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Executive Summary

The introduction of glasnost during the Gorbachev era opened the gates to discussion of a plethora of previously taboo topics. Among these subjects was the low status of the non-Russian languages. Naturally, such discussions were especially widespread in areas with large non-Russian populations.

The issue was especially painful in Kazakhstan, where a large proportion of Kazaks lacked a fluency in "their own" native tongue. For many Kazaks who participated in the discussion, one of the most alarming signs was the large proportion of Kazak children receiving their entire education not in Kazak, but Russian.

In early 1987, the republic party publicly began to pay attention to the low level of Kazak language knowledge in the republic. Although the proportion of republic pupils studying in Kazak-medium classes (henceforth KMC's3) did not begin to rise until 1989, great changes occurred over the next six years. The share of all republic children studying in KMC's was about 30.2 percent in 1988 and 1989; by 1995, however, this indicator had risen to 44.8.

Part of the reason for this rise was the changing demographic picture of Kazakhstan, i.e., a greater share of Kazaks among the republic population. In addition, however, Kazak parents became more inclined to select KMC's. Whereas in 1990 the number of children in KMC's equaled 66.1 percent of the number of ethnic Kazak school children in Kazakhstan, by 1995 this had grown to 80.2 percent. Rural areas, where even in 1990 this indicator stood at 73.0 percent, witnessed an increase to 84.9 percent. Proportionally the jump was greater in urban areas, from 51.4 percent to 71.9 percent.

There is considerable variation in the trends across oblasts. The ratio of KMC enrollment to Kazak nationality enrollment lagged in those areas with relatively small Kazak populations. Preliminary indications suggest that the trends of Kazak parents sending children to KMC's has now stabilized or perhaps even reversed. In the last two years the ratio of KMC enrollment to Kazak nationality enrollment has dropped slightly in the first two grades.

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2This Report was prepared in the late summer of 1996, and delayed in distribution by NCSEER. Further reports will address subsequent developments. [NCSEER Staff note.]
3 "Kazak medium classes" and "Russian medium classes" are a more accurate description than "Kazak medium schools" and "Russian medium schools" for our purposes here because many of the schools have had different classes or sections using different languages as the medium of instruction.
Complex reasons lie behind parents' choice of a KMC or RMC (Russian-medium-class). Major factors in the shift toward the KMC included increased national pride, family and society pressure, and the perception that the educational and job opportunities afforded by the KMC might not be inferior to those of the RMC. Moreover, as the number of KMC's increased, their accessibility also improved; thus, for many families the transportation to these classes became less of a problem. Parents may have also chosen a KMC because they felt this would better protect their children from undesirable phenomena they associated with a "Western" upbringing.

On the other hand, it is widely acknowledged that a KMC education by and large remains inferior to that of the RMC. Among the key problems are poor textbooks and other educational materials, and a severe shortage of qualified teachers. The country's severe economic crisis has confounded the Kazakhstan government's efforts to translate and print new books, train and pay teachers, etc. Because many KMC's are in "mixed" schools, they do not provide the insulation from "undesirable" elements that some Kazak parents may seek for their children. Moreover, although Russian is still critical for advancement in Kazakhstan, many Kazak parents may view the level of Russian language instruction in the KMC as so weak as to present a serious handicap for their children.

It is impossible with any confidence to predict future trends in Kazakhstan's education concerning the balance of KMC and RMC enrollment. The dynamics over the coming years will depend on Kazakhstan's demographic, economic, and political developments. In addition to their effects on other aspects of society, these developments will also directly and indirectly affect parents' choices of school. Moreover, many of the key factors are likely to be influenced by events outside of Kazakhstan, most importantly Russia's policy in the region.
Introduction

As members of the non-Russian Soviet intelligentsia began to speak out on issues of concern to their ethnic group in the Gorbachev era, much of their attention focused on questions of language. They appealed for changes in language status in a wide range of areas, including an increased share of mass media in the local language, greater use of the local language in office work and political life, and greater availability of public services in the local language. Very often, especially in republics where the sphere of use of the titular nationality language had greatly shrunk, the heart of these non-Russians' concern was the role of language in education.

Questions about language in education generally surfaced in two kinds of contexts—the quantity and quality of language instruction (i.e., language as a subject) and the medium of instruction in schools. Although local non-Russian minority languages sometimes also figured in these discussions, each republic's titular nationality intelligentsia's efforts were generally directed at raising the status of their republic titular language vis-à-vis Russian.

This brief study will examine questions of language medium for education in Kazakhstan, especially those from 1988 and 1990 to the present. We will first briefly consider Kazakhstan's demographic composition and the position of Kazakh as a medium of education in the mid-1980s; following this we will examine selected data provided by the Kazakhstan Ministry of Education which illustrate the degree of Kazakh's recovery from its weak position almost ten years ago. Finally, we will consider some of the reasons that have encouraged parents to educate their children in Kazakh medium classes (henceforth KMC), as well as those which have restrained them from doing this.

Background

At the end of the Soviet era Kazakhstan's population contained approximately equal proportions (40 percent each) of ethnic Kazaks and Russians, plus 20 percent of other ethnic groups. Kazaks were concentrated in the west and south, whereas Russians dominated in the east and north. Russians were predominantly urban, whereas Kazaks were more numerous in the countryside. The relation between the proportion of Kazaks and Russians in Kazakhstan had shifted greatly over the years of Soviet power. Although Kazaks had constituted about 60 percent of Kazakhstan's population in 1926, they had fallen to only about 30 percent in 1959. The greatest causes for this shift were man-made disasters in Kazakhstan (especially collectivization and the ensuing famine) and massive migration.

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4 "Local non-Russian minority" is used here to refer to all languages in a particular republic other than Russian and the language of that republic's titular nationality.
5 For some categories of data I have obtained statistics from 1988, but for others they are available only from 1990.
6 The term "Kazakh medium classes" will be used to refer to all classes in which Kazakh is reported as the medium of instruction. It is more exact than "Kazakh language schools" because many of the pupils who attend Kazakh-medium-classes study in institutions which have sections where Russian (or occasionally another language) is the medium of instruction.
As indicated by the practically equal shares of Kazak and Russian population in the republic at the end of the Soviet era, in the 1960s through 1980s Kazaks recovered part of the loss in proportion that had occurred in the previous decades. This, however, does not appear to have brought a recovery for the Kazak language in the republic educational system. According to Kazak sociolinguist B. Khasanuly, the proportion of all republic school children enrolled in KMC’s dropped from 37.7 percent in 1955 to only 30.1 percent 1986. Likewise, according to Khasanuly, during this same period the proportion of Kazak schools dropped from 38.9 percent to 32.4 percent of the total.7

In December 1986, Moscow removed the ethnic Kazak first secretary of the republic communist party. This set off a protest disturbance in Almaty which, however, was quickly crushed and condemned by the new leadership.

Over the following eighteen months, the new republic party first secretary, ethnic Russian Gennadii Kolbin, executed a variety of policies to uproot what Moscow viewed as unhealthy manifestations of nationalism. Despite this, probably to soothe wounded local pride, in March 1987 the republic party and government adopted a resolution "On Improving the Study of the Kazak Language" that seemed to offer some small concessions to Kazak nationalists on issues of education. The resolution acknowledged Kazak’s weak position in education in Kazakstan and specified measures to strengthen it.

Although there was great public discussion of this measure, in fact little real change occurred before 1990. Thus, for example the proportion of all republic pupils in KMC’s remained almost steady at 30.2 percent in 1988 and 1989.8 (Much of this modest growth was probably a result of demographic change.) In fact, the number of children in (monolingual) Kazak schools in September 1988 was 7,600 less than two years previously.9 Soon, however, the situation was to change.

Before we turn to the examination of changes in language of education over the period 1988-96, a few words are in order about the reliability of the data used in the analysis below. They were provided by the Kazakhstan Ministry of Education between 1994 and 1996. Because the Ministry had

7. B. Khasanuly, Ana tili-ata mura (Almaty: Zhazuwshi, 1992), p. 180. Khasanuly's chart seems to imply that the two separate categories of data concerning pupils and schools both relate only to "pure Kazak" schools; however, it very much appears that while his data for "schools" in fact do reflect only the "pure" institutions, the KMC enrollment figures include those both in "pure" and "mixed" schools. This is suggested by the congruence of his data in the same chart for 1990 and 1992 with statistics provided for the respective categories by the Kazakhstan Ministry of Education. In one of his earlier works, the same author stated that between 1957 and 1987 the proportion of Kazak (apparently "pure") schools in the republic fell from 36.5 percent to 28.5 percent (B. Khasanov, Kazakhsko-russkoe dvuiazchic (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1987), p. 18.

8. Data provided by Kazakhstan Ministry of Education.

received tables provided annually by each oblast department of education, there naturally exists a chance of oblast misreporting (both intentional and unintentional). Moreover, errors may have occurred when an employee of the Ministry copied thousands of bits of data from various tables by hand. Nevertheless, based on the very small number of inconsistencies uncovered in processing these data, it seems very likely that the overall picture is accurate.\textsuperscript{10}

We should also note the broader picture in Kazakhstan concerning language of education in republic schools. Other than those in KMC’s, the overwhelming majority of Kazakhstan’s pupils attended Russian medium classes (henceforth RMC’s). In recent years only about 2 percent have studied in languages other than Kazakh or Russian. The large majority of this remaining proportion study in Uzbek, with a small but fairly consistent enrollment in Uyghur and Tajik (combined total for both under 0.5 percent, with Uyghur accounting for the majority.) In addition, a small number of classes have opened which use or have used languages such as German, Turkish, and English as the teaching medium.

The Changes in Enrollment

The data from the Ministry of Education provide a clear picture of steady growth in the proportion of school children in Kazakhstan attending KMC’s between 1988 and 1995.\textsuperscript{11} Whereas KMC’s accounted for only 30.2 percent of the total cohort in 1988, by 1995 the analogous figure had grown to 44.8 percent. Naturally, given Kazakhstan’s demography, the proportion in KMC’s in rural areas was always higher than in urban areas. Thus, for example, whereas in 1990, 46.6 percent of all school children in rural areas attended KMC’s, this was the case for only 16.9 percent of urban school children. Over the next five years the picture changed more dramatically in urban settings, though the proportion in the village continued greatly to exceed that in the city: in 1995 KMC’s provided an education to 58.0 percent of all rural pupils, but only 30.4 percent of urban pupils.

These data alone, of course, do not tell the whole story. After all, the changes might just be a reflection of a shift in Kazakhstan’s demographic situation. Although the demographic composition is a factor, the relation between the number of KMC children and children of Kazak nationality confirms a trend of Kazak parents sending their ethnic Kazak children to school with Kazak as the language of tuition. In 1990, KMC enrollment was equal to 66.1 percent of the number of Kazak

\textsuperscript{10} Subtotals for various categories (e.g., total number of rural pupils) which had already been calculated at the ministry were, moreover, an important check on errors of miscopying. The statistics include enrollments in all primary and secondary schools under the Kazakhstan Ministry of Education.

\textsuperscript{11} The year indicated refers to the beginning of the school year. Thus, for example, "1988" here is used to mean "school year 1988-89." Based on information provided by the Ministry of Education, these data are in each case for September of the year indicated.
nationality school children in the republic.\textsuperscript{12} (Henceforth we will refer to this indicator as KMCe/KN.) Five years later this had grown to 80.2 percent. Moreover, this growth took place both in rural and urban areas. In the former the increase was from 73.0 to 84.9 percent; in the latter the increase was proportionally even greater, from 51.4 to 71.9 percent.\textsuperscript{13}

The pattern of expansion was not uniform across oblasts of the republic. Generally, oblasts with a high proportion of Kazak population already had a high KMCe/KN in 1990, whereas those with a low proportion of Kazaks also had a low KMCe/KN. Since 1990, the KMCe/KN has increased in both types of oblasts, but more dramatically in the second. Thus, for example, in heavily Kazak-populated South Kazakhstan Oblast, the KMCe/KN increased from 85.7 to 94.0 percent (respectively for rural and urban, from 87.2 to 98.7 and from 80.9 to 83.3 percent); in Karaghandy (Karaganda), with a proportionally much smaller Kazak population, the increase was from 39.0 to 58.6 percent (respectively for rural and urban from 58.6 to 77.2 and from 16.6 to 40.7 percent).

Not surprisingly, the growth in KMC enrollment appeared first in the early grades of primary school and only later at the secondary level. In 1990, for example, KMCe/KN for grade one in the entire republic was 74.9 percent; the figures for grades two and three lagged somewhat (68.2 and 64.1 percent respectively), while those for grades seven and eight were between 63.3 and 63.4 percent. By 1995, the gap between the ratios for early primary and secondary classes had increased, with the KMCe/KN for the first three grades at 84.0, 86.6, and 88.4 percent; those for grades seven and eight had also climbed, but only to 76.8 and 72.7 percent, respectively.

The KMCe/KN data for the republic as a whole show increases for every year from 1990 through 1995. However, as can be seen in the following table there has been a slight reversal in the trend for the first two grades. Thus, since 1990 the KMCe/KN has changed in the following way for grades one and two:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>KMC Enrollment as Percentage of Kazak Nationality Enrollment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>86.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>88.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>86.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{12} This does not, of course, imply that only Kazaks studied in KMC’s. However, non-Kazaks certainly account for only a small share of KMC enrollment. Moreover, a disproportionately large share of such pupils are probably Uzbeks, Uyghurs, and Tatars (or other Turkic speakers) who do not have access to schools in their own language, and/or children in mixed nationality families who are recorded as belonging to the ethnic group of the non-Kazak parent.

\textsuperscript{13} Of course throughout this period the number of urban Kazak nationality children was only about half the number of rural school children. In 1990, urban Kazak school children were only 32.1% of all Kazak school children. By 1995, the share had grown to 36.1 percent.
The slight drop indicated in the first grade in the Table above has not meant a decline in the proportion of KMC enrollment among the entire republic first grade enrollment (of all nationalities). This is because of the nationality differences with regard to migration and birth rates. Consequently, through 1995 there was still an increase in the proportion of KMC enrollment in the total first grade cohort (of all nationalities) from 48.0 to 48.2 percent. Nevertheless, there has been a slight decline in the second grade, from 49.4 percent to 48.7 percent.

Why Choose a KMC?

One of the most important reasons that Kazak parents at the close of the 1980s began to select KMC's for their children was the rise of national consciousness in Kazakstan. Such feelings became particularly pronounced after the December 1986 events, although they were undoubtedly fostered by the growth in expression of Russian nationalism (both in Russia and other republics of the USSR) in the immediately preceding years. In this environment, public statements by writers, linguists, and other members of the Kazak intelligentsia about the weak position of Kazak in the republic found a great resonance among a substantial part of the population. In this manner, many people who had long associated "their" language only with an archaic way of life began to take new pride in the language, even if they did not know it.

Efforts to raise the status of titular languages in other Soviet republics undoubtedly buoyed (usually unrealistic) hopes that the status of Kazak could also quickly be elevated. Moreover, other republics' and Soviet bloc states' obvious success in seizing decision-making power from Moscow also likely emboldened the proponents of the native language in Kazakstan.

A group of closely related factors which intensified the effect of growing pride was the combination of public pressure (especially from elder relatives) and guilt (among those who did not know Kazak). Anecdotal evidence suggests that a substantial segment of parents who themselves had a weak knowledge of Kazak began to feel that they bore responsibility for assuring the language's future. This sense of obligation inclined many to choose KMC's for their offspring. Agitation, rallies, house-to-house canvassing, articles in the mass media, and other encouragement by promoters of the Kazak language (often organized by the Kazak Language Society) reinforced these feelings. Given the respect for elders in Kazak society, persuasion by grandparents or other senior members of the community may have been an especially potent force.

Another important stimulus for parents' selection of KMC's was the changing perception of the opportunities that would be open to those with a knowledge of Kazak. One of the primary reasons that Kazak parents had voluntarily sent children to Russian schools in past decades was the (generally accurate) belief that the best opportunities for higher education and upward social mobility required a secondary school diploma based on completion of a RMC. With the adoption of Kazakstan's language law in 1989 and other promises from public officials, it appeared that better higher
educational opportunities for Kazak-school-leavers would improve, and that knowledge of the language might even be required for access to a variety of state and non-state jobs.\textsuperscript{14}

Beginning in 1988, it became easier for pupils who completed secondary education in Kazak (and in some cases Uzbek or Uyghur) to take entrance examinations for higher educational institutions (henceforth vuzes) in these languages. This, too, was a factor which likely changed perceptions of the value of non-Russian education. Moreover, the 1989 language law and promises from officials suggested that more vuz specialties would be taught in Kazak. It also appeared that the proportion of openings in vuzes would change, with an increasing proportion going to Kazak- rather than Russian-medium groups.

This may be the explanation for the fact that in certain (but not all) oblasts with large Russian majorities, the proportion of urban Kazak pupils in KMC’s in the last two grades of secondary school was substantially higher than in the immediately previous classes. (This was true despite the overall picture in which the shift to KMC’s began in the first and second grades.) Two such oblasts were North Kazakhstan and Kokshetau (Kokchetav). The KMCe/KN indicators for urban areas in North Kazakhstan Oblast in 1990 were only 5.6 and 6.1 percent in grades eight and nine respectively, but for grades ten and eleven the corresponding figures were 32.5 and 3.67 percent. In Kokshetau the figures were not as dramatic, but showed the same trend, i.e., 22.9 and 23.6 for grades eight and nine, but 29.0 and 29.2 percent in the following two grades.

Aside from the above, many Kazak parents likely reasoned that even if their children attended KMC’s they would still gain a mastery of Russian. They must certainly have also recognized that the level of instruction of Kazak as a subject in Russian schools was extremely low, and (especially if Kazak was not used in the home) their children would graduate secondary school with virtually no skills in it. Hence, for many parents, the KMC likely seemed the only route to assure that their children learned Kazak.

Another important factor which likely affected the shift was the greater availability of KMC’s. Until the late 1980s, KMC’s in most cities and many rural areas (whether in "Kazak" or "mixed" schools) were few and far enough between so that parents’ selection of a KMC was more likely to involve the necessity of public transportation. This was especially the case in cities with proportionally small Kazak populations. In Karaganda Oblast, for example, as of 1988 only 4 percent of urban schools had KMC’s. But over time more families obviously had a KMC in a nearby school: by 1991, the proportion of such schools in Karaganda had grown to 14 percent, and by

\textsuperscript{14} Such perceptions were undoubtedly enhanced by the commonly expressed views in the press that non-Kazaks might hold jobs even without fluency in Kazak, but that in the case of Kazaks, knowledge of the language should be obligatory.
1995, 25 percent. In Pavlodar, the analogous figures for these years were 14 percent, 42 percent, and 57 percent.\textsuperscript{15}

It is likely that an analogous process affected certain rural areas. In villages of northern oblasts with large Russian populations (many who themselves or whose parents had arrived during the Virgin Lands Program) schools were often shifted from "mixed" to "all-Russian." Often these were the sole schools in a particular village. Left without the option of the KMC, parents were obliged to have children educated in RMC's.

Parents may also have viewed the KMC (especially in a "pure" Kazak school) as the only place where their children might receive the "upbringing" they associated with Kazak culture. Many Kazak parents were obviously alarmed by their children's lack of respect towards teachers, parents, and other adults, and by their fascination with such unhealthy phenomena as Western popular music, as well as films full of horror and sex. Some probably sent their children to Kazak schools hoping that training in such more traditional institutions would help avoid discipline problems they encountered or anticipated in their own children.

One final factor that should be mentioned in this regard is the general optimism which prevailed about the government's ability to support the improvement of Kazak language schools. At the end of the 1980s and the very beginning of the 1990s, few people anticipated the severe economic crisis that would hit the former Soviet republics over the next few years. Most people had little idea that their government would not be able to support the educational sphere in the way that had been customary in recent decades.

**The Drawbacks**

The Table in a previous section of this study illustrates the slight drop in KMCe/KN during the last couple of years for the first and second grades. This trend is more common in oblasts where the ethnic Russians outnumber Kazaks, and more common in urban areas than rural ones. Thus, the KMCe/KN for the first grade between 1993 and 1995 for urban areas in Kazakhstan dropped from 83.1 to 75.8 percent, whereas in rural areas the analogous change was from 91.0 to 89.2 percent. In the second grade the change was less, from 81.9 to 79.7 percent for urban areas; in rural areas the indicator still slightly increased over this period, from 90.7 to 90.9 percent.

Whatever the long range picture might be, there have always been factors restraining parents from sending children to KMC's or encouraging them to rethink previous decisions to do this. The figures cited above suggest a change in the balance of costs and benefits. Ever since the 1980s the greatest minus for parents has probably been the widely acknowledged poorer quality of KMC

\textsuperscript{15} Not surprisingly, most of these schools with KMC's were mixed, and it is very likely that Russian sections outnumbered the Kazak ones.
education. One aspect of this is the better quality of instructional materials for RMC’s. During the Soviet period, textbooks for Kazakhstan’s RMC’s could be the same as those used in most schools of Russia. Today many Kazakhstan schools continue to use textbooks for RMC’s from Russia. Although for most of Soviet history many of Russia’s textbooks have also been translated into Kazak, the translations have often been poor. Methodological literature on how to use textbooks, visual aids, and other supplementary materials have also been scarce or entirely lacking for KMC teachers. These factors, of course, have had a negative impact on KMC education.

The expansion in number of KMC’s during the early 1990s greatly exacerbated these and other problems. As more parents began to send their children to KMC’s, the number of Kazak textbooks became even less adequate for needs. This was not merely a problem of quantity, but quality as well. Translations of textbooks from Russian into Kazak were often of such poor quality as to be virtually incomprehensible.16

The expansion of KMC’s also put a greater strain on the available pool of teachers. With the growth in the number of children in KMC’s, the need increased for teachers who had both adequate Kazak skills and training as subject teachers (e.g., for math, biology, or history classes). A frequent "solution" to this acute problem was the appointment to teaching positions of Kazak speakers even though they lacked sufficient knowledge of the subject or teaching credentials and classroom experience. Another response to the problem was to encourage or oblige ethnic Kazak school faculty with the proper specialization to teach in Kazak even if they lacked fluency in the language. Other "solutions" included employing vuz students to take over in the classroom and reducing the number of hours of the particular subject below what was mandated in the approved curriculum. All of this undoubtedly had a negative effect on the quality of KMC’s and parents’ perceptions of them.

It appears that the difference in composition of the student body in KMC’s and RMC’s respectively also affected educational quality. Because of the generally inferior education in rural schools, children in families that had recently moved to the city frequently had poorer academic backgrounds than their classmates who grew up in urban areas. Of course most of these migrants from the countryside to the cities were Kazaks, many of them lacking Russian skills. Thus, parents concerned about a stimulating educational environment for their offspring may have reasoned that the student body in the KMC would detract from the educational experience.

The experience in the KMC was also affected by the low level of Kazak skills among many Kazak children. Because of this, many first grade teachers had to conduct considerable remedial language work, not to mention that they had to deal with a broad range of skills in the classroom. It would have been a great challenge for a first grade KMC teacher simultaneously to attempt to excite children fresh from the village (with poor general preparation for school but fluent in Kazak) with

their non-Kazak-speaking urban classmates who had more likely already attended kindergartens and might even know how to read, albeit in Russian.

Some parents who wanted their children to study in KMC's were dissatisfied with the "mixed school." These schools combined under one roof KMC's and RMC's (and/or sometimes classes with other-language medium of instruction). Yet in urban areas with only small Kazak populations few "pure" Kazak schools opened. For example, in urban areas of Pavlodar oblast, the proportion of "pure" Russian schools dropped between 1988 and 1995 from 87 to only 43 percent, but the proportion of "pure" Kazak schools grew only from 9 percent to 13 percent. The big gain was in "mixed" schools, which increased from 5 to 44 percent.

For parents wanting their children to become comfortable using the Kazak language in every sphere of activity, the mixed school had the drawback of most (if not all) of its all-school and extracurricular activities being conducted in Russian; likewise, Russian was the only language which virtually all children understood, not to mention parents, teachers and in many cases even the school director. In such schools pupils might be "immersed" in Kazak while in the classroom, but communication in the hallways and on the playground tended to be in Russian.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some Kazak parents who themselves lacked a mastery of Kazak were frustrated by their own inability to help their children with school lessons. True, many parents may have seen their children's attendance in a KMC as an opportunity to improve their own level of Kazak language knowledge together with their children; however, for parents concerned about the mastery of subjects that were difficult for their children—and especially considering the poor level of textbooks and trained teachers—this may also have become a major "minus" for the KMC.

Kazak parents may also have felt that their children who attended KMC's might not achieve the same level of proficiency in Russian that they would in a RMC. As during the Soviet era, Russian has continued to open many doors in cultural, technical, and scientific fields, not to mention entertainment and career advancement. Parents' realization of this fact probably began to grow about 1993, when the euphoria of independence was wearing off and economic problems were getting more serious. The attractiveness of the KMC also probably began to decline because of the increasing realization that the promised higher educational opportunities for KMC graduates were not as attractive as they once looked. There were many signs—such as the failure to allocate resources—that the government was unable or unwilling to implement many provisions of the Law on Languages. There have been few economic incentives for individuals to learn Kazak; with some rare exceptions, no bonuses are paid to employees with a mastery of the language, and there appear to be no formal procedures to give them preference in hiring. Such facts may have convinced wavering Kazak parents that the benefits of a KMC education were too few to outweigh its drawbacks.
The deepening economic crisis had a variety of more direct negative consequences for KMC's. In the late Soviet period, transportation to a KMC beyond walking distance from home was less serious than it would become a few years later. Fuel shortages and deteriorating bus fleets made trips to school more difficult than before; increasing crime undoubtedly also made many parents reluctant to risk sending their young children off to school alone. The deepening economic crisis also meant smaller budgets for such research projects which logically needed to precede expansion of use of Kazak in the classroom. New textbooks needed to be written and/or translated as well as published, but the funds and materials (e.g., paper) necessary to accomplish this were extremely scarce. Even before books were published it was desirable to standardize Kazak terminology and orthography; yet the required funds for research and coordination quickly dried up.

The economic crisis may also have limited families' abilities or interest in KMC's as parents increasingly lacked the energy and resources to make up for KMC shortcomings. If they had sufficient funds, families might have hired tutors to help their children with subjects that were weaker in the KMC (especially Russian language) or which gave their children special difficulties. Many parents who found themselves working two or more jobs to make ends meet may likewise have had less time to take their children to a distant KMC with a higher quality program.

The Prospects?

The factors described above illustrate that Kazak parents' selection of a KMC or RMC is a complex one which cannot be explained or predicted by any single factor. The demographic, economic, and political ingredients which will ultimately shape future trends in choice of school are also intricate in their own right.

Migration and differential birth rates suggest that Kazakstan will continue to become ethnically more Kazak in the coming decades, and it is likely that in such a society more parents will choose KMC's. Moreover, today there is a larger generation than a decade ago in the "KMC pipeline" who in another ten to twenty years might significantly alter the linguistic environment in public life. Although most Kazaks today focus more attention on how to earn a decent living than whether to select a KMC or RMC for their children, it would be imprudent to assume that this choice will not again assume a great symbolic importance in all political scenarios likely to develop in Kazakstan.

The most powerful factor working against KMC enrollment growth is economic. Something of a vicious circle has developed in which the training provided by KMC's is generally inferior to that in RMC's; because there are insufficient resources to invest in education, many inferior KMC's have little chance of substantial improvement in the short term. This in turn contributes to an understanding of the superior prospects for RMC's, and thus undercuts aspirations to raise KMC's to a higher level.
Ultimately, though, the dynamics of school enrollment may be more affected by political forces which are still not visible and the broader currents which affect Kazakstan’s definition of its identity. It is still unclear what the relation of language may be to this identity, which President Nazarbayev consistently defines as supra-ethnic, though with a nod to the history of Kazaks’ attachment to the territory currently inside the republic’s boundaries. If President Nazarbayev is successful in “muddling through” the process of defining a national identity, there may be no radical changes in the proportions of children enrolled in KMC’s and RMC’s. However more abrupt changes are also possible. A turn toward a closer integration of Kazakstan with Russia could set in motion processes that would likely raise even higher the desirability of an education in Russian. On the other hand, a heavy-handed policy by Russia in Kazakstan could trigger other reactions, including a rise of Kazak nationalism and the likely concomitant “patriotic” shift to the Kazak school.