

PRIMARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT: THE CASE OF AZERBAIJAN

Matanat Gurbanova

Institute of Education of Republic of Azerbaijan,
Department of Theory And History of Education, senior researchcer
E-mail: metanetgurban@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7245-6275>

Abstract. The paper examines the changing nature of primary education and primary school management in Azerbaijan. From the first years of independence to the present day, from 1990 to 2024, primary school management has undergone a line of development in terms of creating an effective management system. In this descriptive quantitative study, measurable data was collected to statistically analyze the system and management style of primary schools in Azerbaijan. Here, the figures provide the opportunity to compare existing patterns, relationships, and trends, especially the International Standard Classification of Education at Primary Level (ISCED 1), over a certain period of time.

Keywords: primary school, primary school management, ISCED 1, descriptive quantitative research, the case of Azerbaijan.

DOI: 10.30546/2709-2488.2.2024.127.

To cite this article: Gurbanova M. (2024). Primary school management: the case of Azerbaijan. *Journal of Preschool and Primary Education*, Vol. 247, Issue II, pp. 69-79.

Article history: received – 08.05.2024; accepted – 21.06.2024.

AZƏRBAYCANDA İBTİDAI ÜMUMTƏHSİL MƏKTƏBLƏRİNİN İDARƏ OLUNMASI

Mətanət Qurbanova

Azərbaycan Respublikasının Təhsil İnstitutu,
Təhsilin nəzəriyyəsi və tarixi şöbəsi, böyük elmi işçi
E-mail: metanetgurban@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7245-6275>

Xülasə. Məqalədə Azərbaycan Respublikasında ibtidai təhsil və ibtidai məktəb idarəçiliyinin dəyişən xarakteri təhlil edilir. Müstəqilliyin ilk illərindən bu günə, 1990-cı ildən 2024-cü ilə qədər səmərəli idarəetmə sisteminin formalaşdırılması baxımından ibtidai məktəb idarəçiliyi öz inkişaf trayektoriyasına malikdir. Bu təsviri kəmiyyət tədqiqatında Azərbaycanda ibtidai məktəblərin sistem və idarəetmə nümunəsini statistik təhlil etmək üçün ölçülə bilən məlumatlar toplanmışdır. Burada, rəqəmlər müəyyən zaman kəsiyində mövcud nümunələri, əlaqələri, meylləri, xüsusilə də Beynəlxalq Standart Təhsil Təsnifatının İbtidai Təhsil səviyyəsində (İSCED 1) uyğunluğunu müqayisə etmək imkanını verir.

Açar sözlər: ibtidai ümumtəhsil məktəbi, ibtidai ümumtəhsil məktəbinin idarə olunması, İSCED 1, təsviri kəmiyyət tədqiqatı, Azərbaycan nümunəsində/keysində.

DOI: 10.30546/2709-2488.2.2024.127.

Məqaləyə istinad: Qurbanova M. (2024). Azərbaycanda ibtidai ümumtəhsil məktəblərinin idarə olunması. «Məktəbəqədər və ibtidai təhsil», № 2 (247), səh. 69-79.

Məqalə tarixçəsi: göndərilib – 08.05.2024; qəbul edilib – 21.06.2024.

Introduction / Giriş

Primary school is a general educational institution that provides primary education to school-age children; it is the first stage of general compulsory education. The age at which children start primary school and primary general education schools and the duration of their education in these schools vary in different countries. The International Standard Classification of Education (hereafter – ISCED) views primary education programs primarily as a stage designed to provide basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics and to provide a solid foundation for learning [see ISCED 2011, Manual paragraph 120].

Primary school students acquire basic knowledge about the environment and gain communication and practical problem-solving skills. At this stage, the child's personality begins to form and develop, which is proof of the importance of primary education for society and the country. The aim of primary education is to create and strengthen reading, writing, and arithmetic habits in children. To provide children with basic vital knowledge about people, society, nature, and the laws between them; to form elements of logical and creative thinking in children; to ensure that talented children are discovered and developed from an early age; it consists of instilling in children sensitivity, aesthetic and artistic taste, moral and spiritual qualities, physical culture, and self-service skills.

Primary education is compulsory in Azerbaijan and many countries of the world. The starting age for primary education is generally not less than 5 years old and not older than 7 years old. Primary education in Azerbaijan starts at the age of 6. Students who successfully complete primary education are enrolled in general secondary education. According to the general education approach adopted in Azerbaijan, a student who completes primary education must apply the necessary mathematical knowledge in life, realize simple algorithms, and be able to use computer technology. In primary education, students should describe the objects and events they observe and distinguish them according to their characteristics. At the same time, being able to think independently and logically, expressing one's attitude, communicating, cooperating, and expressing one's thoughts clearly are among the skills at the primary school level. There are cultural behaviors, compliance with personal hygiene and relevant safety rules, independently performing assigned work as well as work that requires creativity, practicing simple study habits, carrying out their duties, and respecting one's own and others' rights on the list of essential skills for a primary school student.

Main Part / Əsas Hissə

“Planning is no less important in a primary school of 30 pupils than in a secondary school of 1,300. Indeed in some ways the smaller the school, the more important it is to stand back and ensure that there is a clear line of vision of direction, responsibilities and priorities”[Dean J., 1995].

In the Education Law of The Republic of Azerbaijan (hereinafter referred to as the Education Law) (March 29, 2019, No. 1532-VQ), the primary general education school is classified as one of the 13th type of general educational institutions (12.14.1). Among the changes made in the law, the establishment of boarding-type sanatorium general education schools and increasing the number of these schools to 14 types were included in order to acquire the knowledge, skills, and habits of the disabled and to ensure their adaptation to society [Decision of the Council of Ministers № 415].

According to the new legislation, general education schools can be organized separately as primary schools, general secondary schools, and full secondary schools. Therefore, primary and general secondary general education schools are allowed to operate on a small scale in remote rural areas, regardless of the number of students. Especially in the period before the Second Karabakh War, due to the existing socio-economic constraints, demographic situation, lack of classrooms, necessary resources, and teachers, full classes were formed from primary school classes with a small number of students [see Education Law 2019, a. 13.6. and 13.7].

By the Decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the approval of “Criteria by Types of General Educational Institutions (29 July 2020, № 270)”, the criteria for primary general education schools have been redefined as follows:

- Primary general education schools covering the primary level of general education; - organization of education based on state standards and programs;
- the school’s ability to operate inadequately;
- determination of the number of personnel based on the Decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated May 26, 1996, and numbered 59, “On exemplary staff of public secondary schools, high schools, and sports halls of the Republic of Azerbaijan.” [Decision Of The Cabinet of The Republic of Azerbaijan, 29 July 2020, № 270].

In order to improve the structure of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Regional Educational Departments (hereafter – RED) were established by the order of the president in accordance with the 32nd paragraph of article 109 of the Constitution. This includes, on the basis of the

“State Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan”, the creation of a responsible, transparent, and efficient management system for educational results, the planning of financial and administrative resources on a unified basis, adequate structuring of educational policy and educational management for future tasks, and the country’s educational system, which serves to raise the field to advanced world standards.

If we refer to the official website of the Ministry of Science and Education, we see that the statistics of primary education institutions affiliated with REDs for the 2023-2024 academic year are as follows:

1. Absheron-Khizi RED– 1;
2. Baku City Education Department – 0;
3. Mountainous Shirvan RED – 23;
4. Ganja-Dashkasan RED– 14;
5. Lankaran-Astara RED – 66;
6. Central Aran RED – 30;
7. Mil-Mughan RED – 14;
8. Karabagh RED – 14;
9. Gazakh-Tovuz RED – 20;
10. Guba-Khachmaz RED – 88;
11. Shaki-Zagatala RED – 25;
12. East Zangezur RED – 0;
13. Shirvan-Salyan RED – 9.

TOTAL – 304 Primary Schools (*RED. Primary Schools*)

When the statistics of primary schools are compared between state and public formal education institutions, it is possible to say that school infrastructure represents significantly higher figures in the first years of independence (*The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan/ Education, Science And Culture.*): Table 1.

Table 1. Statistics on state and public primary schools in the first years of independence and after in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

	Academic year	Formal Primary Schools	Number of students – p.
State Primary Schools	1990/1991	520	10811
	1991/1992	519	10942
	1992/1993	500	10758

	2020/2021		5786
	2021/2022		5764
	2022/2023		5432
Public Primary Schools	2002/2003	1	35
	2003/2004	1	138
	2004/2005	-	-

	2020/2021	-	-
	2021/2022	-	-
	2022/2023	-	-

The figures in the table show statistically the merging of primary schools into secondary schools. The numbers, which decrease each academic year, explain the process (Table 1).

State standards of education in the Republic of Azerbaijan were developed on the basis of the “National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan” State standards - content of education; education management; curriculum; infrastructure of education; quality indicators of educators; the level of students’ knowledge, skills, and habits; competencies developed in students; courses and subjects taught; the results of general training on the exercises and topics taught; organization of training; total hours of weekly course and extracurricular activities for education levels; general pedagogical requirements for the organization of education; It determines the system of evaluation and monitoring of student achievements.

State standards are used as the basis for developing content standards and curricula for preschool and general education courses and are valid for a period of 5 years.

The classification of competencies developed by students at the primary education level is as follows:

1. Thinking

- creativity (makes original additions and corrections to existing ones);
- critical thinking (can justify his or her opinion);
- problem solving (creates algorithms to solve problems);
- decision-making (predicts positive and negative consequences of decisions);
- independent learning (distinguishes learning sources (observation, people, books, internet, etc.)).

2. Activity

- communication (being able to express ideas and listen to others);
- collaboration (can work in a team);
- digital literacy (demonstrates basic ICT usage skills);
- information literacy (knowing how to search and gather information);
- financial literacy (using personal budgets effectively).

3. Values

- awareness of national identity and a sense of national pride (respect for state symbols);
- active citizen position (has knowledge about the state and statehood traditions)
- personal and social responsibility (understands personal responsibility);
- respect for democracy and human rights (knowing one’s own rights and duties, respecting other people’s rights and duties);
- respect for cultural diversity (accepts cultural diversity-people belonging to different ethnic groups, languages, religions, and races).

The classification of competencies developed by students in primary education includes both international and national standards for thinking, activity, and values.

According to the Decision No. 361 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated September 29, 2020, state standards and programs (curriculums) on the level of general education were approved in the new edition. At the primary level, “Azerbaijani language” (in schools where education is provided in Azerbaijani language), the relevant language in schools where education is provided in other languages, “Azerbaijani language as the state language” (in schools where education is provided in other languages), “Foreign Language”, “Mathematics”, “Informatics”, “Life Sciences”, “Technology”, “Physical Education”, “Music”, and “Fine Arts” courses and subjects are reflected (5.2.).

General learning outcomes for courses and subjects taught at the primary level ensure the quality standard for each course, the requirements of the state standard, and the primary education program (curriculum). (Table 2.)

Table 2. Learning outcomes for subjects and topics taught at primary levels

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR SUBJECTS AND TOPICS TAUGHT AT PRIMARY LEVELS									
10.2.1.In language teaching (Azerbaijani and other languages):	10.2.2.In “Azerbaijani language as a state language”:	10.2.3.In “foreign language”:	10.2.4.In “Mathematics”:	10.2.5.In “Informatics”:	10.2.6. In “Life Science”:	10.2.7.In “Technology”:	10.2.8.In “physical education”:	10.2.9.In “Music”:	10.2.10. In “fine arts”:
reading the text according to the relevant rules;	reading and writing within current requirements;	reading small and simple texts and demonstrating comprehension;	performing simple calculations on numbers;	demonstrating understanding of information (forms, sources, properties, and means of transmission);	displaying patriotic knowledge, state symbols, children’s rights, and moral values;	comparison and classification of materials;	implementing action complexes according to examples and norms;	compliance with performance rules; distinguishing musical instruments;	expressing life images in a practical way;
observing speech etiquette and language rules;	explaining what is read, listened to, and observed;	describing what was heard and observed;	proper use of quantities (length, area, volume, mass, and time)	performing simple operations on the computer;	observing and reacting to events that occur in the surrounding world;	production of products using appropriate technologies;	obeying the rules in dynamic and sportive games;	distinguishing musical works according to their characters;	using appropriate colors and color tones in the expression of objects and events;
expressing attitude towards what he reads and listens to;	creating small, simple texts.	expressing what has been learned verbally and in writing;	making measurements and calculations on planar shapes;	creating simple algorithms.	explaining the necessary safety rules to protect life and health in daily life and in emergency situations;	performance of household services;	compliance with body strengthening and safety rules;	naming and singing musical notes;	creating compositions and carrying out design studies;
creating small, simple texts;		communicating using words and appropriate speech tags.	collecting data, analyzing it, and expressing the results with mathematical modeling;		demonstrating economic knowledge and skills (savings, efficient use, etc.).	compliance with safety and hygiene rules;		demonstrating recognition of the outstanding musical figures of Azerbaijan and their famous works.	demonstrating the knowledge of the outstanding artists of Azerbaijan.
expressing ideas orally and in writing.			stating probabilities regarding life events.			making simple models and projects.			

[<https://e-qanun.az/framework/46052>]

The total number of hours of weekly course and extracurricular studies and activities in the languages of instruction in grades I–IV at the primary education level is as follows:

- Azerbaijani language: 99 hours;
- Other languages: 107 hours.

The number of extracurricular instructional hours may not exceed 20 percent of the maximum weekly hours. When necessary, it can also be taken from out-of-class hours to teach the subject.

Conclusion/Nəticə

The level of compliance of the content and management issues of primary education with International Standards was first included in the Normative-Legal documents of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Over time, it has become possible to implement the provisions reflected in the legislative framework as measures or activities. The measurement of the results of the studies carried out in the field of education, especially primary education, of the country, which has gone through a social, economic, and political formation process, shows that it has achieved a line of development in International Evaluation studies. In this descriptive quantitative study, we tried to reveal the management and content issues of the primary school by covering the period from the years of independence to the present day. Despite high scientific development, socio-economic constraints, demographic crises, lack of classrooms, resources, and teachers, living in war zones, and disasters caused by climate change, these are typical examples of the 21st century. In the background of economic and political development, there is the experience of transforming primary schools into general education schools with multigrade classes or completely canceling them, but even in the developed countries of the world, this is not a choice, but a requirement of the situation. Primary schools are the necessary institutions that will provide the right to “Equality of opportunity in education” under difficult conditions at all times.

Relevance of the topic. In addition to the high development trends of the 21st century, ongoing wars, long-term conflicts, and climate change necessitate socio-economic constraints, demographic crises, and shortages of classrooms, resources, and teachers. For this reason, it makes primary schools (multigrade classes) outside major cities more accessible than schools with higher infrastructure. The current situation shows that the content and management experience of the primary school we are talking about may change in form and content, but they are and will remain as current as before.

Scientific novelty of the topic In the paper, the content issues and management problems of primary schools are analyzed separately, in a comparative manner, not within primary education in general.

Practical importance of the topic. The paper is research material and a methodologically important resource for students of higher and vocational secondary education institutions with a pedagogical profile, as well as young researchers, educational administrators, and people doing research in the field of educational management. It is a useful topic for future research by education researchers who conduct research in the fields of crisis management and education policy.

References / İstifadə edilmiş ədəbiyyat

1. Azərbaycan Respublikası Elm və Təhsil Nazirliyinin strukturunun təkmilləşdirilməsi haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin Sərəncamı (24 July 2014, № 664). <https://e-qanun.az/framework/28160>
2. On the approval of “Criteria of general educational institutions by types” Decision Of The Cabinet of The Republic of Azerbaijan (29 July 2020, № 270) <https://e-qanun.az/framework/45592>
3. Law Of The Republic Of Azerbaijan on Education (29 march 2019, № 1532-VQ) <https://e-qanun.az/framework/42543>
4. Secondary schools subordinated to Regional Education Departments. Primary Schools https://edu.gov.az/umumitehsil-muessiselerinin-siyahisi/rayon-seher-tehsil-sobelerinin-idarelerinin-tabeliyinde-olan-umumtehsil-muessiseleri_428
5. Azərbaycan Respublikası Nazirlər Kabinetinin 29 sentyabr 2020-ci il, № 361 Qərarına əsasən “Ümumi təhsil pilləsinin dövlət standartı və proqramları (kurikulumları)” <https://e-qanun.az/framework/46052>
6. Decision of the Council of Ministers № 415. <https://e-qanun.az/framework/52789>
7. The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan Education, Science And Culture. <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/education/?lang=en>
8. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı Okul Öncesi Eğitim ve İlköğretim Kurumları Yönetmeliği. T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Mevzuat Bilgi Sistemi. <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=19942&MevzuatTur=7&MevzuatTertip=5>

9. Competences That Primary School Administrators Should Have. National Education Journal, number 160. 2003 https://dhgm.meb.gov.tr/yayimlar/dergiler/milli_egitim_dergisi/160/toremen-kolay.htm
10. Practical tips for teaching multigrade classes. UNESCO, 2013, 65 p. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000220101>
11. International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011. Published in 2012 by: UNESCO Institute for Statistics P.O. Box 6128, Succursale Centre-Ville Montreal, Quebec H3C 3J7 Canada
12. Joan Dean. Managing the Primary School. 1995 by Routledge, 260 pages.