Kazakhstan's extremely bold and innovative new system of schools called MIRAS is currently in its third year of operation. The educational leaders in the Republic of Kazakhstan who have conceptualized the MIRAS Schools have embodied powerful new notions of learning. The new vision calls for a recognition that all real learning involves thinking, that thinking ability can be nurtured and cultivated in everyone, and that the entire educational program must be reconceived and revitalized so that thinking pervades students' lives from kindergarten onward.

The goal of having students become competent thinkers has long been an international educational ideal as well. And, for just as long, this ideal has eluded too many students in too many schools in too many nations. Recent research, however, provides a new perspective on how people learn to think. Pursuing these new ideas may provide the basis for future educational practices that can help students become skilled in thinking.

The international community, then, is witnessing the growth of a remarkable consensus that the achievement of basic literacy, while obviously necessary, is not a sufficient goal, and that students have the right to expect more, from elementary and secondary education. Graduates must not only be literate; they must also be competent thinkers.

It is the intention of this presentation to specifically address the importance of global and international connections. The growing interdependence of the world's nations reminds us that we need to continue to learn from one another. No where is this more crucial than in the kinds of education each nation will offer to the world's future citizens—its children.

References

Beare, H. and Boyd, W. (1993) Restructuring schools: an international perspective on the movement to transform the control and performance of schools, New York: The Falmer Press.

Cummings, W.K. and Altbach, P. (1997) The challenge of eastern asian education: Implications for America. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Flavell, J.H., Miller, P.A., and Miller, S. A. (1993) Cognitive development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Guthrie, J.W. and Koppich, J.E. (1988) Exploring the political economy of national educational reform, in Boyd, W.L. and Kerchner, C.T. (Eds) The politics of excellence and choice in education, New York, The