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FACTORS RELATED TO THE SELECTION PROCESS AT STATE AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES. THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SIDES OF CENTRALIZATION

Isaxan ISAYEV

(Khazar University, Baku, Azerbaijan)

In Azerbaijan, where there are 28 public and 17 private accredited universities, the level of preparation of specialists and the "filtration" process should always be given attention. What is the "filtration" process and why is it the focus of attention in education?

The "filtration" process refers to the mechanism for students to flow through the university (the process of testing, the principles of testing-evaluating, passing from course to course, etc.). The realization of these principles in the process of education must be strictly and objectively formed. Thus, it refers to an honest and strict system of selection from the very first days of university study until students enter the work world.

Higher education represents an extended period of time involving the direct preparation of youth for the world of work. Companies looking for good specialists always try to determine the degree to which the students who pass through the filtration process will successfully enter the labor market and be successful on the job. Generally, the relations of the universities with big companies and organizations ought to be such that these firms positively influence the education process. "The demands and wish" of companies and organizations hiring graduates from the universities should be one of the main factors in regulating the structure and process of education.

Because companies and organizations should be informed of the appropriateness of the applicants who want to be hired, the process of filtration always represents a definite expense to the companies. That is why it is crucial for companies to feel satisfied with the filtration process in higher institutions. The process of "filtration" at the

university must directly influence how well the graduates are able to obtain jobs. As a matter of fact the "filtration" process puts the university in a crucial situation. It must decide what to do, what "to be or not to be." There is no need for a university whose graduates cannot find a job.

Kenneth J. Arrow writes about the importance of the "filtration system." "An educational system would have considerable economic value in national society, if it fulfilled this selective function only, without even adding knowledge of the young people"¹

Generally, the filtration process includes the following factors:

- The organization of the admissions process.
- The principles of testing and evaluating.
- The process of passing from course to course.
- The principles of graduation.

Three out of four of the above principles are closely connected with the graduation mechanism, so we will direct our main attention to this process.

The admission to the universities is centralized in Azerbaijan through the State Student Admission Commission. American scholar Warner Z. Hirsch claims centralization involves the undiluted upward shift of decision-making authority.² The best way out of this situation is to give independence to universities or to be declared a private organization. This implies that the university must be somewhat independent of the central organization. Why is this so important? Centralization in education has positive and negative features. "In centralized education students are taught on the basis of one-model programs and centralized management systems curb change, renewal, and especially individualism."³

It should be noted that after Azerbaijan's independence centralization was weakened and became looser. The main reason for it was the deep economic crisis and difficulties in salary, textbooks, and other resources to the point that centralized management lost its control. It should be mentioned that even in such condition the public

universities did not show much initiative; instead, still they continued to rely on the center to define what would happen. This dependence has contributed to the crisis in higher education institutions.

The main lesson to learn from these developments is that experienced universities themselves must engage in educational reform and try to get the center to approve of these innovations. Of course, the center is content that the universities show no initiative, but until they take the initiative little will happen in terms of reform.

The centralized admission process run by the State Student Admission Commission appears to be one positive influence on the public universities. It is a common knowledge that factors unrelated to student qualifications had come to play a major role in the admission process. These factors included personal influences from those in positions of authority, priorities given to the children of university faculty, even corruption, which came to play a great role in the admission process when it was conducted by the universities themselves. So, students are admitted to university by the State Student Admission Commission, which is the first stage in the filtration system, but the further fate of filtration remains dependent largely on the education policy of the individual university and how strictly and correctly it is followed, though some centralized control continues to be exercised. For example, there is some movement toward centralized testing, regulating by a centralized computer system, controlling by the organizations responsible for education make it more difficult to skirt the process.

In Azerbaijan degree programs have a defined period of time (mainly for 4-5 years) and almost all students graduate in that specified time period. Let us look briefly at the peculiarities of this specified period has introduced with regard to course schedules, testing and evaluating principles, etc. The students are required to take semester exams two times a year. Some courses require examinations with grades while others are pass/no pass. Students who pass the exams successfully may enroll in the next course without difficulty. A

student who fails has a right to retake the exam two or even three times. This presents a problem, and universities have dealt with this problem in different ways. Some universities allow a student to enroll in the next course, but they stipulate that the student must pass the previous examination before the end of the next semester. Other universities require the student to repeat the entire semester again if they fail one subject. It should be noted that such cases are very rare, and everybody knows the reason. The failed student has a possibility to repeat the examination within a short period of time, and if they are successful they can continue their course of study without loss of time. If a student fails the exams for two years that student is expelled from studies. This possibility leads to every effort on the part of the student to pass the exam, including money payments, phone calls to those in influential positions, etc.

Thus, the four/five year requirement for graduation leads to many students, who graduate without actually qualifying for a diploma. They are not ready to work as a qualified specialist. The filtration process is corrupted and the filter fails to work in public education system, because all the students who are admitted end up as graduates of the universities.

And now let us analyze the same situation in the private universities.

Private universities can be divided into two categories, according to the model of education and the academic programs used in these universities:

1. There are private universities using mostly the same model of education as in public universities, though they have some peculiarities, such as the teaching of English. These institutions include Western University, Private Azerbaijan University, Taffakur University.

2. There are private universities trying to use the education model practiced in world education system mainly. These would include Khazar University.

The main reason of dividing the private universities into these two types is to analyze the filtration process in them.

At universities of the first type, the training of specialists may be carried on using international standards within the context of national demands. In this respect, these private universities do not coincide with the model used in public universities. In addition, two other differentiating reasons should be noted in working out the curricula than that of in the public universities:

- Private institutions are more dynamic in making changes in curricula as defined by specialists wishing to update university programs.
- The courses can be quickly organized to allow visiting professors and other specialists to address developing issues and innovative topics.

There are no great differences in the organization and evaluation of courses in universities of the first type compared with those of public universities. The diplomas given to the graduates are at the same level (ordinary and honor). A number of factors, including the development of the physical plant (buildings, computer labs equipped with modern computers, modern libraries, etc.), initial steps in international relations, manpower competence, and program developments, influence the filtration process positively at the universities. That is why the percentage of the graduates on time differs slightly from that of the public schools.

The only university in Azerbaijan representing of the second type of the higher education institutions is Khazar University. It provides a completely different education model.

The curriculum at Khazar University is worked out on the following principles:

- University requirements
- General education requirements
- Major and minor subjects
- Electives

According to these principles the types of subjects, the number of courses, and the number of credits are defined. Students have to earn a definite number of credits to complete their education. The testing and evaluation systems of Khazar University also differ from other universities. The activities and level of participation of the students are taken into consideration and influence the final grades. That is, the student's participation and activity through the term are calculated into the final grade following the adapted principles in different departments.

Exams are generally in written form, though in special cases tests oral exams are organized. The grading system is based on a 100-point system, with 60 points required to pass a course. Any exam with less than 60 points represents a failing grade, which means the student must retake the course in the next semester take the examination again. In order to graduate from Khazar University the GPA (including GPA in the major field) must more than 70 points. Otherwise the student must retake some courses in order to raise the GPA. In other words, the 70 point GPA requirement acts as a filter in the process of graduation. A student who has accumulated enough credits and has a GPA of more than 70 points is eligible for graduation from Khazar University.⁴

The types of diplomas given by Khazar University is another filtration process. A student may graduation with various honors based on the minimum GPA. The classification of honors is as follows:

- 60 ≤ GPA ≤ 79.5 - Ordinary Diploma
- 80 ≤ GPA ≤ 86.5 - Honors
- 87 ≤ GPA ≤ 93.5 - High Honors
- 94 ≤ GPA ≤ 100 - Highest Honors.⁵

So, the additional requirement may serve as a strict organization of the filtration process. However, it is necessary to see what actually happens in terms of the graduation rate at various universities, so we

provide information concerning the graduation rates at various universities over a two-year period.

Name of University	Academic Year entered	Admitted in four years	Graduated	Percent
Tafakkur	1992/93	150	100	67
	1993/94	315	301	95
Private Az. University	1992/93	216	157	73
	1993/94	225	225	100
Western	1992/93	129	123	95
	1993/94	241	220	91
Khazar	1992/93	147	50	34
	1993/94	175	44	25

Note : those who delayed their graduation from the university for different reasons are also included here.

The main reason students transfer to another university is because they are unable to graduate in time. That is why those who left the university earlier are not shown separately.

For comparative purposes, we note that at the universities in the USA, the leader of world higher education, the graduation rate after four years is between 25 - 35 percent. It should be noted that the US students pass through a strict filtration process in order to get their diplomas. In may also be noted that graduation in the USA, regardless of specialty (medicine, law, history), does not guarantee that the student gets a job. In order to get job in certain specialties, including law and medicine, students must pass special examinations arranged by professional associations. Private companies may also establish strict procedures for qualifying for a job. This represents an additional

filtration process demanding that the student demonstrate the abilities and skills.

Thus, filtration plays a great role in the training of highly skilled specialists. That is why factors improving the filtration process should be taken into consideration in defining educational policy.

NOTES

1. *Relations between the State and Higher Education*, Council of Europe and Kluwer Law international, 1996, The Hague /London/ Boston, p.22.
2. Werner Z. Hirsch *Inventing Education for the Future*. p.284, Institute of Government and Public Affairs, University of California, Los Angeles, 1967.
3. Hamlet Isaxanli "*Our education at the cross roads*", The conference "The education reforms in the Republic of Azerbaijan", January 27-28, 1995, Khazar University, Baku, Azerbaijan
4. For more information, consult the *Khazar University Catalog*, 1996-1998, pp. 31-32.
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DÖLƏT VƏ ÖZƏL UNİVERSİTƏLƏRDƏ SEÇMƏ PROSESİ: MƏRKƏZLƏŞMƏNİN MƏNFI VƏ MÜSBƏT YÖNLƏRİ

İsaxan İSAYEV

(*Xəzər universitəsi, Bakı, Azərbaycan*)

Təqdim olunan yazıda Azərbaycan ali təhsilində gənc mütəxəssis hazırlığının hansı səviyyədə və necə aparılması prosesi öyrənilmişdir. Ali təhsildə süzgəc anlayışı ətraflı tədqiq edilmişdir.

Süzgəc dedikdə ali məktəbin tətbiq etdiyi təhsil modelinin seçmə prinsipləri-xüsusiyyətləri (imtahan keçirilmə mexanizmi, imtahan yoxlama-

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THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SIDES OF
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Xülasə

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İsaxan İSAYEV

(Xəzər universitəsi, Bakı, Azərbaycan)

Təqdim olunan yazıda Azərbaycan ali təhsilində gənc mütəxəssis hazırlığının hansı səviyyədə və necə aparılması prosesi öyrənilmişdir. Ali təhsildə süzgəc anlayışı ətraflı tədqiq edilmişdir.

Süzgəc dedikdə ali məktəbin tətbiq etdiyi təhsil modelinin seçmə prinsipləri-xüsusiyyətləri (imtahan keçirilmə mexanizmi, imtahan yoxlama- qiymətləndirmə prinsipləri, kursdan-kursa keçmə mexanizmi və s.) və bu prinsiplərin tədris prosesində nə qədər ciddi və obyektiv olaraq həyata keçirilməsi, beləliklə də, tələbələrin qəbul olunduqları vaxtdan ali məktəbi bitirərək hər hansı təşkilatda işə düzəlmələrinə qədər ciddi və düzgün seçmə sistemi keçmələri nəzərdə tutulur.

Dövlət və özəl universitetlərdə süzgəc prosesinin gedişi aşağıdakı xüsusiyyətlərə görə araşdırılır.

- Qəbul imtahanlarının keçirilmə mexanizmi;
- Semestr imtahan yoxlama və qiymətləndirmə prinsipi;
- Kursdan-kursa keçmə prosesi;
- Qəbul olmuş tələbələrin mə'zun olma prinsipləri;

Sonra özəl universitetlərdə tələbələrin vaxtında mə'zun olma prinsipləri araşdırılır və bu süzgəc prosesi ilə izah olunur.

Beləliklə özəl və dövlət ali məktəblərində mütəxəssis hazırlığının əsasında süzgəc prosesinin dayandığı sübut olunmuş və təhsil sistemində süzgəc prosesinə düzgün əməl olunmasının vacibliyi əsaslandırılmışdır.