



# Who Rules the Schools?

The Tale of Three Countries

Dr. Elena Lenskaya



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## Foreword

This study is a continuation of the research done by NEPC in 2015 in ten NEPC countries<sup>1</sup>. Two more post-Soviet Union countries have been asked to do the mapping of their school governance policies and these policies were compared with each other.

Although the educational background of the three reviewed countries, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia has been very similar and the infrastructure almost identical 25-30 years ago when all of them were part of the Soviet Union, it has changed and diversified considerably since then. While the policy of Russia and Azerbaijan was initially towards decentralization of power, in the last 18 years it has changed to its opposite and the so-called “vertical of power” became prevailing. In Kyrgyzstan the tendency towards decentralization has been less pronounced in the beginning but has never been compromised subsequently. As the consequence the governance systems in the education sector look rather different now, although, as we will see later sometimes this difference is more in intentions than in the daily practices.

But before we proceed to the actual review, we need to make sure that our understanding of the term “governance” is consistent across the three countries under review. In Soviet days when Russian was the official state language common for all the soviet republics<sup>2</sup>, the word “управление (upravleniye)” was widely used, and this word could be translated into English in multiple ways depending on the context: governance, management, leadership and even administration. In this text we will use it as the umbrella word.

Since we are interested in the interplay of different actors who are involved in ‘upravleniye’ of the school system we will distinguish between all the forms in the following way:

**Administration** - the least demanding form of upravleniye which means that the goals, objectives and even the mode of delivery (procedures) are prescribed by senior authorities, and the better the **administrator** observes the rules and the procedures, the better is the quality of his/her performance. Thus, teachers or parents, sitting on the parental committee, being responsible for collecting donations from other parents to cover costs of extracurricular activities are doing a purely **administrative** work.

**Management** - a more important task implying that the goals and objectives are set by the senior authorities, while the mode of delivery is not. The manager, same as administrator, is always appointed officially. A good manager is therefore the one who can find the best way to meet the objectives. Thus, a deputy principal who is responsible for analyzing the outcomes of the interim tests would be doing a **managerial** work. A parent who is helping with the distribution of extra-budgetary resources if no specific requirements exist is **managing** school finance.

**Leadership** is one of the most demanding and responsible forms of upravleniye because the leader always has followers. A **leader** is somebody who has a vision of the desired future of an

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<sup>1</sup> Sergij Gabrscek. Who rules the schools. NEPC, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> In Soviet days there were two official languages in each of the republics, Russian and the ethnic language of the republic, Azeri an Azerbaijan and Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan, but Russian was the lingua franca of the country.

organization or a team and a mission to reach the broadly described goal set by the governing bodies. To meet this goal, he sets his own objectives and creates a road map towards the desired goal. A **leader** can be formally appointed or informally recognized. Thus, a parent who has started a campaign against school merges was acting as a leader. A teacher who takes responsibility for networking or coaching his/her peers also acts as a leader. A school principal can act as a **leader** if he has a vision and a mission or as a **manager** if he/ prefers “to do what he is told”.

Finally, **governance** always implies goal-setting and can be performed at multiple levels. In more centralized and less democratic countries school governance is the responsibility of the state and state only. As Sergij Gabršček mentions in the first volume of ‘Who rules the schools’, “The tradition of highly centralized countries has concentrated governance functions in central ministries” [Gabrichek, 2016.p5]. It is assumed that the state is acting on behalf of its taxpayers, while in reality we often discover that it is pursuing its own interests, trying to decrease the expenditure budget and privatize some of the services that have previously been state funded. Thus, recently the state in Russia has taken away some of the former privileges of the parents, such as their right to influence school curriculum or have free after school services. Another form of **governance** is encountered in decentralized democratic societies and often takes the shape of school governing boards. These boards can be called governing if they are entitled with the responsibilities to set development goals for their schools and manage resources to meet them. Thus, when school boards can decide upon the school development plan, the future curriculum, distribution of school resources, if they can hire and fire staff including the school principal, they are performing the **governance** role.

In the future discourse we will try to identify the function and the degree of responsibility each actor in the education system is having using the above described terms.

## Methodology

The second part of 'Who Rules the schools' was using the same methodology as the first and is based on the provided ToR. The comparative review of the three countries policy will be supplemented by a case study from each of the three countries.

A list of relevant topics regarding school governance was replicating the one used in the first part of the review and looking at the following areas:

- Stakeholders in educational policy
- Legislation
- Studies/research
- Governance at the school level and quality of education
- School leadership
- Supporting principals to improve schools
- Major domains of responsibility of school leadership
- School councils
- Other school bodies

A list of questions and sub-questions was prepared and shared with participating countries. The three countries participating in the second round of the review represent different regions of the former Soviet Union: Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The history of their post-soviet development is rather diverse, and this gave an interesting variety of experiences as well as highlighted some commonalities which in most cases were the legacy of the Soviet period.

The questionnaire was filled out by the researcher in the country, consulting the following type of documentation:

- Laws and regulations regulating school governance in primary and secondary education
- Laws and regulations concerning the duties and responsibilities, as well as the rights, of principals
- Laws and regulations concerning capacity building of school governance bodies
- Laws and regulations concerning the functioning of schools (e.g. funding regulations and regulations regarding the appointment of teachers and principals)
- Relevant statistics available from the national Ministry of Education or from agencies
- In some questions, identification of relevant research (if available) was required

Questionnaires were developed and collected by NEPC. They were checked for consistency and the completeness of information provided and forwarded to the consultant for the analysis. Two questionnaires were filled in English while the third one was in Russian and the consultant had to translate it into English to verify the consistency of the use of terminology. The first draft report was prepared and sent to NEPC for comments and revised accordingly.



## WHO RULES THE SCHOOLS?

Researchers from participating countries provided all requested information needed for this comparative study. Most information was sufficiently detailed but there were a couple of cases when local respondents have provided fewer details. In such cases we had to ask them questions to fill in the gaps in the information.

It also depended on the level of governance researchers were looking at. However, the data provided gives a clear picture of the school governance system in the participating countries. Besides, all documents related to the question were delivered as references supporting the information provided. They are also an additional source of information for those interested in further learning from other countries' experience.

Results are presented following the thematic areas in the questionnaire. For each sub question a short overview of the situation and/or experience is presented in the introduction. This is followed by information from each country, to give the reader an opportunity to get some more details. Where appropriate, results are presented in tables for more clarity, in particular if the information that was provided was very detailed (e.g. role of the school council). Some interesting cases are also presented in textboxes in the text.

1 The questionnaire is attached in Annex 1 of this report.

If we are to look at the table below the situation in the three countries may seem almost identical. However, this is not quite the case. The devil, as usual, is in the details.

*Stakeholders relevant in education policy*

Stakeholders	Azerbaijan	Kyrgyzstan	Russia
Ministry of Education	✓	✓	✓
National agency	✓	✓	✓
School inspection	✓	local	✓
Local educational authorities	✓	✓	✓
School principals	✓	✓	✓
Teachers	✓	✓	✓
Parents	✓	✓	✓
Students	✓	✓	✓
Others	✓	✓	✓

## The Ministry

In each of the three reviewed countries the Ministry of Education has the overall responsibility for policy-making in education, goal setting for education development, strategic planning in education and setting legal norms and regulations.<sup>3</sup> However, while in Azerbaijan there is the Ministry of Education proper, in Russia and in Kyrgyzstan there are Ministries of Education and Science. Having a merged Ministry in a small country like Kyrgyz Republic is quite understandable, while in Russia with its huge territory a Ministry with several responsibilities may be a mission impossible type of institution.

In all the three countries the Ministries are responsible for preschool education, elementary, secondary and higher education, national curricula, school books, development of education, education of teachers, inspections and surveillance, monitoring of the legal functioning of the schools. It is also responsible for the administration of the education system at the national level and for drafting the legal and by-law acts of the educational system, including legal framework for governing and administration of all levels of education. Some of their responsibilities can be delegated to different agencies that were established for specific activities covering one or more levels of education or its support.

The responsibilities of the Ministry of Education are defined by the Law and now include protection of rights of vulnerable groups of population, securing access to quality education for all and other important functions. It can be said however, that while in the Soviet Union the system of education was mostly egalitarian, the recent developments in all the three countries contrary to the declarations made in policy documents are more towards elitism in education. Thus, in Russia the Ministry often announces competitions for schools to demonstrate their excellency which make the richer schools even more rich and channels additional resources to celebrate excellence rather than support resilience.

In Kyrgyzstan however, a lot of the Ministry's staff have participated in international projects and therefore have been exposed to a different philosophy, so they understand their role as the protection of equal rights in education and try to follow this mission.

The role of the Ministry is therefore hard to underestimate. Yet it will be true to say, that some other national agencies may play a very significant role in the national school governance system.

## National Agencies

In Azerbaijan the State Exam Centre runs centralized university admission exams and therefore plays a very important role in governing the education system because it reports not to the Ministry of Education but directly to the administration of the President, which gives it a lot of independence and a possibility to challenge the Ministry to deliver better results. The National Testing Centre in Kyrgyzstan is reporting directly to the Ministry and therefore plays a limited role in school governance. In Russia the Federal Institute of Pedagogical Measurement as

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<sup>3</sup> <http://минобрнауки.рф/министерство>

well as The Federal Testing Centre play even more limited role as they are reporting to the State Committee on Supervision in Education (SCSE) which in its turn reports to the Ministry of Education. Numerous cases of bad management of state exams and corruption were mostly attributed to poor performance of the above institutions rather than policy mistakes of the Ministry and the SCSE. In Azerbaijan, however, the State Exam Centre may significantly influence policy-making due to its independence from executive bodies.

In Russian Federation the Committee on Education of the Parliament (The State Duma) is often playing an important role. Thus, recently the Parliamentary Committee has initiated several amendments to the educational legislation which could have had a very negative effect on the system, but luckily, they have not been endorsed by the Parliament. One of such proposed amendments was to stop teaching foreign languages in schools as those are 'the languages of the enemies'. The amendment was proposed by the notorious Irina Yarovaya, who is also the author of the law restricting the freedom of information in social networks. Some positive amendments have also been approved by the parliamentary majority: thus in 2017 the amendments served to remove all legislative obstacles to inclusion. Azerbaijan's Education Commission of the National Parliament can play a similar role, particularly in University governance and in overseeing admission to HEI.

In Kyrgyzstan the Centre for Assessment and Methodology of Teaching (CAMT) plays a significant role as this is an independent agency set up with the help of American Council on International Education (ACCELS) and with financial support of the USAID to ensure fair and independent testing. While the National Testing Centre is effectively an arm of the Ministry, the CAMT's mission is to be the civil society watchdog in testing. As regards to Kyrgyz Academy of Education, its role is often rather negative: the old generation of academics is blocking new developments because these are "foreign ideas". Same as in Russia, the Academy is semi-independent from the Ministry and used to be its think-tank. This role is no longer the unique privilege of the Academy, but it still enjoys the respect of the society based on the respect to the seniors.

In Russia, however, the Academy retains its independent status only on paper. In reality it has become an arm of the Ministry of Education and is hardly ever has an opportunity to promote its own ideas.

## School inspectorate

Traditionally, under the Soviet regime, school inspection played a purely punitive role. Their mode of functioning was to find faults in every institution they visited even if the institution was successful and delivered high quality outcomes. It was not uncommon to criticize the entire school administration for a lopsided picture on the wall or dirty blackboard in one of the classrooms. Since the criteria of excellence had not been formulated it was easy to find reasons for disqualification.

This tradition, unfortunately, is still alive. In Russia and Kyrgyzstan the school inspection proper is mostly functioning on the local level- regional and municipal, while the Universities in Russia are under the federal control. Those are overseen by the State Committee for

Supervision in Education, a federal agency reporting to the Ministry of Education. The State Committee also is in charge of the quality of state exams, licensing and attestation of educational organizations and oversees the state exams procedures. Their negative verdict on the fairness of the procedure may cause a serious problem to local administration including the governor. Thus, the Moscow city administration has encouraged school leaders to fire hundreds of teachers even if for the violations of the procedure were very minor. In one of the schools a novice teacher who had to stay in the exam center for 12 hours has opened the center door to pizza delivery service and was immediately fired as he was not supposed to move out of the building or talk to anyone from outside. He was disqualified for three years in spite of the fact that this was his first month in school, because as the school principal lamely explained, “the Moscow education committee wanted blood”.

In Azerbaijan, the school inspection was looking into every detail of classroom management: they visit schools, observe lessons, check classroom journals and lesson plans, micro-managing every element of teaching activity. But after the recent education reform (2010-2012) a number of inspectors was significantly decreased, and their functions were significantly narrowed down. So, teachers and principals do not have a fear of inspection anymore.

In Kyrgyzstan, the inspection functioning at the municipal level is recruiting experienced teachers into the inspection team, probably in hope that they would do justice to school services. One should also bear in mind that Kyrgyzstan had a lot of foreign aid and support in education policy, also as regards to school inspection. This is why they have moved further away from the punitive role of school inspection.

## Local education authorities

The structure and functions of the local education authorities varies considerably across the three countries. Russia, as already mentioned in the first part of the survey, has a four-layer educational infrastructure: federal, regional, municipal and school level. The set of responsibilities of regional administration is defined in the legislation in the following way: development and implementation of regional programs for education development, founding and liquidation of educational institutions, providing conditions for quality education, protecting rights for education, quality assurance.<sup>4</sup> They secure additional funding for the educational system, adopt regional laws on education. launch campaigns on school networking and school merges, introduce innovations such as additional teacher qualifications for career within the teaching profession. While the regional administration has legislative power and usually sets policies in the region such as language policy, financial policy, teacher assessment policies and many other policies, municipal authorities have no legislative power, but they can distribute finances between schools and kindergartens and commission certain projects to schools (these are called municipal assignments). Also, municipal authorities are responsible for organizing and guaranteeing access to free of charge general and supplementary education, funding, re-organizing and liquidation of educational organizations. The city of Moscow is the only exception because in spite of its size it does not have any local sub-divisions and combines regional and municipal responsibilities.

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<sup>4</sup> The Law “On Education”.

In Kyrgyzstan the Ministry of Education and Science is represented by forty local district divisions. All the field work (except the development of strategic documents) on school administration and governance is performed at the level of local departments of education, and this is a sign of true decentralization.

In Azerbaijan local education authorities are responsible for overall education management at district level while all the policy decisions are usually made in the Ministry of Education.

### School principals

In Russia a school principal is a unilateral executive body of a school. School principals are responsible for the operational management of a school within the limits stipulated by the Law on Education and have rights and responsibilities described in the school charter. School principals by law must be part of the school governing board. They are reporting to local educational authorities and are fully dependent of them (their job contracts can be terminated any moment without explanation of reasons (Federal Law 237). However, they have an opportunity to make unilateral decisions for their schools not involving other management bodies.

Although every school in Russia must have a governing board, TALIS review<sup>1</sup> has shown that only 85% of schools have followed this order and what is even more pathetic, 40% of the principals said that they make all the important decisions themselves without consulting anybody.

In Azerbaijan according to the Exemplary School Charter (article 5), the responsibilities (role) of school principals are defined as follows: identification of school activity directions, planning school activities and controlling their implementation; implementation of state decisions related to development of general education: representing their school and its interests in state bodies and public entities; coordination of School Pedagogical council activities. Unlike Russia, the school principal has a more stable job, but is still under the full control of the Ministry and the local authorities.

In Kyrgyzstan the school principal bears full responsibility for school management.

He is responsible for managing the process of education, hiring and firing the teaching staff, organizing teaching and learning within and outside school curriculum, school meals and healthy way of life. He enjoys greater autonomy than a school principal in Russia, because in some Russian regions these are still local authorities who hire and fire staff for schools. In Kyrgyzstan a school principal is also responsible for planning, in-service training of staff, support to young teachers and improvement of quality of education. In Russia and Azerbaijan this responsibility also rests with the principal, but somehow is much less emphasized, except for the regions which have delegated in-service training budget to schools. In Kyrgyzstan however, the entire in-service training system is under reform and a part of the former Academy of Education is transformed into a new in-service training institute which will work directly with schools and explore their needs much more thoroughly, therefore school principals will be its counterparts and partners.

The pedagogical leadership role of a school principal is very important and new to post-Soviet countries where professional development had a very formal character- once in five years every teacher had to attend courses, whether he needed them or not, and the content of those courses was largely defined by the providers. Now the in-service training becomes much more teacher and school-centered and the principals must make decisions as to how best to meet their needs and spend the budget effectively.

## Teachers

By law Russian teachers have the right to freely choose forms, methods of education, textbooks, to freely express their point of view in particular on school management. By the Law on education teachers have the right to participate in school governance. Once elected they become members of a school governing board. However, the ratio of teachers in a school governing board is not defined except for a few regions (Krasnoyarsk, Khanti-Mansiiski autonomous region and Moscow). Sometimes they have a majority, but often their ratio is less than 20%.

In the majority of schools, teachers can choose forms and methods of teaching but their right to choose textbooks is limited by the prescribed list of textbooks approved by the Ministry and by financial limitations of the school. The amount of paperwork they need to produce within the accountability system is the biggest in pilot schools, lyceums and gymnasia (analogue of grammar schools) and in private schools. Teachers can participate in assessment of their colleagues once the principal delegates this responsibility to them.

In Azerbaijan the article 33 of the Education Law defines the responsibilities of the teachers in the following way: ensuring acquisition/learning of curriculum. These duties include teaching, classroom management and students' assessment.

It also defines their rights, such as

- to work in adequate working environment and be provided with technologies meeting modern standards;
- to actively participate in organization of teaching process and school governance (in accordance with school charter);
- to choose a form of teaching instruction, methods and tools;
- to demand for the respect to their dignity;
- to get a position in the school and in relevant cases to participate in elections and/or be elected;
- to be involved in professional development;
- to be awarded.

In Kyrgyzstan a teacher has the right to participate in educational institution management as it is stipulated by the school charter. The teacher manages the learning process at the class level and can also participate in managing school activities as regards to the content of education and methods of instruction. Teachers can also participate in school governance by way of joining the pedagogical councils and school methodological bodies. However, these

bodies can hardly be described as governance proper, rather these are administrative or management units since they mostly follow the prescribed procedures and do not set any goals by themselves.

The role of teachers as regards to their participation in school governance in all the three countries is often limited by the sheer lack of resources: the budget is so tight that even the choice of textbooks becomes impossible - the schools keep recycling the ones purchased several years ago. TALIS study has shown that teachers are almost never involved in managing resources, be those human or financial ones and without access to resources neither governance nor management functions are possible to perform.

## Parents/legal representatives

By the Law on Education parents in Russia have the priority rights as regards to education of their children. They can choose a school, provide domestic education to their child, protect rights and legal interests of students, get the full amount of information regarding education and monitoring of their children outcomes, participate in school governance. Parents are responsible for providing access to complete secondary education for their children<sup>5</sup>. Within the last decade parents have become much more active in school management. They join school governing boards, parental committees, boards of trustees (a governance body for some private schools). They take part in independent evaluation of school quality of education, public control and supervision. Some parents express their views not just within their schools but also represent their schools in a broader context acting as representatives of their schools. SEN children parents as well as parents of children engaged in domestic education form parental associations and take an active part in protecting rights of their children.

In Azerbaijan parents have a right to participate in school events and school governance, but school governance policy is yet in a pilot project phase.

The article 34 of the Education Law defines the rights and responsibilities of parents/legal guardians the following way:

- to choose a school for their children,
- to be informed on the teaching process organization, quality of education, their children's attendance, interest to learning and behavior,
- to protect rights of their learner children,
- to participate in school governance,
- to partner with schools, to propose suggestions for improvement of teaching process and teaching facilities and offer donations voluntarily.

Their responsibilities (role) are: to ensure holistic development of their child and his/her mandatory general education. This definition suggest that the understanding of school governance nature is still not complete. The line of the law that mentions voluntary donations

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

shows that there is still some confusion about the role of a school governor and a trustee. In this respect Azerbaijan is repeating the steps Russia has made two decades ago when school governance was often confused with fund-raising and donations.

In Kyrgyzstan parents and legal caretakers have the right to participate in an educational institution governance in the format defined by the school charter. The parents participate in the work of parental committees (at the class and school level), boards of trustees and other bodies which provide support to school functioning, However the concept of school governing boards is not yet present in the country's educational policy, therefore parental involvement is more at the administrative or management level. One should also bear in mind that in Kyrgyzstan and to a somewhat lesser extent in Azerbaijan a lot of parents are labor migrants to other countries while their children stay with caretakers, very often elderly grandparents. Setting up an infrastructure of school governing boards in these countries is therefore not very easy.

Interestingly, the fact that parents in Russia seek much more active participation in school governance than in other countries is hardly due to the fact that Russia has a more democratic way of school management: quite the opposite. The parental involvement and self-promotion is explained by the tightening grip of bureaucracy and desire to protect children and schools from corruption and nepotism. In this respect this is a true civil movement. A group of parents in one of the Moscow schools have vigorously protested against the imposition of religious education camouflaged as ethics. They have analyzed the textbooks that the school had to choose from and have proven to the Moscow City department that both books were advocating the orthodox religion. As a consequence, the course unit on "ethics" did not become part of school curriculum.

## Children, pupils, students

The role of students in school governance in all the three countries is not easy to interpret. Much depends on the school leadership and their understanding of pupils' rights and responsibility. Thus, in Russia according to the Law on Education students can participate in school management and become members of School Councils and in some cases in school governing boards, they have a right to choose a profile and supplementary education services, however often these are the parents who have the final say in this choice. In the majority of the regions students can participate in school governing boards, but this is for an individual school to decide whether to include them or not. In the city of Moscow, one of the few Russian regions that has a special legislation on school governance, students' participation is mandatory and their quota in the governing board is 25%.

Participation in school governing boards alongside the adults provides for diverse social practices, contributes to forming an active citizenship position while making decisions on strategic tasks of their schools' development.

Another mode of students' involvement in school governance is participation in students' self-governance activities. This is an opportunity to make decisions usually concerning some extra activities that students would like to launch or introduce disciplinary measures that would help



combat misconduct such as truancy or cheating. Student self-governance is the heritage of the Soviet system and is not practiced in most schools any longer, but in some regions, it still exists.

In Azerbaijan national legislation describes the rights and responsibilities of students in very many details: The article 32 of the law on education defines the responsibility of learners in the following way: to learn in accordance with state educational standards. Their rights are defined as follows:

- Be accepted by educational institutions in accordance with the legislation,
- Choose a school, form of education (formal, informal, etc.), language of instruction,
- Get quality education meeting the requirements of the state education standards,
- Choose curriculum, extra-curricular activities, school specialization (temaul),
- Use school facilities and equipment (library, etc.),
- Change the school,
- Get continuous education,
- Be educated in safe education environment,
- Be protected from actions violating their human rights and dignity,
- Demand for repeating assessment of their achievements,
- Get free of charge general education,
- Be provided with free textbooks,
- Participate in associations both local and international
- Actively participate in education process, in the school governance and have a freedom to express his/her thoughts and comments.

The legislation therefore gives students an opportunity to participate in school governance but does not define the form of their participation. This is understandable because as we already know the school governance project is still in its pilot stage.

In Kyrgyzstan students have the right to participate in school governance in the form defined by its charter<sup>6</sup>; schools have bodies of school self-governance. The form of self-governance and the degree of student participation in real decision-making is determined by the school and varies considerably from one institution to another. The Ministry recommends the following formats: school parliament, youth organizations and movements. All of these formats suggest that students work independently from the adults. Their involvement in governance may still be quite substantial, but they are not given right to participate in decision-making alongside with the adults.

	Azerbaijan	Kyrgyzstan	Russia
Participation in school governing boards	✓	n/a	✓
Participation in youth self-governance	✓	✓	✓
Participation is regulated by national legislation	✓	n/a	n/a

<sup>6</sup> «The framework act on educational organization» The order of the Ministry of Education, 2009 («Типовое положение об образовательной организации». Приказ Министерства Образования 2009 г.)

## Others

The role of the President and Presidents' administration in Russia and Azerbaijan is hard to underestimate. Traditionally, the Presidents use the system of Education for the purpose of forming ideological values and citizenship skills, they usually commission strategic documents and plans, pass decrees and initiate new legislation. However recently the role of the President of Russia has become even more significant. He is the one who determines the fate of educational innovations: supports the unified exam and does not allow to cancel it even if the Minister is in favor of such a decision. He convenes a meeting of the State Council at which within one day a strategic plan for the reform of in-service training of teachers is produced. Therefore, his role becomes much broader than just governance. He is involved in all the major details of the system management. Not surprisingly the Minister of education often announces a certain innovation and then hastily cancels it without even starting to implement it – apparently the presidential administration intervenes in every such decision and sometimes belatedly.

In Azerbaijan the President has an opportunity to significantly influence the system using the data that the national testing centre is providing. But because the tests are often too complicated, and their requirements may far exceed those of state curriculum, this opportunity is mostly used to reprimand and replace officials at local and school levels.

In Kyrgyzstan before 2013, the schools were financed from the local administration budgets and the municipal administration bodies were therefore involved in school governance. Currently municipal bodies are only responsible for providing equal access to education for all children. But in reality, because social service bodies are grossly understaffed, the registration of children living within the school catchment areas is performed by school teachers, who visit all households within the school catchment areas three times a year (In January, May and August), identifying children who do not attend schools. Therefore, we can say that municipal involvement in school governance is now practically non-existent. But the President is involved in policy making only in most important cases and does not intervene on the micro-management level. It will be true to say that while in Russia and Azerbaijan foreign agencies are no longer allowed to participate in policy-making, in Kyrgyzstan their role remains very strong. They help launch necessary innovations and are often involved in evaluation of the results. Also, in the course of the last 25 years, these agencies have trained thousands of education specialists, many of whom now hold senior positions in the government. Therefore, indirectly they continue to influence the system. One of the examples is the role a US agency ACTR-ACCELS has played in the development of SAT-like University entrance exam. This exam was a very high stake, because it determined who gets tuition-free places in the Universities. When the project funded by USAID was about to be mainstreamed, ACCELS specialists insisted on the launch of an independent Centre for Assessment and Methodology of Teaching which was to monitor the quality of the procedure. In spite of multiple attempts of the old guard in the Ministry to delegate these responsibilities to the National Testing Centre directly responsible to the Ministry, the independent centre still continues to function – very possibly due to those Ministry employers who understand the need for unprejudiced assessment.

None of the reviewed countries have mentioned trade-unions, possibly because they have lost their governance role completely. They are sometimes consulted on policy issues concerning educational staff, but their voice is hardly ever heard.

Parental associations may have a more significant role: those are very active in such issues as inclusion and homeschooling and are often represented at policy-making forums at the regional and national levels.

## Legislation

### Legal framework

In all the three countries there are pieces of legislation which directly or indirectly set the framework for school governance.

The two main legislative documents in Azerbaijan that pertain to school governance are the Law on Education<sup>7</sup> (article 30), School Pedagogical Council Charter<sup>8</sup> and Exemplary School Charter<sup>9</sup>. However the Education Law does not define the governance of educational institutions. School governance is also not defined in the list of main terms used in the Law. The Exemplary School Charter names the School Pedagogical Council as the highest governing body in a school and its functions are further described in the Charter of School Pedagogical Councils which can be considered a legislative framework of school governance. According to the article 3 of the Charter, the main duties of Pedagogical Councils are:

- To make school community aware about decisions of the state, decisions of the MoE's highest governing body (collegiya) and other regulations;
- To support creating of an effective work system in accordance with the state policy;
- To support talented children;
- To approve lesson schedule and extra-curricular activities, activities of students' councils;
- To keep stable student enrolment into mandatory education;
- To organize and oversee the work of methodological councils and subject commissions;
- To improve the school working schedule;
- To oversee transition of students from class to class/grade to grade), their retention, re-examination and summer assignments;
- To monitor results of graduation exams and students' attestation.

<sup>7</sup> Adopted in 2009, retrieved from: <http://edu.gov.az/az/page/72/302>. The Education Law regulates all the areas and aspects of education. General educational institutions in Azerbaijan include primary (1st-4th grades), basic (5th-9th grades) and full secondary (10th-11th grades) levels of education, as well as a school readiness (pilot phase).

<sup>8</sup> Approved by the Cabinet of Ministries in 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Approved by the Cabinet of Ministries in 2011, Retrieved from: <http://www.cabmin.gov.az/?/az/pressreliz/view/437/> or <http://edu.gov.az/az/page/74/3210>.

Mostly the Charter defines responsibilities of the Pedagogical Council without delegating any decision-making rights to its members.

In Kyrgyzstan the main documents that are meant to regulate school governance are as follows:

1. The law on Education of the Kyrgyz republic<sup>10</sup>
2. The law on the status of teachers
3. The norms and regulations of the Ministry of Education of the government of Kyrgyz republic (KR)
4. The code of labor of KR
5. Internal orders and regulations of the school principal.

The framework regulations on an educational organization contain the following definition of school governance: «The governance of an educational institution is performed in accordance with the law of the Kyrgyz Republic: „On Education”, the current regulations and the charter of an educational organization following the principles of democracy, openness, priority of humanistic values and free development of a personality, undivided authority and self-governance». But the main document for school governance is the School Charter. The draft of the school charter is discussed and approved at the general school conference. The changes can be introduced by the same procedure as appropriate. The Ministry of Education designs the framework charter and the schools may elaborate upon it. The charter must be registered by the Ministry of Justice after it is approved by the Ministry of Education. Therefore, although the endorsement procedure is fairly democratic, the final approval procedure is centralized and prescriptive. Russia seems to be the only country in which the Federal Law “On education” mentions school governance. Although there is no special federal law describing the role and mode of functioning of school governing boards, four regions of the Russian federation have such special legislation. The federal laws have the following definition of school governance: “Management of an educational organization is based on a balance of principles of undivided authority and collegiality<sup>11</sup>”.

An educational organization has a right to define the structure of management of its activity (p.9 article.32), however considering that the management of an educational organization is based on the principles of undivided authority and self-governance (p.2 article.35).

The Law guarantees the right to participate in the governance of an educational institution to students (p.4 article.50), their parents (legal representatives), (p.1 article.52), and to employees of the organization (p.1 article 55). It has to be said that the public-state nature of school governance was mentioned first in the Law “On Education” in 1993, and then the role of public participation was emphasized as the main pathway to school accountability. Yet it took twenty years to establish the format for it.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/1216?cl=ru-ru>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Article.26

Table 3 Types of legislation defining school governance in different countries

Legislation defining governance	Azerbaijan	Kyrgyzstan	Russia
General Law “On education”	✗	✓	✓
Regional Laws on education	✗	✗	✓
Regional Laws on School Governance	✗	✗	✓
School Charters	✓	✓	✓
Other	✓	✓	✓

## Governance bodies at school level

In Azerbaijan currently, while the school governing boards are not yet introduced country-wide, the only governance body existing at school level is the pedagogical council, which has more management than governance functions, but can increase its governance power under certain conditions. Any school having minimum three teachers must create its own Pedagogical Council.

According to the Charter of Pedagogical Council (article 1), this is the highest governing body in school and it acts in accordance with its charter. In general public schools Pedagogical council should involve every member of the school teaching staff and its role is to discuss and make collegial decisions as regards to issues specified in the previous sub-chapter.

If necessary, a school principal/head of the Pedagogical Council can invite members/representatives of other self-governing bodies (school council, children’s parliament, caretaker’s council), as well as parents to participate in advisory role without the right to vote. The agenda for Pedagogical councils can be formed based on suggestions of its members, as well as advice of other self-governing bodies representatives. However, this is the school principal who has the final say: all the decisions become legal only when translated into school principal orders.

In Kyrgyzstan the governance responsibility is rather diverse. It can rest with the general conference, board of trustees, academic councils, pedagogical councils and other councils and committees. The way elections into these bodies of co-governance are held and their scope of competence, the competences of the councils and the leader of an educational organization are defined by the laws of the Kyrgyz republic and the charters of educational institutions. The management of an educational organization is the responsibility of the principal, the rector, the head or another leader (administrator)<sup>12</sup>. The recent innovation is the establishment of school boards of trustees. The Ministry has designed a framework regulation on a Board of Trustees, trainings and promotion campaigns for this form of public involvement in school governance have been held within several donor projects. In reality the already existing school governance bodies alongside with other public foundations and agencies whose mission is

<sup>12</sup> Law “On Education” KR (Закон об образовании КР)

school support are mostly involved into financial support and fund raising rather than school governance proper.

There are two main governance agents in Russia: the school principal who has the undivided executive authority and the collegial body which in most cases is the school governing board (84% of schools of the Russian Federation have governing boards). Their composition, duties and functions are defined by the School Charter or the regional legislation if it exists. Although the vast majority of schools now have governing boards, in half of them these are still the school principals who make major policy decisions. Russian schools also have pedagogical Councils composed of the teaching staff, but those are seen as purely management bodies reporting to the school principal. Their members are not elected, and their duties are defined by the school principal. Some schools however have an alternative governance structures- either Boards of Trustees (these are mostly private schools that prefer this form of governance) or School Councils as defined by the Law "On Education" 1993. The School Councils are very close in their concept to school governing boards, but mostly have less opportunities to manage human resources.

In all the three countries parental committees and students' self-governance structures also exist. The parental committees mostly play an administrative role, supporting the teachers in organizing extra-curricular activities or collecting money for classroom needs. The students' bodies are seldom given enough rights to participate in policy discussions, but some schools do involve them.

## School principal appointment

A school principal's appointment in all the three countries is rather similar. None of the three countries has a rotation policy, so a school principal can work in a particular school until he/she is retired. The average term of service of a school principal in Russia is 1,5 times the OECD average. The school governing board, even when it exists, does not have a right to hire and fire principals.

In Azerbaijan in order to become a school principal one has to submit to the Ministry of Education an electronic application mentioning that they have a University education and at least five years of professional pedagogical or education management expertise. Those that have completed a special University program in Education management and leadership can qualify even with three years of experience. The Ministry specialists consider the application and if it meets all the requirements, the candidate is asked to take an exam. There are two stages in the selection. First, they have to demonstrate knowledge and skills in education legislation, statistics and finance. The successful graduates of the special program may be exempt from this test. The last stage is an interview administered by representatives of the three departments of the Ministry. According to the article 30 of the Education Law, public schools are managed by school principals appointed by the MoE, while principals for municipal schools, are appointed by municipalities. Principals of private schools are appointed by the founders and guardians of private schools.

According to the article 30 of the Education Law, the MoE decides on the retirement age for school principals. The Law does set up the retirement age for school managers but not teachers and researchers.

In Russia the procedure is even more complicated. According to the State Law of the Russian Federation the candidate for the school principal position could be selected and approved by the School Board or the School General Conference if the candidate is selected from existing school administrators. In some cases (no appropriate candidates suggested by school) the school principal could be appointed by the Municipal Department of Education or the Ministry of Education of Russian Federation.<sup>13</sup> Each approved candidate must have a higher education diploma and comply with the existing professional standards and qualification requirements. The appointment is valid after the candidate passes the computer testing for principals and the presents his vision at the certifying commission. Computer testing includes five units: State Policy in Education, School Management, Educational Law, Economics and Finance, Pedagogy. The main criteria for selection is demonstrating the capacity of an effective manager. As for the term of service, the regulations have changed considerably in the last five years. The school principals' position is no longer secure: he/she can be fired without an explanation of reasons any time at the discretion of the regional or federal authority. This amendment to the previous rules was possibly made for control purposes in recognition of the important role principal plays in civil society being able to influence opinions of thousands of students and parents during the election campaign.

In Kyrgyzstan, where the rules are not so elaborate, a principal is very often performing his duties for a very long time until he is retired or until he himself resigns from his position. Only then a new principal will be appointed. The appointment of a school principal is within the competence of the district sub-structure of the Ministry of Education. In 2008 new qualification requirements for the post of a school principal have been endorsed by the order of the Ministry of Education<sup>14</sup>. The following requirements were set: knowledge of the laws of the KR and international conventions signed by the government of Kyrgyzstan, higher pedagogical education, and the work experience within the system of education for not less than 5 years (also required for the post of deputy principal). However, in 2009, in the context of the reform of the system of legislation this document has been cancelled and to this day no analogous document has been endorsed. Therefore, every regional administration can design their own qualification criteria. Mostly these are education, work experience, much more rarely a program of actions designed by the candidate to the position, If the school that has a vacancy of a school principal is of status, there may be several candidates to the position and a competition can be announced. The selection procedure is held in the form of an interview. The decision is approved by the collegiate meeting of the educational administration (collegiate body including the leader and the representatives of schools and local authorities).

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<sup>13</sup> Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" # 273-FZ, 29/12/2012, article 51.

<sup>14</sup> Annex №2 to the order of the Ministry of Education dated February 11th, 2008. And №70/1, №11, On endorsement of the Regulation "On attestation of pedagogical and leadership staff of educational institutions of the Kyrgyz Republic (Об аттестации педагогических и руководящих работников общеобразовательных организаций Кыргызской Республики)" [http://presskg.com/kut/08/0926\\_12\\_14.htm](http://presskg.com/kut/08/0926_12_14.htm).

## The role of the national and regional educational authorities in the process of school principal appointment

In Azerbaijan, the country with a highly centralized management, MOE plays main the role in selection and appointment of school principal. Its representatives are central to all the three stages of the selection procedure. This is the way the procedure is described:

“Firstly, I have completed the training course (free of charge) on School Leadership for head teachers organized by MOE. I was admitted to this program after getting the recommendation from Baku city Education Department and passing successfully interview with MOE officials. After the course I took part in the exams run by MOE. This exam was structured in a form of standardized multiple-choice questions and essay. Unfortunately, I failed, and my application was not considered. A year later I passed the exam held by MOE. My second attempt was successful, and I move to the next stage of competition. So, I was interviewed by MOE Selection Committee. In three-four months after the interview I got an offer to take a vacant position of school principal.”<sup>15</sup> As for participation of the regional authorities, the Education Law clearly states that no intervention of any agencies into school governance and management is permitted.

In the much more liberal Kyrgyzstan the Central apparatus of the Ministry of Education does not participate in the process of school principal appointment. Theoretically an informal intervention (protectionism) is possible, and this was mentioned in the corruption risks within the system of education study conducted by Transparency International Kyrgyzstan.<sup>16</sup> The appointment of a school principal is in charge of the regional department of education.

In Russia with its four layers of administration the federal Ministry of Education and Science has no authority in appointment of the school principal. The main authorities are regional or municipal bodies and the school itself (see above). Thus, in the city of Moscow the head of Moscow City department is in charge of appointing school principals. He also has the undivided authority to terminate the school principal’s contract. By the law the labor contract with a school principal is to be signed by the founder of the educational organization. In the city of Moscow, the head of the department often fires the school principal without explanation of reasons after several months of service. Legally, as described earlier, any top executive in any state institution can be fired without any explanation of reasons, but in Moscow this practice is most widespread.

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<sup>15</sup> From interview with Baku School Principal, 18 July 2017

<sup>16</sup> AlymzhanovaA., AcambaevaA., Sharshenbayev A. – Corruption risks within the system of secondary education. Non-formal payments in schools, Bishkek.: 2014. [http://www.transparency.kg/files/doc/corruptionineducation\\_new.pdf](http://www.transparency.kg/files/doc/corruptionineducation_new.pdf)



## Possible provision for vetoing the nomination of the principal

In Azerbaijan the right to veto belongs solely to the Ministry of Education. The Education Law, as well as other regulations do not provide any information on vetoing the nomination of the principal.

MOE makes such decisions in the following circumstances

- Failed results of selection exams
- Health limitations
- A court decision prohibiting professional pedagogical activities.

The right to veto the nomination of a school principal is not envisaged by the legislation of Kyrgyzstan while in Russia (in Moscow as well as in some other regions) some school governing boards can negotiate the appointment of candidates proposed by the regional Department of Education as stipulated by their charters. In most regions of the Russian Federation the local department of education has a database of management reserve cadre eligible for being appointed to the position of a school principal. The candidates, mostly recruited from deputy principals' cohort must take a special in-service training course in order to become eligible. Yet, in reality only 6% of acting school principals had a proper training before they were appointed to the post. (TALIS-2013)

## Studies

There were a number of national and international studies commissioned by a range of different agencies in all the three countries. Most of them were not tackling school governance directly but contained data relevant for understanding of school governance issues. Thus, in Kyrgyzstan in 2017 the Asia Development Bank has commissioned a baseline study of 30 innovative schools, representing all regions of the country. The study was carried out by the Foundation for support of educational initiatives (FSEI) in a consortium with Erfolg Consult and EdNet. One of the parts of this study was devoted to issues of school governance. In particular the study was looking at the strategic planning process, public accountability of schools and also activities of school governance bodies. The research has shown that although the participation of stakeholders in school governance is declared as an issue of state policy, in reality, except for a few cases, the degree of public participation is very low. The researchers have recommended to organize training and consultations to form a sustainable model of school governance with public participation.

In Azerbaijan the Centre for International Education Project on Community Participation in school governance revealed that the national education law does not clearly identify the role of families and community in school functioning and does not delegate any authority in school governance to the community. It also does not define the relations between the pedagogical council and other governance bodies. A specific difficulty for the development and implementation of the community participatory school governance model is the fact that the national education law

does not clearly identify the role of families and community in school functioning and does not give decision-making power to the community in school life. The Education Law declares that schools have to have a democratic governance system (Article 31), but legal mechanisms on how to establish this system are not defined. There is also contradiction in the law. For instance, while schools have a right to establish governance and self-governance bodies, the highest governing body is the so-called pedagogical council comprising of the school administrators and teachers only. The relations between the pedagogical council and other governance bodies are not defined. The researchers concluded that the lack of appropriate legislation was the main obstacle to public participation in school governance. Also, in absence of the necessary instructions and resources, potential members of school boards were hesitant to commit their time to school governance agenda. The fact that school councils did not have legal power to act on school matters was one of the main obstacles towards creating viable school-community connections. Both school councils and school principals knew that legally the latter has all the authority to act on school matters, that the former did not have. This legal constraint reflected the whole experience and mood of the school councils.

## Lack of community commitment

School Boards were not so active and to some extent were dependent on project staff recommendations and instructions. Being a member of school council meant a commitment to work for common and shared goal. The enthusiasm at the initial stages significantly decreased toward the later stages of project implementation when it was time, for instance, to adapt sample School Charter for a particular school, or to develop a School-Community Fund as a public association established to support the school. In the process of project implementation, the school council members and project staff realized that being a school council member was almost a full-time job and required commitment. The community did not have well-developed administrative resources and human capacity necessary to participate in school governance or to create an association to support it. Another trend was the lack of community trust on the school. Highly bureaucratic schools with widespread corruption and authoritarian style of governance have lost credibility among community members. People could not provide the needed commitment if they did not trust the institution that should be implementing the project.

The studies conducted under Component 5 of the World Bank Education Sector Development Project (2008). “Strengthening Education Policy Development and Management” have demonstrated the relevance of public involvement in school governance to the success of such elements of the school reform as the introduction of efficient decentralized models of school funding, better information flow and public awareness in education achievements and challenges<sup>17</sup>. Weak public awareness campaign in support of the new funding system was seen as one of the main barriers to the success (WB report, 2010, p.29).

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<sup>17</sup> “Strengthening Community Participation in the Azeri School Governance: Lessons Learned from Some Project Experience”, “Human Rights Education in Asian Schools”, Volume Twelve, Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Centre, Osaka, Japan, 2008. <http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/pdf/asia-s-ed/v11/14Community%20Participation%20in%20the%20Azeri%20School%20Governance.pdf>

A qualitative study on how stakeholders assess the possibilities of community-based school management and its impact on the quality of education done by independent researcher Murad Nasibov.<sup>18</sup> The study recommended:

In the long-term perspective - decentralization of education system aligned with extended family services and active participation of local government.

In short-term perspective – to strengthen community participation in the school management; to revise legislative documents on Parents' Associations in order to create opportunities for meaningful and effective participation of parents; to raise public awareness through a campaign and deliver trainings for teachers, students and parents at national and local levels; to cooperate with civil society institutions and apply their experience within education reforms.

In Russia in 2001 there was a baseline study conducted by the Russian-British team of School governance project. The main finding was that in spite of the Presidents decree ordering the establishment of Boards of Trustees (1996) most schools had no governance structures. The only exception was the city of Krasnoyarsk where several schools already had boards of trustees who in their functions and structure were similar to the British model of school governing boards. Subsequently, as school governing boards began to emerge in Russia, there was a study of the main needs of school governors conducted by another Russian-British team and a training manual was produced. Recommendations on the format and content of training were also elaborated. There were several regional case studies on the basis of which local legislation was produced in four regions and recommendations were made on the functions of governing boards in each region.

Research conducted by Julia Galyamina was based on studying social networks publication and on-line public campaigns in the city of Moscow. The research has shown that although most Moscow schools were mandated to introduce school governing boards, those were introduced formally and did not perform even the simplest functions such as informing community and parents on school merge decisions which would affect the interests of their children.

## Participation in international studies

Only Russia and Azerbaijan reported participation in international studies of school governance issues. In Azerbaijan some of the international comparisons were made by individual researchers. Thus Cathryn S. Magno (2013) has produces a study called “Comparative Perspectives on International School Leadership: Policy, Preparation, and Practice. Chapter 4. Perspectives from Azerbaijan. Cultural Hybridity and Leadership: Forming Accountability in Azerbaijan.

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<sup>18</sup> Nasibov, M. (2013). “Improving the quality of education through community-based school management: Any possibility without educational decentralization?”, New Education Initiatives, presented at the Second Forum of American Azerbaijani Alumni, organized by AAA, Ministry of Education and Centre for Innovations in Education, 26 July 2013

The author explored the following issues:

- The commitment of MOE to support school managers as key players in the process of school quality improvement
- Challenges of School leadership policy in the context of centralized governance
- How lack of “financial freedom” impacts the school accountability and transparency.

Indirectly this issue was considered in Comparative study on Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education Policy in Eastern Partnership Countries.<sup>19</sup>

Russia has participated in two OECD international surveys, TALIS-2008 and TALIS-2013. The latter had a special chapter on school governance and identified the following strengths and weaknesses in Russian school governance system:

- Russian schools have a shortage of administrative staff and their number keeps shrinking. As a consequence, the burden of admin paper work is carried by school principals who hardly have any time for pedagogical leadership and by teachers who have less and less time to prepare for lessons and to interact with students. The research has shown that Russian school principals have more admin work than their peers in most countries, 56% of their time is spent on administration.
- Although most school principals have been trained for their job, they mostly had this training after they have already been appointed.

Most Russian school principals (96%) said they had school management teams and 84% said they had school governing boards. Yet 46% of the sampled school principals agreed with the following statement: “I make all important decisions myself”. When asked about functions they delegate to their governing bodies or management teams most school principals have said that they themselves make decisions about resource allocation, hiring and firing staff, add-ons to staff salaries and recruiting students. If they delegate the right to make decisions those are mostly decisions on disciplinary measures, curriculum design and assessment policies. Again, these are mostly delegated to their deputies rather than governing bodies. Russian school principals are more authoritarian than their colleagues in countries leading in international league tables. Younger school principals (aged 30 to 40), however, are more likely to delegate responsibilities to governors.

Russian school principals report a lack of qualified human resources as well as material resources, but the deficit is less than in 2008.

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<sup>19</sup> A report on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education Policy and Practice in six eastern partnership countries. 2016. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/1680703cf8>

## Changes in school governance systems in the three countries which have occurred in the last 10 years

The three countries have reported several changes that have occurred in the course of the last decade. In Azerbaijan regulations on aspiring school principals' training, appointment and replacement procedures were issued. This was done in order to centralize the procedure and eliminate local education authorities' involvement into it to prevent nepotism and corruption. Schools became fiscal agents in accordance with the amendment made to the Education Law. The right to manage school budgets was given only to schools under the direct supervision of the MoE. Other school principals are provided with debit cards allowing them to manage day-to-day expenses on school needs.

An idea of parent involvement in school management was revisited and piloted in Baku. This was done in accordance with the State Education Strategy which called for outcome-oriented responsible, transparent and effective education management mechanisms.

Teachers code of conduct was adopted and introduced in general education institutions with an intention to create a value-driven professional culture within secondary schools.

In Kyrgyzstan, a reform of the country governance based on decentralization of management and increasing the role of local self-governance (rural and city councils) was promoted since the 90s. The state funding of schools was performed through municipalities and the municipalities were held responsible for education locally. Also, the bodies of local self-governance (BLSG) participated in the processes of school principals' appointment (in partnership). But as of 2013 the funding of schools is performed in a centralized way through the regional departments of education (except the city of Bishkek where the funding of schools is still performed through the mayorate). The BLSG currently only cover the communal costs and the building maintenance. The decrease of the scope of responsibility of municipalities have led to lower participation of BLSG in school governance.

From 2010 to 2014 stage by stage, all funding of schools of Kyrgyzstan have been transformed towards formula-based per capita model. This transition was meant to increase school autonomy and broaden participation of all stakeholders in budget management as well as contribute to the transparency of management. Unfortunately, none of the expected changes have happened and all the decisions regarding school budget management are still made not in schools but at the local educational administration agencies.

The donor projects (USAID, WB) promoted interventions into school governance by way of developing methods and instruments of management such as:

- strategic planning (school improvement)
- development of boards of trustees
- the system of motivation an assessment of teachers.

The suggested instruments were supported by the Ministry, but never became part of the day to day practice and are used only by individual advanced schools.

In Russia The Law on autonomous, budgetary and state maintained organizations was approved in 2010. It has limited the role of school governance in the budgetary and maintained

institutions while for autonomous ones the school governance has become a necessity. The Law “On Education” (2012) has stipulated state-public governance of education once again but has not given clear guidance on school governing boards’ role. However, the Strategy for Education Development of the Federal Ministry has emphasized the school governance role, thus the number of boards has increased several times just within the last five years.

The policy of optimizing education resources has led to cuts in school budgets and school merges. In Moscow these merges were to be approved by school governing boards, but in reality, most of the boards were either established formally and were totally dysfunctional or their opinion was ignored. The city department has introduced a rule that once the decision on merging schools was taken, the former board was to be replaced by a new one. Thus, even when the board was questioning the decision, according to Moscow legislation they already were out of power.

Surprisingly even in such circumstances some governing boards managed to protect their rights and denounce the planned merge. Currently the study is being conducted by the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences to explore the role school governing boards had in the process of merges.

Similar merges are now occurring in other regions, and in rural settings where school boards were either non-existent or very weak, parental views are not taken into account.

Changes in governance	Azerbaijan	Kyrgyzstan	Russia
Decentralization	✗	✓ Until 2010	✗
Centralization	✓	✓	✓
Capacity building for governors	✗	✗	✓
Legislative changes	✓	✗	✓
Per capita funding of schools	✗	✓	✓
Development of the Education code	✓	✗	✗

*Governance at the school level and quality of education*

## The effectiveness of the existing governance structures at the school level in helping to improve teaching and students’ learning

In all the three countries the main responsibility for improvement of teaching and learning rests with the school principal.

In Azerbaijan awarding and punishments are the main principal’s tools towards improvement. The decisions are made based on the class coordinator annual reports and deputy principal’s reports on schoolchildren academic achievements. Then the principal has to report to senior officials and produce a school annual strategy plan before and after school year with participation of all school teaching staff.

In Kyrgyzstan the law on education stipulates that the schools are autonomous in the way they assure quality. However, given the current deficit of resources (human, financial and methodological) and weak support of the ministry this system does not work effectively and the quality across the country does not improve much. The motivation and skills of the school principal are among the main success factors. This is the school principal, who identifies community members who could add value to school life and ways of its involving them into school activities.

In Russia the responsibility for quality of education in an individual school is to be joint responsibility of the school principal and the governing board. But at the moment most school governance structures exist only on paper: school leadership had been mandated to introduce governing boards and many of them did it very formally. School principals are reluctant to introduce effective boards because in reality they are still fully accountable for everything that is happening in schools while some decision-making power is taken away from them. However, in some regions school governors are trained and equipped with manuals and checklists. This is true about Krasnoyarsk, Karelia, Khanti-Mansi republic. The evidence that these tools help the board members to become more effective has not been properly documented, yet the composition of school governing boards in the above mentioned regions is revised more often than in other places, some decisions made by school boards have allowed school leadership to introduce changes into the curriculum they otherwise could not make (more foreign language classes, more courses taught at the advanced level etc.)

### Composition of the governance body

Since only Russia has endorsed school governing boards across the country, we will describe their situation first. As specified below the school governing board composition is determined by the school charter. However, in the draft of the law on public governance of schools which was submitted to the Parliament in 2002 it was recommended that the number of parents is bigger than the number of teachers, and that there are only one or two representatives of the founder. In the city of Moscow though the local legislation stipulates that there is an equal proportion of parents, school teachers, students and community members. As regards to vulnerable groups (migrant families, SEN children parents) those are seldom taken into consideration while composing school governing boards.

In Azerbaijan the only body that can support the school principal in decision making is the School Pedagogical Council. Although in theory the selection is done based on School Pedagogical Council Charter, mostly the charter does not allow election process: members must join if they hold a certain position in the school: teaching staff members, technical staff, school doctor, head of school PTA etc.

In Kyrgyzstan the Ministry has declared openness and public accountability of the school system. However, it did not set any guidance to the process and does not allocate appropriate resources. The schools use resources of the local community trying to involve existing stakeholders into school activities. The donor projects existing in Kyrgyzstan contributes to this purpose. These are not just educational projects, but also youth, community-building, health ones, because schools in rural communities are the only socially active agencies and they participate in implementation of the majority of social projects.

## **The role of school leadership in promoting learning**

Since even in Russia where school governing boards do exist, this is the school principal who has the ultimate responsibility for the school success and failure, therefore the way school principals are trained and supported is of utmost importance. The evaluation of the school effectiveness depends on evaluation of the results of learning. Recently national and local school ratings became widespread in Russia, and the system of independent evaluation of the quality of education provides the school administrators with the necessary information and the feedback, which could be used for decision making. So, promoting learning depends on the common efforts and shared philosophy of all key stakeholders, including principals, administrators, teachers, parents, students, etc.

The modern system of recruiting school principals in most regions of Russia emphasizes their capacity as managers, but not as teachers or instructors. The everyday workload of school principals prevents their active involvement in the teaching practice or exercising instructional activities to the faculty. Previously most school principals were combining teaching and administration (as per TALIS-2013 outcomes) but this situation is rapidly changing. One of the major challenges these days is the capacity in pedagogical leadership, since the principals seldom see management of professional development of their staff as their primary duty, rather, they treat this responsibility formally, sending the teachers for in-service training on the regular basis (until recently once in 5 years) regardless of the actual need. It is obvious that such practice does not lead to school improvement.

In Russia as well as in Kyrgyzstan school principals are usually recruited from the cohort of deputy principals. In the cities of Moscow and Bishkek the school governance authorities form the succession pool from those willing to take the leadership post. In Russia though when the principal is selected from outside, the school governing boards sometimes are asked to approve the nominee. But largely the current mechanism for recruitment corresponds to the existing system of governance.

There is an interesting innovation in Azerbaijan: in some schools the teachers are encouraged to take part in the diagnostic assessment of the school principals and thus can influence evaluation of their performance for improvement purposes.

## **Transparency of school leadership and public accountability of leaders**

In Russia according to article 29 of the Federal Law on Education each school is supposed to have a site and there are strict prescriptions of the State Committee on Supervision specifying what should and what should not be posted. Thus, detailed descriptions of the curriculum are posted while exam results and staff performance data are not. While selecting a school for their children parents do not have an opportunity to compare performance of the neighboring schools, nor do they have data on their financial circumstances. Yet, every year the school principal must report to the parents and staff and describe all the outcomes of the school work. Another way of finding data on school performance is following school ratings. Those



ratings, however, do not necessarily portray the actual state of affairs. Schools who have more school Olympiad winners or students with excellent marks will make the top of ratings regardless of the number of failing students or drop-outs. Big schools have better chances than small schools because what matters is the sheer number of high performers, not their percentage in the intake. The place in the rating affects school financing – the lower the place, the less support the school will get from the local authorities.

In Azerbaijan the head of the School PTA is a member of Pedagogical council and responsible for informing the team about all decisions related to school performance.

There are no clear mechanisms of informing and involving community members in management decisions. Baku city Education department has introduced Microsoft Outlook program to all school as a tool for sharing information related to school administration and networking. The school principals value this innovation as an effective platform for schools networking.<sup>20</sup>

In Kyrgyzstan schools report the outcomes of their activity every half year as required by the local departments of education. The standards procedure is to do it during school assembly held in September and in January.

Recently a new practice became widespread: schools organize budget hearings at which they present the draft of the budget and also report on budget execution. This is an interesting way to ensure transparency of finance and to reach consensus on spending.

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<sup>20</sup> From interview with Baku School principal, 18 July 2017

## School leadership

### Continuous professional development for school principals

In all the three countries school principals are supposed to attend CPD courses held by national or local in-service training institutes. But the standards for those do not exist. In Azerbaijan, however, in 2014 a special curriculum was designed for a short term professional development program.

There is no structured or planned system of professional development for school principals in Russia with the special focus on development of their leadership skills. The most of existing trainings, courses or workshops are practice-oriented and cover the everyday issues of the school budget planning, salary payments, educational law, etc. The courses are usually presented by academics or teacher trainers who are specialists in a certain subject area with no experience in real life school management or/and leadership skills. No after training support, or mentor's assistance is provided. TALIS research has shown that only 6% of school principals have been trained for the job before they have started working.

In Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan seminars with invited international experts are often organized by MOE and Universities, some of them are parts of international projects. In Azerbaijan summer courses for school principals are organized by in-service Teachers Institutes or other licensed training institutions with MOE support.

Continuous professional development of school principals	Azerbaijan	Kyrgyzstan	Russia
Standards for CPD exist	✗	✗	✗
Training needs analysis is performed	✓	✓	✓
Training programs for principals are available	✓	✓	✓
Summer schools are available	✓	✗	✗
Principals are obliged to participate in CPD	✓	✓	✓
Leadership program is available	✓	✗	✓

### Teacher leadership and distributed leadership programs

In Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan, the idea of teacher leadership is not yet widespread and there are no appropriate courses or curriculum. Teacher leadership is mostly practiced in international projects.

In Russia there are three ongoing professional development programs which promote the practice of teacher leadership and distributed leadership: the professional development courses on Management in Education at RANE (at Moscow Higher School of Social and Economic Studies), Higher School of Economics, and MIRBIS University.

## Reward system for school principals

In Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan this is the school that can get some additional support, but not the school principal. The school winner In Azerbaijan was getting 10 000 AZN award to be spent for school activities. In Kyrgyzstan regular competitions are held to identify the best school and the following criteria are taken into account: the dynamics of academic testing outcomes, innovations and the number of projects implemented in the school.

In Russia if the school is ranking high enough in school ratings, the principal could be rewarded with local or government professional awards like medals or honorary titles, in some cases – could get some personal premium or grant. The situation is very different in big cities and local rural communities in remote regions. In Moscow good performance of the school means that the principal has more chances to remain the principal of the same school for another five years, i.e. the Department of Education will prolong the job contract if there is one. The school ranking highly in Moscow, however, and entering top-100 or top-200 schools league table will get increased funding for the next year, which may mean that the principal's salary is increased but the decision is taken not in the school itself but in the Department of Education.

Reward system for principals for school's good performance	Azerbaijan	Kyrgyzstan	Russia
Increasing salary for a period of time	✗	✗	✓
Advancement in their position	✗	✗	✓
National award	✓	✓	✓
Municipality bonus	✗	✓	✓
School receives an incentive	✓	✗	✓
School receiving national recognition	✓	✓	✓

## Providing guidance to teachers in teaching related tasks

In Russia and Kyrgyzstan, the principals are not explicitly required to provide guidance to teachers for curriculum and teaching tasks. In both countries the school principal is personally responsible for the organization and outcomes of education but if the school is big enough (500 students and more) the principal will have a deputy director in charge for the teaching and learning process. There is a dramatic shift in Russia within the recent years from principal who is a leader in teaching to principal who is an effective manager. The new qualification standard does not require school principal to have a diploma on Pedagogy or Educational Psychology. In Azerbaijan in accordance with the Exemplary School Charter, school principals are directly responsible for creating an environment and psychological climate which is conducive for creativity and initiative of teachers, as well as implementation of pedagogical innovations.

In all the three countries the principals are responsible for in-service training of their staff, but this responsibility is rather formal: making sure that teachers do not miss the prescribed trainings. In Azerbaijan however according to the Exemplary School Charter, school principals are responsible for providing suggestions to the Council on recruitment of cadres, professional development of teachers, dismissal of teachers whose performance do not meet defined requirements.

In all the three countries school principals are also responsible for suggesting financial stimulation/rewarding of the best performing teachers. In Russia and Kyrgyzstan, unlike Azerbaijan, they can do it without seeking permission of the senior authorities. However, this opportunity to offer small bonuses to best performing teachers turned out to be a mixed blessing: first the schools have to agree criteria for rewards and even at this stage there are a lot of misunderstandings, while the actual reward procedures have led to multiple conflicts in school teams. This is understandable: the principals seldom observe teacher’s performance; therefore, it is difficult to make judgments about its quality.

In Kyrgyzstan as the consequence of such conflicts a decision was made to set a moratorium on teacher attestation and evaluation of their performance.

Providing guidance to teachers	Azerbaijan	Kyrgyzstan	Russia
Developing common understanding of curriculum	✓	✓	✓
Guidance on principles of teaching and learning	✗	✗	✗
Guidance on methodological principles	✗	✗	✗
Ensuring professional development of teachers	✓	✓	✓
Rewarding good performance	✓	✓	✓

## Evaluating teacher performance

In Russia and Azerbaijan, the school principal is required to control the performance of a teacher. The new Russian “Program for the improvement of the system of wages” introduces a new system of labor relations on the base of the “effective contract”<sup>21</sup>. The new type of the job contract with the employee includes indicators and criteria of evaluation of effectiveness of the employee’s job performance, which influences the amount of stimulating payments. The criteria for the teacher performance evaluation differ from one school to another, they are fixed by the local school acts, and used as instruments to evaluate the results of teaching and the quality of educational services provided to students. The actual monitoring is usually done by the deputy principal, but the feedback from the students and their parents, the recommendations of the school subject/methodological association, or the school center of monitoring the quality of teaching learning can also be taken into account.

<sup>21</sup> Order of the Government of the Russian Federation #2190-r, 26/11/2012.

Once in five years each teacher in Russia must be certified by a school attestation commission, which is done in public, but the principal is in charge for the development of guidelines for this procedure. But in Kyrgyzstan currently there is a moratorium as regards to attestation of teachers. The payment system does not envisage separate categories of teacher status. Thus, no evaluation of teacher performance is possible.

The procedure of evaluation however has been designed, but currently it is not applicable. It includes:

- 1) Evaluation of teacher's portfolio;
- 2) Lesson observation;
- 3) Interview;
- 4) Qualification testing.

## Supporting Principals to Improve Schools

### Regulations for continuous professional development of school principals

The variance in CPD requirements among the three countries is significant.

There are no special regulations in the Russian legislation for the status of CPD training of school principals. It is up to a principal to participate in CPD, or not. According to the Law “On Education” every teacher and every principal has a right to get an in-service training course once in three years, but this is not mandatory for the principal to do so.

In Azerbaijan CPD is a part of the new appointment system which was piloted in 2014. New Appointment system was piloted in 2014. Every candidate to the school principals post must take a three months training (180 hours) following the training curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education. It consists of the following courses:

- Education Quality management
- Education legislation
- ICT & learning technologies
- Qualitative and quantitative methods
- Educational leadership
- Educational psychology and personal development
- Curriculum: theory and applications
- Education finance
- School community & community relationship support

In Kyrgyzstan in accordance with the legislation teachers and school principals must attend in-service training courses at least once in five years as was the case in Russia several years ago. The standards duration of a course is 72 hours and it is organized by national and regional institutes of education (based in Bishkek, Osh and Karakol). But only less than a half of school teachers and principals go through the prescribed courses, possibly because local departments of education also organize their own courses. Donor projects make an important input into school principals’ education, but their outreach is uneven, and the content depends on the agenda of each project.

Participation in continuing professional development	Azerbaijan	Kyrgyzstan	Russia
Participation is voluntary	✓	✗	✓
Participation necessary for the employment	✓	✗	✗
Participation required on a regular basis	✗	✓	✗

## Who pays for professional development of a school principal?

In all the three countries school principals can get free tuition if these are courses prescribed or recommended by the national or regional Ministries. In some cases, a local Department of Education in Russia could form a group of specially selected principals under some grant competition and forward them for a professional development course or internship, covering all expenses, including the tuition fees, transportation and accommodation. Such opportunities are available in wealthier regions. In Azerbaijan as well in case if candidates are selected through the MOE competition they get free tuition for CPD. But while in Russia and Azerbaijan school principals can also take a fee-paying course and pay from their own pocket, the school principals in Kyrgyzstan almost never pay for their professional development from their own pocket except when they take a course in a private school. But this practice is not widespread.

Financing of continuous professional development	Azerbaijan	Kyrgyzstan	Russia
Self-financing by school principals	✓	✗	✓
School budget	✗	✗	✓
State/local budget	✓	✓	✓
Donors/ organizers	✓	✓	✗

## School principal performance evaluation and consequences for principals' CPD

In all the three countries there are no formal procedures for school principal's evaluation and therefore there are no direct relationship between the evaluation and CPD. In Russia schools and principals have a full freedom to choose any professional development course they are interested in. Since 2014 the school in Russia acquired a separate budget item to be spent on professional development (the money comes from the regional budget). Sometimes, the certification (attestation) commission at the Department of Education may insist that the principal to take some specific training or professional development course, if he/she showed the lack of some specific competencies, but this does not happen very often. In Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan mentorship support for school principals is not available. In Kyrgyzstan performance evaluation of school principals is not conducted. The training materials for school principals have previously been designed by the national institute of education and currently the strategy and the curricula of the Institute are being revisited with the support of Asia Development Bank (Columbia University).

## What is required to remain the principal?

Continuous professional development does not affect employment in any of the three countries. In Russia all the decisions regarding the prolongation of the job contract with a principal are taken by the certification commission at the local Department of Education. The principal is interviewed to check whether he/she meets the requirements of existing professional standards and can demonstrate his leadership abilities. The place the school occupies in the global ratings and its development in comparison to other schools in the region also matter. CPD courses may be recommended by the commission but hardly influence the final decision.

In Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan there is no formal procedure for the prolongation of school principals' contracts. Informal indicators of a successful school principal include the number of schoolchildren-winners of national and international Olympiads, the number of school leavers admitted to HE institutions and the number of teachers who got state awards such as the Best Teacher of the Year. In Kyrgyzstan within the project of Asia Development Bank the new methodology of teacher and school principals' appraisal is being developed. In 2016 it was piloted in 30 innovative schools but because of the moratorium on attestations for three years it has been put on ice.

## Can a principal be fired for breaching his responsibilities?

In each of the three countries a school principal can be dismissed due to breach of responsibilities, however the procedures vary. Previously in Russia the school principal could be fired under the Labor Code of the Russian Federation for the serious breach of responsibilities which was followed by injury or the property damage.<sup>22</sup> The latest Federal Law added 14 more reasons for the principals to be fired under "initiative of the employer" (i.e. local Department of Education)<sup>23</sup>. The procedure includes the inquiry into the incident by corresponding divisions of the Department of Education, and issuing an order on termination of the labor contract with a principal.

In Azerbaijan the decision is made on the basis of school audit report done by educational officials. The audit might be initiated in response to teachers' or parents' complaints.

In Kyrgyzstan if a school principal is to be fired, the decision is made by the collegium of the local department of education. This can be done on the grounds of inspection findings, conflicts in school or even a criminal case (in case of mismanagement).

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<sup>22</sup> Labour Code of the Russian Federation, p.10 Part I, article 81.

<sup>23</sup> Federal Law #116-FZ 05/05/2014, article 81.



## Performance reviews and their influence on salary and bonuses

Performance reviews per se do not influence the salaries. In Kyrgyzstan, as we know they are suspended and the current salary system does not allow any variations in payments based on the school principal performance outcomes. In Russia the salary of the principal depends mostly on the place the school occupies in the national and regional school ratings, as well as the school budget (the number of students in a school). The more students in a school, the more is the school budget, and thus the higher salary of a principal. In some cases, the local Department of Education could motivate the most successful principals by monthly additional bonuses to be added to their fixed salaries. The level of the school principal' salaries varies greatly in different regions of Russia.

In Azerbaijan if the school team has agreed to take part in the diagnostic assessment the school principals and their deputies can get a salary increase.

## Major domains of responsibility of School leadership - Supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality

In Russia and Azerbaijan, the responsibility for evaluating teacher quality and their professional support rests the school subject area units ("predmetnie metodicheskiye ob'edineniya"), "methodological" councils, which unites professionals in some subject areas, and pedagogical councils. In other words, these are professional communities that support teachers. Their responsibilities include initiating independent testing of students, evaluation of the teacher's performance, decision making regarding the types of the programs to be taken, curriculum, and the textbooks selection, etc. If needed, the subject area units could provide support to a new teacher who comes to teach in the school by way of introducing a mentorship program and ongoing assistance.

In all the three countries the deputy director in charge for teaching and learning monitors and controls the teaching process, and provides the teachers with ongoing support.

The Governing Board in Russia ("Upravlyaushiy sovet") does not usually get involved into teaching quality matters, however no legal norms preclude it from getting involved.

In Azerbaijan the Pedagogical Council has the right to define a school schedule in accordance with the local context and to reward school staff members for their effective work, as well as students and for their achievements.

The existing system of school governance in Kyrgyzstan has not changed in any major way in the last two decades and is not effective in improving teacher quality.

Support, evaluating and developing teacher quality	Azerbaijan	Kyrgyzstan	Russia
Responsibility of principal	✗	✗	✗
Responsibility of school Council/governing board	✗	✗	✓
Responsibility of deputy principal	✓	✓	✓
Responsibility of subject-based professional bodies in school	✓	✗	✓
Responsibility of the pedagogical council	✓	✓	✓

## Involvement of school governance structures in schools in goal-setting, assessment and accountability

In all the three countries the school principals and their deputies carry the responsibilities for goal-setting, assessment and accountability.

Formally goal-setting is a direct objective of the school Governing Boards wherever they exist, but even in Russia this is the school principal and his deputies who evaluate and analyze the information and data, provided to them by the authorities. Once in a year the school principal must report to the Governing Board on the above mentioned three issues. The members of the Governing Board are not very much experienced in policy-making, and unless specially trained, they have to trust the school principal because he has much higher level of competence and vision.

In Azerbaijan members of the Pedagogical School Councils discuss relevant information, annual reports done by school principal, head teachers and teacher reports on students' academic achievements, monitoring reports on student assessment. However, as it was indicated in analysis of CIE Project experience, there is still serious challenge caused by authoritarian school culture: "Community School councils' actions depended on the school principals' opinion, and very often the latter's views dominated." This hierarchical situation reflects the hierarchy existing within the public education system.

In Kyrgyzstan in 2008 within the framework of the World Bank project a set of recommendations was developed "How to make a school improvement plan".<sup>24</sup> This set of recommendations was endorsed by the Ministry of Education as an instrument of planning and assessing school activities with the involvement of parents and community members. Unfortunately, only a few schools are using these recommendations these days.

<sup>24</sup> How to make a school improvement plan Bishkek, 2009 (Как разработать школьный план улучшения обучения и воспитания. – Бишкек, 2009.)

## School governance involvement in strategic financial and human resource management

Management of the resources in the three countries either rests with the school senior management team or even with local educational authorities, and this means that schools do not have the autonomy. Though formally all of existing Governing Boards in Russian schools include such responsibilities as direct monitoring/controlling the process of the budgetary spending, and participation in strategic financial planning, all the strategic financial and human resource management decisions are usually made by the principal and the chief accountant officer or financial director. The issues on HR management should be coordinated with the teacher trade unions. As TALIS has demonstrated, all decisions about resource allocation in schools, be it financial or human resources are made by school principals.

In Azerbaijan even when the school has raised money from the paid services or grants, all payments are transferred to the bank accountant of the district Education department. The school principal develops the plan for spending fundraised money for the current school needs and submits to educational authorities for approval.”<sup>25</sup>

In Kyrgyzstan the financial and human resource management is performed in a centralized way. The state budget money is managed by municipal departments of education. Boards of trustees and public foundations created in schools manage additionally mobilized finance together with the school principal, while all human resource issues are considered sole handedly by the school principal.

## Collaboration with other schools and school governance involvement

This is another area in which the situation in the three target countries differs considerably. While in Russia the degree of collaboration between schools is rather low because of numerous competitions and ratings that cause tension, in Azerbaijan and even more so in Kyrgyzstan the schools are strongly encouraged to cooperate. After the new national curriculum was introduced in Azerbaijan in 2009, excellence centers (on various subjects) were set up in the best performing schools. The best subject teachers were appointed to share their best practices with other school teachers. In Kyrgyzstan local schools with the support of the local departments of education are linked to conduct programs of methodological studies and exchange of the expertise. The structure of management promotes cooperation between school principals, teachers and students as well as sharing the resources. It is interesting that better financial conditions often are counterproductive for school collaboration, while shortages encourage it.

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<sup>25</sup> From interview with Baku city school principal

## School councils

### Local names of school governing bodies

The local names of the school councils are summarized in the table below, and it is obvious that each of the names presupposes a different function of the agency, and this will be explored in the latter subsections.

Country	Name	English translation	Characteristics
Azerbaijan	PedaqojiŞura	Pedagogical Council.	This is not an elected body composed predominantly of the school staff
Kyrgyzstan	Попечительский Совет	Board of Trustees.	This is an elected body composed of parents, members of school staff and sponsors. Its function is mostly to raise money
Russia	Управляющий Совет Совет Школы	School governing board. School Council.	The concept of the governing board implies policy-making, resource management and goal setting power. The School Council has no resource management function

### Composition of school governing board

The Governing Board in Russia consists of:

- Representatives of the students' parents (statutory representatives), representatives of the employees of the educational organization, representatives of the high school students (once they are elected);
- Representatives of the local community, nominated by the Board from those who have graduated from the educational organization, employers or their representatives who are directly or indirectly involved in the organization or in the social development of the district where this organization is located; citizens who are known for their cultural, scientific, social activities (including charity); other members of the public and legal entities in accordance with the co-optation;
- A school principal, a representative of the founder, a representative of the trade union in accordance with the position taken;

The number of the Board can vary from 9 to 30 (depending on the size of the school). Parent representatives usually slightly outnumber representatives of teachers, but some regional legislation have them in equal proportion (Moscow).

## WHO RULES THE SCHOOLS?

The Pedagogical Council in Azerbaijan usually consists of the school principal, teachers, school doctor, technical staff members, librarian, head of PTA. According to the Pedagogical Council's Charter (article 2) teachers, school doctor and a head of parent's committee are members of the Pedagogical Council.

A school principal is appointed as a head of the Pedagogical Council. A Secretary is elected among the Pedagogical Council members for a year, in the beginning of each teaching year all decisions of the Pedagogical Council are made based in the majority of votes.

The Ministry of Kyrgyzstan recommended the framework charter of a Board of Trustees which can serve as the basis for developing a school's own charter. However, the exact composition is not yet defined, and research shows that Boards of trustees are not yet operational in schools.

The chart below therefor specifies the composition only for Russia and Azerbaijan

Representation in the school body	Azerbaijan	Russia
Teachers	✓	✓
Parents	(1)	(5-11)
Students	✗	✓ In some cases.
Local community	✗	✓ In some cases.
Local government	✗	✓ In some cases.
Local education authority	✗	✓
School staff other than teachers	✓	✗
School founder	✗	✓
Ministry of Education	✗	✗
Business Community	✗	✓
Principal	✓	✓
Deputy principal	✓	✓
Other organizations	✓	✓
Social partners	✗	✓
Trade Unions	✗	✓ In some cases.

## The term of members of the school council

As a rule, members of the governing board in Russia are elected for two-three years terms.

Members may be re-elected, except for some special cases when they stop being eligible either because of an offence, negligence of duties or change of the position. All the reasons for denying re-election are specified in regional laws.

In Azerbaijan the term of members of the Pedagogical Council, as well as re-election issue are not defined in the legislation.

In Kyrgyzstan the members of the council (Board of Trustees) are elected for three years.

## Responsibilities of the School Council

The School Governing Board in Russia bears social, partnership and civil responsibility for decisions made to the school community. The Governing Board decides upon the strategic issues of the school life. The Governing Board decisions are compulsory for everyone. The members' rights, duties, responsibilities are stated in the School Charter.

According to the article 3 of the Pedagogical Council's Charter in Azerbaijan it discusses and makes decisions on the following issues based on discussion: approval of school annual and prospective (strategic) activity plans, hearings of school annual and semi-annual reports, results of monitoring of teaching process on all subjects, pedagogical innovations, implementation of best practices, improvement of teaching quality, as well as improvement of school management.

The main purpose of the Board of Trustees activities in Kyrgyzstan is to support the educational institution in delivery of its mission stipulated in the charter. Joined activities of organizations and individual citizens aimed at improving provisions and knowledge base as well as control over purposeful spend of the extra-budgetary resources are parts of this support.<sup>26</sup>

## Role of the school council in appointment of the school principal

The concept of a school governing board presupposes an influence on hiring and firing school principals. In some Russian regions (for example, in Moscow) the Governing Board is entitled to elect the school principal from three candidates proposed by the Department of Education. However, in most regions, the Governing Board has no influence on the process of appointing the school principal.

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<sup>26</sup> Framework statute of A Board of Trustees in state and municipal; educational institutions of Kyrgyz republic. Типовое положение о попечительских советах в государственных и муниципальных общеобразовательных организациях Кыргызской Республики

In Azerbaijan the school council is not involved in the appointment of school principal. And in Kyrgyzstan it is envisaged that boards of trustees would not participate in hiring school principals, but according to their statute may appeal to the local administration to fire the principal if he is not fulfilling his duties.

## Introductory training for school board members

Russia remains the only country in the entire region, which does have such an introductory training. A special curriculum has been created for this purpose and it can be delivered as face-to-face instruction taking 4-16 hours or via online learning. It covers the following topics:

SECTION 1. The State-Public Educational Management and the concept of public governance.

SECTION 2. The Governing Board in the Strategic Management of Modern School.

SECTION 3. Transparency in Education.

SECTION 4. Assessment and Public Quality Control in Education.

In the course of this training session the board members can get a checklist which would help them in monitoring quality of education in their school.

## Manuals for school board members

In Azerbaijan the Pedagogical Council Charter is the main document that can be used as a manual for the members. No manuals or instructions are yet available in Kyrgyzstan.

In Russia the Centre for School Governance has published several manuals and while drafting them, paid special attention to the language avoiding complicated professional terminology so that any parent could understand the text. Also, the Governing Board members can have a set of brochures "School Manager Library" which were also produced by the Centre.

The following brochures have been produced:

- Welcome to the Governing Board
- The Governing Board committees and commissions
- The school principal and the Governing Board: working together
- Students in the Governing Board
- The Governing Board Chairman
- The Governing Board secretary
- Manual of rules and regulations of the state-public educational governance
- School economy for school managers

- The Governing Board and strategy: let's make the school better
- Designing a school development program. Manual for The Governing Board members
- The Governing Board: the verge of transparency
- Students' health management

## Legal responsibility of school council members

A school principal who has delegated authority to make policy decisions to the governing board also expects delegating certain responsibilities. Therefore, in the UK the governing board as an entity is legally accountable for its decisions. This is not the case in all the three ex-SU countries.

In Kyrgyzstan the degree of responsibility of the members of the Board of Trustees is not defined by the framework statute at all. In Azerbaijan the members of the Pedagogical Council are legally responsible for decisions concerning extreme cases of HR management. Thus, written and signed School Council protocols might be used as evidences for taken decisions, such as firing a member of school staff.

In Russia the Governing Board as an entity does not have legal responsibility for the decisions made. Its responsibility is civil and social. This is public responsibility for the education and socialization of children. But, if the Governing Board takes an illegitimate decision (violating the laws of Russian Federation), a representative of the founder can cancel the decision.

Some regional school governance laws establish personal responsibility of the Governing Board members for the decisions which lead to mismanagement of finances.

## School Council members involvement into the recruitment of teachers

Management of human resources is an important function of public governance systems, because no policy decisions can be implemented in the absence of the resources.

Yet, none of the three countries have explicitly delegated authority to hire and fire teachers to their school councils. However, in Azerbaijan, although teachers are recruited centrally, by the local or even national authorities rather than the school itself, the Pedagogical Councils' decision is needed for firing them in case of misconduct.

In Russia the Governing Board members may nominate teachers if vacancies are available. But this responsibility is not directly included in the list of their duties. 100% of the school principals sampled by TALIS-2013 have mentioned that hiring and firing reaching staff is their exclusive responsibility.



## School Council's involvement in management of financial resources

The role of school councils in management of financial resources in all the three countries is limited to the approval of the overall budget, management of extra-budgetary resources and fund-raising. Thus, in Russia the Governing Board members review the budget estimates of the educational organization and approve extra-budgetary estimates of the educational organization. They may be engaged in fundraising attracting additional financial resources to provide for school needs (charitable donations, grants). Recently the Governing Board became involved in the development of criteria for the incentive rewards for school staff (bonuses). This is an important function because it makes the procedure of rewarding teachers for good performance more transparent.

In Azerbaijan the school council is involved in fundraising activities. Here is a replica of an Azeri school principal: "As a newly appointed school principal I noticed that our schoolchildren were not involved in international Olympiads due to lack of travel funds. I've discussed this issue at a Pedagogical Council meeting and got a very positive feedback. We have established a Committee consisting of parents and teachers who developed and realized a good fundraising plan. This year a group of our students took part in IT Olympiad in Romania."<sup>27</sup>

In accordance with its statute the Board of Trustees oversees the use of financial resources and must work towards attracting additional ones in Kyrgyzstan.

The school council and management of financial resources	Azerbaijan	Kyrgyzstan	Russia
Approving the draft of the school budget	✗	✓	✓
Proposing and reviewing the annual financial report	✗	✓	✓
Involvement in fundraising	✓	✓	✓
Managing extra-budgetary resources	✓	✓	✓
Drafting the financial plan	✓	✗	✗
Development of criteria for the incentive rewards	✗	✗	✓

## The role of the school council in management of running costs

The school council in Azerbaijan has no responsibility for managing running costs, while in Kyrgyzstan the Board of Trustees oversees their budget. In Russia the Governing Board is occasionally involved in the distribution of funds for running costs (for example, when choosing new equipment for the school canteen, or purchasing computers).

<sup>27</sup> From interview with Baku city school principal, July 18, 2017.

## How much power does the school council have

The responsibilities of the school councils vary due to the difference in their status. See the table below.

Responsibilities of the school councils	Azerbaijan	Kyrgyzstan	Russia
Setting school rules	✓	✗	✓
Drawing up a school development plan	✓	✓	✓
Setting the teaching syllabus and objectives	✓	✗	✓
Control of expenditure	✗	✓	✓
Allocation of the school budget	✗	✓	✓
Out of school activities and programs	✓	✗	✗

## School autonomy in acquisition of goods and services

In Russia the degree of autonomy depends on the type of the school: private schools and autonomous educational organizations have more freedom in acquisition of goods and services. Budgetary and state maintained institutions have very limited control of their funds.

In Azerbaijan in accordance with the article 1 of the Exemplary School Charter, comprehensive schools have a freedom to implement administrative and financial duties, within the framework of existing legislation. A school principal is responsible for purchasing equipment and assets for the school, as well as organization of provision of various services. All the contracts on behalf of the school with vendors are signed by school principals. All school activities/ operations are conducted based on a school principal's orders.

In Kyrgyzstan a school can only manage extra budgetary resources (donations, grants, sponsorships)

## Other school bodies

School governing boards are the main agencies of state-public governance in Russian schools. But due to rather complicated history of the approach there are quite a few other bodies that can participate in school governance.

**The Board of Trustees** is a body of public participation in school management whose function is to attract donations and contributions from individuals and entities, and to oversee their spending. The legal basis was provided by the Decree of the President of Russia and RF Government Regulation, 1999.

The composition: representatives of the local community, graduates, business, social sphere. As a rule, the composition is determined by the principal (by invitation).

The main function is fundraising. The impact on school governance: through representatives in the Governing Board.

**The Supervisory Committee** is a body directly involved in the autonomous organization management with the help of the representatives of the founder, as well as representatives of the state or local government, public representatives and, possibly, with the participation of the representatives of the institution staff (legal basis: Federal Act № 174). As a rule, the composition is determined by the principal (by invitation). The main function is expenditure control.

**The Parental committee** consists of parents of school students. The composition is usually determined in the course of the election or by delegation from each class or parallel. (legal basis: The School Charter). The main function: participation in the organization of extracurricular activities, organization of feedback from parents to school administration. The impact on school management: through representatives in the Governing Board.

**The Student Council** consists of students of the school. As a rule, the members are elected in high school class or parallel and delegated to the Council. (legal basis: Local School Act). The main function: participation in the organization of extracurricular students' activities, organization of events and competitions. The impact on school management: through representatives in the Governing Board.

**The Teachers Council** consists of the school teachers. The main function: solving the educational problems arising in the course of education (legal basis: School Charter).

In Azerbaijan according to the article 30 of the Education Law other governing and self-governing bodies can be created at the school level such as general assembly, research and subject teaching methodology councils, school council, parent council, student council, caregivers' council, etc.).

There were several pilot projects on participation of students and parents in school governance (UNICEF (PTA), Eurasia Foundation, Buta, OSI, CIE). Membership and structure of the governing bodies was defined by project implementers.

The analysis of CIE project funded by OSI was published as an article. Other reports could be found through donor organizations.

Recently the MoE founded a Parents Association as a social enterprise. Currently the Baku Education Department is piloting a project on parents' participation in school management/governance in partnership with the Association (shared by official from Baku Education Department). Legal basis: the article 30 stipulates that the guidelines for establishing those bodies and their responsibilities are defined by the school charter.

The Kyrgyzstan report did not provide any data on other bodies of school governance. Apparently, such bodies as teachers' councils, parental committees and students' self-governance bodies also exist there since these are the legacy of the Soviet time which can be found in almost any ex-SU country.

## Conclusion

The three countries we are reviewing have made a considerable progress towards public accountability of schools in the last two decades. However, the overall pictures of their governance systems are quite patchy.

Kyrgyzstan has probably made the biggest progress towards decentralization of management, but its system of school governance exists mostly on paper. Partially this can be explained by poor economic situation and inadequate financial provisions: while boards of trustees are supposed to manage school budgets, these budgets are barely sufficient for the very basic needs and there is no room for choices. Another reason is the multitude of international donors, who sometimes do not coordinate their efforts, therefore schools often do not know which elements of the infrastructure are the most beneficial for them and take their time in making the decision. Still it can be said that Kyrgyz schools enjoy greater autonomy in resource management and staff training options which may be caused by the positive influence of the donors.

Both Russia and Azerbaijan have reversed their progress towards decentralization which was quite pronounced in the 90s. It is worth mentioning however that school public governance structures are in a way counter-balancing this trend. They are still weak as regards to the rights given to them by the legislation and the degree of public awareness about their potential role, yet in Russia they definitely are beginning to intervene into the policy-making.

This is a pity that Georgia, another country with the Soviet legacy, did not participate in this research – a painful history of governing boards in this country are very much worth studying.

In answer to the question in the heading of this survey, this is still the school principal who rules the school in each of the three countries. He/she is the one who controls human and financial resources and sets the objectives for his school. While in Russia and in Azerbaijan the national and regional authorities are trying to set a tighter control on his activities and make him/her fully dependent on their will, the school principals may discover that school councils are their major support and protection against arbitrary power.

An interesting observation was made as regards to different agencies that directly or indirectly participate in the governance of the entire system of education. They happen to be more numerous than we have imagined and many of them can influence policy decisions quite considerable, yet their role in this respect has never been properly studied. The main mission of this report was to explore governance at the school level, but country level studies may be a natural next step.