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Introduction

Problem identification

Universal understanding of education circulates around the right of all children to survival, protection, development and participation in quality education. In other words, as emphasized in Sustainable Development goals the quality education is the right of all children.

Quality education defined in various ways which includes several terms such as efficiency, effectiveness and equity. Quality education covers several aspects: learners who are healthy and ready to attend and learn; family and community who support learners; environment which is safe, protective and gender sensitive; relevant curricular and materials; modern teaching methods; process which embraces interaction of schools and related institutions; policies and outcomes which are connected to national goals for education. This definition above is international approach on quality education. Our research simultaneously tries to find national understanding of quality education.

Considering that quality is a complex and multidimensional, the key assumption of the research paper is that reform ideas were based on the understanding of quality which not always was congruent to its understanding at the national level.

Through a small scale qualitative study this research attempts to answer two important questions: (1) how quality education has been defined by education stakeholders in Azerbaijan; (2) and is there shared understanding of quality among all stakeholders.

Global understanding of quality education

There are various definitions for quality education. Different literatures give different interpretation for quality education, however they share also similar features. The literature analyze has been divided into global, European and autonomous experts' definitions on quality of education.

The literature on quality education could be grouped in certain theoretical approaches described below.

- **Humanist approach** to quality – child-centered education, teachers are facilitators and help students to provide their needs

- **Behaviorist** approach to quality – based on defined and controlled curricula, measured by assessments that is why the tests and examinations are the main part of education. Teachers are directors of students as well as control curricula.

- **Critical approach** finds equality as main part of education, they consider education as creator of social equality

- Quality in the **indigenous tradition** sees quality education to be relevant to needs of learners and society.

These theories described above were used when the definitions given to quality education by different stakeholders were analyzed [CITATION Ang06 \l 1033].

Methodology

In order to respond research questions mainly interview and focus group methods were used for data collection. Interviews were conducted with experts in the field of education. They

were included Elmina Kazimzade education director Center for Innovations in Education, Cemil Memmedov chief of the Pedagogy department at Baku Engineering University, Yulia Kerimova director of the 23rd school. Focus groups were held with former school students (current university students), parents and teachers.

Expert interviews included only direct questions in order not to affect to the responses. Focus groups were much more interactive, since it consists of several people, therefore discussion among group members changed the way of interaction. While the role of interviewer was to explain questions and record answers, the role of moderator in focus groups was both to deliver the essence of the research to the participants and to ensure everyone's participation in the discussion. Due to help discussions to become more interactive cards were presented to the participants. Each group was consisted at least six people and even in one school the size of group discussion was up to ten persons. Schools were chosen in terms of geographical location: one central school and one school in suburb. But all research covers Baku city.

Quality education in the perception of different stakeholders

Because of the purpose of the research to identify how different stakeholders in education in Azerbaijan define quality education the main question was how they understand quality education. The answers were quite different. Camil Mammadov, chief of the Pedagogy department at Baku Engineering University gives definition to the quality school education as preparation of Azerbaijani citizen. If the education in schools could achieve the objective to prepare right citizens to the society then this education could be considered as qualitative. He also thinks education should serve peoples' happiness. As a result of education school should provide happy citizens to the society. School director Yulia Karimova considers teacher as main factor of quality education. She equals quality education to the preparation of teachers, teacher's responsibility, motivation and worldview. According to Elmina Kazimova quality education is creating equal opportunities to get minimal education set by the state standards irrespective any factors such as economic and social status, residential area, physical situation and etc. One student from rural school also shares similar opinion with Elmina Kazimova and considers that there should not be differences in any factor: professionalism of teachers or teaching instruments, materials etc. Students defined quality education to attract students attention, to interest students and to teach given program during the classes. Some of teachers also see interest of students crucial in the quality of education, but not all teachers accept their role in creation of interest in classrooms. Teachers at the central school consider quality education to teach students in such way they could show higher results in exams. Parents also share similar attitude and think if students show high results in exams the education could be seen as qualitative. Teachers of the rural school see quality education as the ability to express what a student is learning. Another definition given by the same school teachers was to get what was taught to the students and to apply knowledge students get in real life.

In the second step some indicators of quality education were discussed in both interviews

and focus groups. Main indicators of quality education given by stakeholders were teachers, parents' support, textbooks, interest of students, and curricular. Grading of quality education was also main concern of respondents.

According to the definition provided by participants of focus groups and experts education in Azerbaijan belongs to either humanist or behaviorist approach. Teachers especially consider their role diminished and education became student centered. Simultaneously, curricular is also essential in education and grading as well as examination is based on fulfillment of this curricular. Elmina Kazimzade supports critical approach and considers equity an important factor in quality education.

Conclusion

Analyses show that experts see quality education much more complex, they add equity, good citizens and development of worldview to the definition. However, teachers and parents mainly define quality by high exam results and implementation of curricular. Only some parents and teachers relate ethical education to the quality.

To sum up results the research paper offers following suggestions:

- Needs and problems should be deeply analyzed, priorities should be defined and sustainability of the strategy should be followed.
- Teachers, parents and state should work together in order to reach desired results.
- Preparations of teachers starting from right selection process and education provided at universities should be prioritized. They also should be supported at schools.
- Equal opportunities should be provided for all.

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Education quality in the perception of Azerbaijani education community



**GUNAY HAMIDOVA
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- Worldwide definition of quality education

Efficiency

effectiveness

equity

support by family

environment

curricular

teaching methods

policies

- Our research simultaneously tries to find national understanding of quality education.

Global understanding of quality education



- **Humanist approach** to quality – child-centered education, teachers are facilitators and help students to provide their needs
- **Behaviorist** approach to quality – based on defined and controlled curricula, measured by assessments that is why the tests and examinations are the main part of education.
- **Critical approach** finds equality as main part of education, they consider education as creator of social equality

Methodology



The quality school education is a process of preparation of Azerbaijani citizen.

School should provide happy citizens to the society.

Teacher are main factor of quality education.

quality education is creating equal opportunities to get minimal education set by the state standards irrespective any factors such as economic and social status, residential area, physical situation and etc.



to attract students attention, to interest students and to teach given program during the classes.

quality education to teach students in such way they could show higher results in exams.
the ability to express what a student is learning



Textbooks



- Textbooks are assistant tools. They should not be considered as a single source.
- Students are overloaded by textbooks. Overload reduces students' interest to classes. Exams are constituted according to textbooks and teachers are obliged to complete the given program. This prevents teachers to use additional materials. However, some teachers are not satisfied with textbooks therefore, they use supplementary books.
- Teachers complain that textbooks contain many mistakes and false information. Moreover, textbooks are not relevant to be used by students independently.

The role of parents



- Parents often interfere educational process than support it. Parents should form public control but not to interfere pedagogical process.
- Students' attitude to schools depends on parents' attitude. When parents support teachers students respect that teacher. Quality education depends on teacher and parents corporation.
- Parents should trust the school and should demand education at schools.

The role of teachers



- Professionalism of teachers combine with conscience and values. The preparation of teachers, teacher's responsibility, motivation and worldview are also important.
- Teachers should not be random people. Students complain about irresponsibility of teachers and parents claim to replace non-professional teachers.
- Teachers are deprived from rights. They cannot criticize students. This results students to be irresponsible towards classes.

Evaluation of quality education



- Final exam is not enough for evaluation of quality education. Final exam only partially evaluates student's knowledge. Students with high scores are less prepared to life than others.
- Students think entrance exam reduce the quality of education, because students focus only for major classes and study especially at final grades. Admission to universities should be held by average schools grading.
- Multiple choice questions should be restricted. Because it is only one way to evaluate knowledge. Moreover, tests is not satisfactory for all subjects. Tests impairs students' speech.

Conclusion



- Needs and problems should be deeply analyzed, priorities should be defined and sustainability of the strategy should be followed.
- Teachers, parents and state should work together in order to reach desired results.
- Preparations of teachers starting from right selection process and education provided at universities should be prioritized. They also should be supported at schools.
- Equal opportunities should be provided for all.