

**Білім беру үдерісіндегі білім беру саясаты,  
инновациялар және цифрандыру**

**Образовательная политика, инновации  
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## **From Soviet Legacy to Neoliberal Vision: An Evaluation and Critical Discourse Analysis of Kazakhstan's State Program of Education Development (2011–2020)**

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**Abstract.** This study presents a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and evaluative examination of the State Program of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020, aiming to uncover and assess the underlying discourses, ideologies, and global influences shaping national education policy. Utilizing Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework in conjunction with Rizvi and Lingard's policy analysis questions, the research critically evaluates the text at the levels of language, discourse practice, and social practice. Quantitative word frequency analysis provides an evaluative mapping of dominant themes such as development, modernization, and human capital, while qualitative analysis identifies and critiques the prevalence of globalized discourses including the knowledge economy, marketization, standardization, and internationalization. The findings not only demonstrate but also evaluate how effectively the policy text articulates a transition from Soviet-style education to a neoliberal and Western-aligned system, emphasizing competitiveness, privatization, and alignment with global standards. Moreover, the study critically interrogates and assesses the implications of the policy's promotion of economic instrumentalism and its engagement with international agencies such as the OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank. While the policy aspires to decolonize education and reframe Kazakhstan's future through human capital development, it also raises critical evaluative questions about the emergence of a new form of soft colonization via neoliberal globalization. The analysis concludes that the policy reflects a hybrid vision, simultaneously seeking national identity consolidation and alignment with global educational trends, thus contributing an evaluative perspective to ongoing debates around post-socialist transitions, globalization, and education reform. This CDA contributes to the field by highlighting and evaluating the complexities, contradictions, and power dynamics embedded in Kazakhstan's education policymaking processes within a globalized context.



**Keywords:** critical discourse analysis, education policy, globalization, Kazakhstan, neoliberalism, policy borrowing, knowledge economy



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## Introduction

In recent decades, education policymaking across the globe has been increasingly shaped by transnational discourses that foreground competitiveness, accountability, and market-oriented reform. These global agendas often advanced by supranational organizations such as the OECD, the World Bank, and UNESCO have become powerful influences on how national governments conceptualize and pursue educational development [1]. Within this evolving global policy environment, Kazakhstan's post-Soviet education system has undergone significant reconfiguration, shaped by its strategic aspiration to position itself among the world's top 50 most competitive nations. At the center of this transformation lies the *State Program of Education Development for 2011–2020* (hereafter, SPED), which functions as the country's flagship policy document articulating a long-term vision for aligning national education with international standards and economic priorities [2].

Importantly, while the SPED presents itself as a roadmap for modernization and innovation, it simultaneously operates as a discursive artifact one that embodies wider ideological currents and geopolitical ambitions. It is not merely a compilation of technical targets or reform initiatives; rather, it plays a constitutive role in constructing a national imaginary of Kazakhstan as a future-oriented, knowledge-driven society situated within the competitive space of global education markets. In doing so, the policy text selectively draws on dominant Western discourses such as the knowledge economy, international benchmarking, lifelong learning, and digital transformation while seeking to marginalize or reframe its Soviet education

al heritage. This dual movement, whereby the past is symbolically reimagined and distanced from Soviet legacies even as global norms are selectively internalized, invites a critical examination of the role of discourse in mediating national policy trajectories.

Accordingly, this article employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to interrogate the linguistic, ideological, and sociopolitical dimensions of Kazakhstan's education reform as articulated in the SPED. Adopting Fairclough's [3] three-dimensional framework comprising the textual, discourse practice, and social practice levels the study investigates how reform is legitimized through language and how discourse operates to naturalize particular visions of development. To further contextualize the analysis within the global policy landscape, the study draws on Rizvi and Lingard's framework on globalization and education [4], which highlights how policy ideas travel across borders and become embedded in national contexts. Additional theoretical insights from van Dijk [5], Wodak [6], and Blommaert inform the study's understanding of how power, ideology, and historical positioning are encoded in policy language [7].

The primary aim of this study is to critically deconstruct the dominant discourses embedded within Kazakhstan's national education policy and to analyze how these discourses are mobilized to support specific configurations of identity, governance, and progress. In doing so, the study addresses the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1. What discourses and discursive strategies structure the SPED's vision of educational development?

RQ2. How are global ideologies appropriated, adapted, or resisted within the national context?

RQ3. What are the broader implications of these discursive constructions for post-socialist education reform?

By engaging with these questions, this article contributes to critical education policy research in several ways. First, it offers a detailed case study of how language is used not only to communicate reform, but to legitimize it. Second, it illustrates the symbolic and material effects of policy borrowing in transitional societies where modernization is frequently equated with Westernization, and where discourse serves as a mechanism for elite-driven, top-down reform. In this way, the study underscores the importance of discourse as both a site and instrument of power in the shaping of national educational futures.

## Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as both a theoretical lens and a methodological approach. In particular, it adopts Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, which conceptualizes discourse as simultaneously a text, a discursive practice (the production, distribution, and consumption of text), and a social practice (the wider sociopolitical and institutional context in which discourse is embedded). This multi-level approach allows for a nuanced analysis of how language in education policy both reflects and shapes power relations, governance ideologies, and social change[3].

However, Fairclough's framework alone is insufficient for fully capturing the complexity of education policy discourse in a globalized and post-socialist context. Therefore, the study incorporates insights from Rizvi and Lingard's theory of globalizing education policy, which explores how transnational discourses such as neoliberalism, policy borrowing, and international benchmarking are negotiated, translated, and embedded within national reform agendas [1]. Their framework is particularly useful for interro-

gating how policy texts articulate the goals of global competitiveness, modernity, and efficiency, while simultaneously responding to local political and cultural imperatives.

In addition, the study draws on the work of several foundational discourse theorists to enrich the analytical process. First, van Dijk's notion of ideological square is used to analyze how the SPED constructs in-group and out-group representations often by glorifying global standards while marginalizing regional alternatives [5]. This concept is essential in examining how Kazakhstan's policy discourse constructs a vision of progress that is inherently Western-aligned, thereby implicitly devaluing alternative educational traditions rooted in the Soviet or Central Asian context.

Second, the study employs Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to situate the policy within its broader temporal and geopolitical contexts. This approach emphasizes the importance of intertextuality, recontextualization, and historical memory in the construction of meaning. In the case of Kazakhstan, this is particularly relevant given the country's postcolonial positioning and its ongoing efforts to redefine national identity through education [6].

Third, Blommaert's theory of discourse as a sociolinguistic resource highlights the unequal distribution of symbolic power in global education discourse. Blommaert argues that discourse is not evenly accessible or influential across social contexts, and that the circulation of dominant discourses often reinforces existing inequalities [7]. This perspective is critical in analyzing how the SPED selectively integrates discourses of the knowledge economy, lifelong learning, and digital modernization while remaining silent on issues of linguistic diversity, regional equity, or indigenous knowledge systems.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives enable a comprehensive understanding of how discourse functions not merely as a vehicle of communication, but as a mechanism of power, ideology, and governance. The hybridization of global and local discourses in Kazakhstan's education policy

reflects not only an aspiration for modernization, but also a strategic positioning in the international political economy of education. Thus, CDA, when coupled with globalization theory and critical sociolinguistics, offers a robust framework for analyzing how national education reforms are discursively constructed, legitimized, and contested.

Finally, it is necessary to address the specific geopolitical categorization of the region. While the classification of post-Soviet Central Asia as 'post-colonial' remains a subject of vibrant academic debate [23], scholars such as Adams [23] and Kandiyoti [24] have highlighted the utility of comparative frameworks that account for the Soviet Union's 'hybrid' nature as both a modernizing state and an imperial power. Consequently, this study adopts the decolonial lens not as a definitive historical categorization, but as an analytical tool to examine the discursive erasure of local epistemologies and the strategic distancing from the Soviet past.

## Materials and methods

To explore how Kazakhstan's national education policy discourse is constructed, legitimized, and aligned with global paradigms, this study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its central methodological approach. In line with the theoretical framework outlined above, the analysis is guided by Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which enables a systematic examination of the policy text at three interrelated levels: the textual, the discursive practice, and the broader social practice. This tripartite model facilitates a layered understanding of how language operates as both a product and a producer of sociopolitical structures [3].

Moreover, the study incorporates Rizvi and Lingard's policy analysis questions to deepen the global policy context and to analyze how international discourses are adopted, translated, and domesticated within Kazakhstan's reform agenda. These questions help situate the text within broader flows of global education governance and provide a critical lens through which to interrogate the actors, motivations, and institutional alli-

ances involved in policy formation [1].

The primary data source for this study is the State Program of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020 (SPED), a 55-page document produced by the Ministry of Education and Science [2]. This text was selected not only because of its national authority and scope, but also due to its strategic role in articulating Kazakhstan's educational vision during a critical period of post-Soviet transformation. The SPED outlines long-term goals, reform priorities, and ideological frameworks intended to guide all levels of the national education system.

While the SPED serves as the focal text, the study is further enriched by incorporating a micro-corpus of supporting documents that provide intertextual and contextual depth. These include selected presidential addresses on education, such as the 2010 State of the Nation speech, the OECD's Review of National Education Policy: Kazakhstan (2014), and the Concept of Lifelong Education in Kazakhstan (2013). These documents are not analyzed in equal detail but serve to triangulate major themes, validate policy continuities, and reinforce the interdiscursive character of the primary text.

## Analytical Procedure

The analysis was conducted in three distinct but interconnected phases. First, a preliminary textual scan of the SPED was carried out using Voyant Tools, a digital platform for textual analysis [8, 9]. This stage involved mapping high-frequency lexical items (excluding function words) to identify recurring terms such as "development," "standard," "international," and "knowledge." Terms appearing more than ten times were tagged for thematic clustering. While this initial frequency analysis does not constitute interpretation on its own, it provided a lexical map that guided deeper qualitative inquiry.

Second, the text underwent open and axial coding using NVivo software. In the open coding phase, recurring concepts were grouped inductively into thematic categories such as knowledge economy, interna-

tionalization, market logic, standardization, and human capital development. Axial coding then refined these into broader discourse fields, aligned with both global education paradigms and national political interests. The coding scheme was informed by CDA principles, particularly those emphasizing discursive strategies such as legitimization, naturalization, and exclusion [3,5].

- Third, selected excerpts were subjected to fine-grained qualitative analysis using tools from CDA, including:
- Nominalization (e.g., turning processes into static goals: “standardization,” “modernization”),
- Passivization (e.g., obscuring agency: “conditions will be created...”),
- Lexical choices (e.g., frequent use of “global,” “innovative,” and “competitive”),
- Intertextuality (e.g., references to OECD, UNESCO, and PISA),
- Silences and absences (e.g., omission of Russia or CIS as comparative references).

Excerpts were selected based on three main criteria: (1) their centrality within the policy text, (2) their density of discursive features, and (3) their ability to represent broader ideological trends. These excerpts are analyzed in detail in the following section.

In sum, this methodology allows for a critical reconstruction of how Kazakhstan’s educa-

tion policy is discursively framed, drawing attention to the symbolic power of language in governance, and how global ideologies are recontextualized in post-socialist national reform.

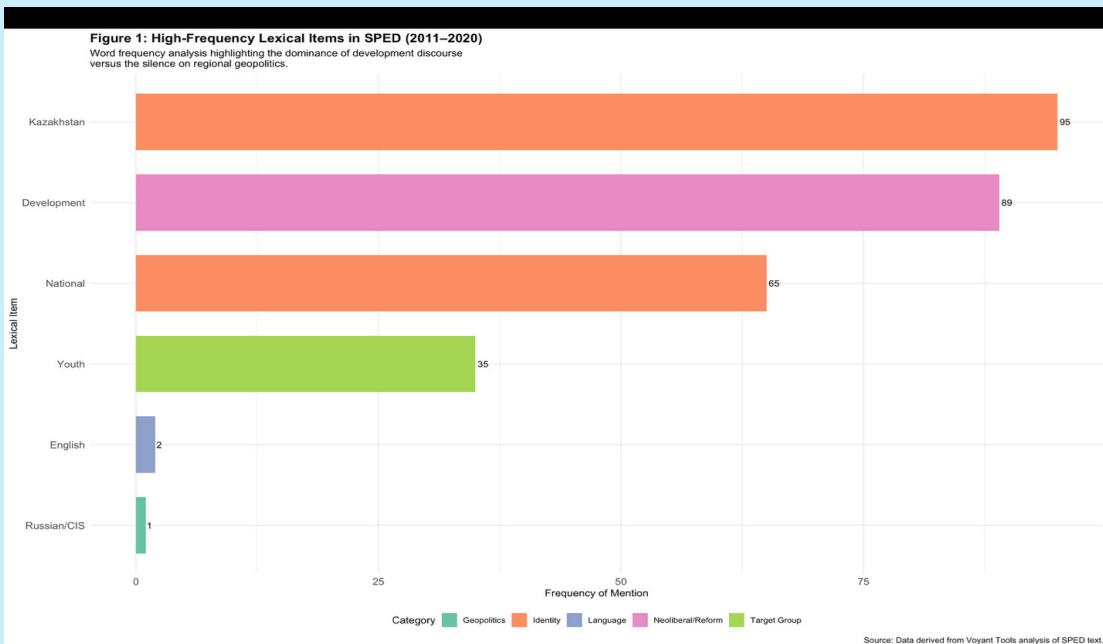
## Findings and Analysis

The following analysis applies Fairclough’s three-dimensional distinctions to deconstruct the SPED, interpreting the statistical lexical data (textual level) through the lens of Rizvi and Lingard’s globalization framework (discourse and social practice levels).

### Textual Level: Constructing the Language of Reform

At the textual level, the State Program of Education Development for 2011–2020 (SPED) reveals a lexicon deeply embedded in the language of globalization, modernization, and economic rationality. This layer of analysis examines the surface-level linguistic features and vocabulary choices that underpin the policy’s dominant discourses. While not sufficient on their own, lexical patterns and syntactic constructions provide important clues about how meaning is stabilized and ideological orientations are naturalized.

In Figure 1, a preliminary word frequency analysis using Voyant Tools highlights the prominence of terms such as “Kazakhstan” (95 mentions), “development” (89), “national” (65), and “youth” (35).



**Figure 1**  
**Frequency of Key Lexical Items in the State Program of Education Development (2011–2020)**  
Note. The bar chart illustrates the frequency of dominant discourse terms versus the marginalization of regional geopolitical terms. Data derived from Voyant Tools frequency analysis.

The frequent repetition of “development” throughout the document serves to frame educational reform not as a contested process but as an inevitable and linear progression. Notably, while terms like “modernization,” “competitiveness,” and “innovation” occur repeatedly, mentions of “Kazakh language” and “Russian language” are strikingly limited, with “English” appearing only twice. This selective emphasis suggests a deliberate orientation toward international integration, and potentially, a redefinition of national identity through global alignment.

Furthermore, several discursive strategies are visible in the syntactic and grammatical construction of the text. Most notably, the policy makes extensive use of nominalization, transforming dynamic processes into abstract, depersonalized nouns. For example, phrases such as “the improvement of

quality,” “the implementation of new standards,” and “the modernization of curricula” effectively remove human agency and present change as a technical or administrative imperative. This has the effect, as Fairclough [3] argues, of naturalizing reform, rendering it as objective and non-negotiable.

Closely related to this is the policy’s frequent use of the passive voice, which further obscures the actors responsible for educational change. Statements such as “conditions will be created,” “standards will be implemented,” and “measures will be taken” reflect a broader tendency to depersonalize accountability. As Wodak notes, such grammatical choices are rarely neutral; rather, they operate as discursive tools that help legitimize authority and diffuse responsibility [6].

Moreover, the lexical field of the SPED is

saturated with evaluative and promotional language, which contributes to the discursive construction of reform as not only necessary but morally desirable. Words such as “best,” “global,” “effective,” “innovative,” and “advanced” appear frequently in connection with educational goals and institutional objectives. These terms are not merely descriptive; rather, they serve to frame reform in highly positive terms, creating what van Dijk refers to as an ideological square emphasizing the in-group (“we” as modern, progressive, future-oriented) while implicitly devaluing the out-group (e.g., Soviet-era structures or regional alternatives) [5].

It is also noteworthy that while international organizations such as the OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank are directly referenced, there is no mention of Russia or the CIS region. This absence is not accidental; rather, it functions as a discursive exclusion, one that signifies a break with past geopolitical affiliations and underscores Kazakhstan’s pivot toward Western educational models. This strategy aligns with what Blommaert identifies as the re-scaling of discourse, where national texts index themselves within global hierarchies and value systems, often by silencing competing references [7].

In sum, the textual features of the SPED its lexical choices, syntactic patterns, and discursive silences converge to construct a narrative of education as a technocratic, depoliticized project of national modernization, aligned with global norms. These features work in tandem to position Kazakhstan as a rational actor in the global education space, thereby legitimizing policy directions that are both neoliberal and selectively Westernized.

#### Discourse Practice Level: Global Discourses in National Packaging

At the discourse practice level, this study employed Rizvi and Lingard’s framework to analyze the policy text and identify the discourses that frame Kazakhstan’s State Program of Education Development for 2011–2020 (SPED) [1]. The central research questions guiding this phase of analysis were: What discourses are present in the

policy text? and Are these discourses globalized? These questions serve to locate the SPED within broader networks of global education policy discourse and examine how such discourses are recontextualized within the national setting.

The analysis revealed several interrelated discourses embedded within the policy text, including but not limited to: the knowledge economy, marketization, standardization, internationalization, harmonization, homogenization, lifelong learning, digital learning, global citizenship, English as a global language, and education for human rights and social justice. Although all of these discourses are worthy of attention, the present study focuses primarily on three dominant formations: the knowledge economy, the market economy, and the interlinked cluster of standardization, harmonization, and homogenization.

#### Knowledge Economy

The discourse of the knowledge economy is central to the SPED and serves as a key organizing logic within the policy’s strategic vision. Drawing on the idea that national prosperity in the 21st century depends on the development of high-quality human capital, the policy text emphasizes education as a driver of technical innovation, labor market adaptability, and global competitiveness [11,12]. The knowledge economy, often framed as a knowledge-based economy, valorizes intellectual property, innovation, and advanced skills as essential for economic growth. In line with this, the SPED frequently invokes the goal of creating “an intellectual nation,” positioning education not simply as a social good but as a strategic investment in Kazakhstan’s economic future.

Moreover, the policy links this discourse with expectations of behavioral adaptation, such as leadership, flexibility, and cross-cultural competence [1]. Phrases such as “world-class education,” “lifelong learning,” and “human capital development” appear throughout the document, illustrating an ideological commitment to neoliberal logics that equate education with productivity and national competitiveness. Additionally, the

policy highlights the role of research universities, research-based enterprises, and research-design organizations as institutional vehicles to advance Kazakhstan's position in the global knowledge economy [13].

### Market Economy

Closely related to the knowledge economy is the discourse of the market economy, which reconfigures education as a competitive, consumer-driven sector. In this discourse, education is no longer conceptualized solely as a public service but increasingly as a marketplace characterized by performance, choice, and profit motivation [14]. The SPED explicitly references mechanisms that promote competition among educational institutions and among students themselves, such as government-sponsored contests ("The Best Educational Institution", "The Best in Profession") and employer-funded grants or scholarship programs [12].

Such initiatives reflect a broader shift toward performance-based educational governance, in which individual excellence, institutional branding, and public recognition are emphasized over equity or collaboration. As van Dijk would suggest, these patterns are not ideologically neutral they reflect and reinforce a neoliberal worldview in which education is treated as an individual responsibility and an economic transaction [5]. Moreover, the policy's repeated emphasis on "mobility" and "dynamism" in the labor market echoes global discourses that conflate personal success with adaptability to economic volatility [16].

### Standardization, Harmonization, and Homogenization

Finally, the policy text is saturated with references to standardization, harmonization, and homogenization, reflecting a deeper commitment to global benchmarking and alignment with international norms. Standardization, in this context, refers to the creation and implementation of unified measures across curricula, teacher qualifications, and student assessments. The terms "international standard," "professional standard," and "educational standard" are invoked

frequently, suggesting that reform success is measured primarily by compliance with globally recognized indicators.

Harmonization, meanwhile, is evident in Kazakhstan's participation in frameworks such as the Bologna Process and its alignment with organizations like the OECD and UNESCO. These moves are framed in the policy as prerequisites for enhancing educational quality and international mobility, yet they also imply the subordination of local context to external expectations [16]. Homogenization often less explicit is evident in the policy's silence on regional diversity, indigenous knowledge systems, and post-Soviet educational legacies. As Pieterse cautions, such moves risk suppressing cultural specificity in the name of universal excellence [17,18].

This alignment is further reinforced through selective intertextuality. The frequent referencing of global institutions such as the OECD and World Bank not only provides technical legitimacy but also contributes to the construction of an aspirational policy narrative one that presents Kazakhstan as a globally engaged, reform-oriented state. Conversely, the absence of regional voices (e.g., Russia or the CIS) and the marginal visibility of Kazakhstani languages in international discourse signify a symbolic distancing from the past, as Wodak's discourse-historical approach would suggest [6].

In sum, the discourse practice level reveals that Kazakhstan's education policy is not only shaped by global discourses but is also a site of negotiation where these discourses are localized, reframed, and strategically deployed. The SPED does not passively adopt international models; rather, it constructs an aspirational narrative of national advancement through carefully curated global scripts. This hybridization of policy language allows the Kazakhstani state to maintain legitimacy in both domestic and international arenas, reinforcing its image as a modern, reform-oriented nation while subtly reinforcing elite-driven governance structures.

### Social Practice Level: Discursive Governance and the Geopolitics of Reform

At the level of social practice, this study applies Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate the wider institutional, ideological, and geopolitical context in which the State Program of Education Development for 2011–2020 (SPED) was conceived and implemented. According to Fairclough [3], discourse does not merely reflect existing social realities; rather, it plays a constitutive role in shaping and organizing them. Hence, to critically understand the function of the SPED, it is necessary to situate the policy within Kazakhstan's evolving national strategy and its engagement with global education policy paradigms. In doing so, this study employs the analytical framework proposed by Rizvi and Lingard [1], which foregrounds two interrelated questions: (1) Who has advocated and promoted the policy, and why? and (2) What role have international agencies played in its development and dissemination?

In addressing the first question, it is important to recognize the central role of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan in formulating the SPED. However, this institutional authorship must be contextualized within a broader national agenda aimed at transforming Kazakhstan into one of the world's top 50 most competitive nations by 2020. While on the surface this ambition appears to be an economic objective, it also functions symbolically as part of a larger project of national modernization and global rebranding. Accordingly, the SPED not only delineates educational reforms, but simultaneously operates as a discursive tool to legitimize the state's developmental trajectory. Through the repeated invocation of terms such as "innovation," "quality," and "international standard," the policy constructs an image of Kazakhstan as a forward-looking and globally integrated nation-state.

Nevertheless, this discursive orientation cannot be divorced from the political structure within which it is embedded. Kazakhstan functions within a political context frequently characterized by scholars as soft authoritarian or neopatrimonial, wherein power is highly personalized and the boundaries between formal and informal politics are

blurred [25–27]. Despite the SPED's reformist language, the policy was adopted via Presidential Decree No. 1118 rather than through extensive parliamentary debate, illustrating a top-down approach that prioritizes executive vision over public deliberation. Consequently, while the SPED may present reform as a technical necessity, it operates within a system where elite consolidation often supersedes democratic participation [26, 28].

In relation to the second question, the SPED reveals a significant alignment with and reliance on international organizations, including the OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank, as well as participation in global assessment systems such as PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS, and ICILS. The policy text emphasizes the importance of these instruments in benchmarking educational outcomes and enhancing international credibility. Yet, as Rizvi and Lingard contend, globalization in education policy is not a neutral process [1]. Rather, it is ideologically mediated and often structured by asymmetrical relationships of power. The selective citation of global agencies in the SPED thus functions not merely as technical guidance, but as a discursive strategy aimed at securing legitimacy through alignment with dominant global standards.

Moreover, international agencies are not passive actors in this process. Their influence extends beyond funding and technical assistance to the production of policy discourses themselves. As Steiner-Khamisi notes, such organizations often serve as gatekeepers of "best practice," shaping the conditions under which national reforms are both imagined and evaluated [16]. In the Kazakhstani context, these agencies contribute to a broader policy logic wherein reform is validated externally through comparative indicators, rather than internally through participatory processes.

At the same time, the SPED exhibits notable silences. There is a conspicuous absence of references to regional traditions, the Soviet educational legacy, Russian-language instruction, or local epistemological frameworks. This discursive exclusion, as observed in Wodak's [6] discourse-historical approach, reflects a strategic distancing from post-So-

viet identity formations in favor of a Western-oriented trajectory. Moreover, following Said [21] and Blommaert [7], such omissions can be interpreted as forms of epistemic violence, whereby indigenous knowledge systems and alternative pedagogical traditions are marginalized or erased in the process of aligning with globally sanctioned norms [22].

These dynamics raise a critical question regarding the nature of Kazakhstan's educational transformation. While the SPED ostensibly seeks to dismantle the Soviet legacy by moving beyond past models, it risks replacing one hegemonic framework with another. The shift from collectivist, centrally planned education toward individualized, market-oriented, and performance-driven models—coupled with a strong emphasis on international benchmarking—may represent not emancipation, but rather a form of neoliberal hegemony. As Silova asserts, in many post-socialist contexts, the discourse of globalization often masks enduring patterns of elite control and state-centered governance [19].

In sum, the SPED exemplifies how education reform operates as a discursive regime, wherein language functions as a mechanism of policy legitimization, identity formation, and geopolitical positioning. While the policy reflects Kazakhstan's aspirations for global relevance and educational excellence, it simultaneously reproduces dominant global ideologies and reinforces domestic power structures. Thus, at the level of social practice, the SPED must be understood not merely as a response to educational challenges, but as an ideological artifact navigating the complex and often contradictory terrain between sovereignty and dependency, modernization and exclusion, and decolonization and neoliberal governance.

## Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that Kazakhstan's State Program of Education Development for 2011–2020 (SPED) is not a neutral roadmap for technical reform, but a deeply discursive text shaped by intersecting global

and domestic ideological forces. Analyzing the policy across textual, discursive, and social dimensions has uncovered how reform is not only articulated through language, but also legitimized, politicized, and selectively aligned with dominant global norms.

Crucially, the SPED engages in discursive alignment with global narratives such as the knowledge economy, market-based governance, and international standardization. These discourses are not imported wholesale; rather, they are strategically hybridized, serving Kazakhstan's political goals of global visibility and economic competitiveness. As Rizvi and Lingard argue [1], global policy flows are never adopted in a vacuum they are recontextualized, often unevenly, within local power structures. In Kazakhstan's case, this results in the simultaneous adoption of global logics and suppression of local epistemologies.

What is particularly striking is the use of linguistic strategies such as nominalization and passive voice to obscure agency and present reform as inevitable. Such constructions depoliticize decision-making, allowing elite actors to impose reform agendas without open contestation. At the same time, discursive omissions notably the erasure of Soviet pedagogical legacies or regionally embedded practices reveal an underlying ideology of epistemic distancing. This aligns with Blommaert's view of discourse as a terrain where inclusion and exclusion are enacted through silence as much as through speech [7].

Furthermore, the SPED's apparent embrace of modernity and innovation masks a deeper governance contradiction: although framed in the language of transparency, quality, and accountability, the reform process occurs within a semi-authoritarian system, where democratic participation in policymaking is limited. International organizations such as the OECD and World Bank are invoked to lend legitimacy, yet their presence reinforces a global hierarchy of knowledge that privileges Western norms over post-socialist realities.

In this sense, the SPED exemplifies what

Said [21] and Wodak [6] describe as symbolic power: the ability of discourse to normalize ideological positions and suppress alternatives under the guise of rationality and progress. Thus, the findings not only speak to the construction of reform narratives, but also to how discourse mediates access to authority, legitimacy, and visibility on the global stage. The policy represents not merely what Kazakhstan wants to do with education, but what it wants to become and that transformation is made visible, and governable, through language.

## Conclusion

This study has investigated how language functions as a strategic tool in constructing Kazakhstan's education reform agenda, as articulated in the State Program of Education Development for 2011–2020. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, and guided by Fairclough's three-level model and Rizvi and Lingard's framework on policy globalization [1], the analysis revealed that SPED serves as more than a reform plan it is an ideological artifact, negotiating Kazakhstan's identity between post-Soviet heritage and global alignment.

By unpacking the linguistic and ideological mechanisms at work, this study demonstrated how dominant global discourses such as the knowledge economy, marketization, and international benchmarking are selectively mobilized to position Kazakhstan as a modern, globally competitive state. At the same time, the policy's silence on regional and local traditions, its depoliticized language, and its heavy reliance on external validation raise important concerns about the nature of reform in semi-authoritarian contexts.

Importantly, this research contributes to ongoing discussions in critical education policy studies by highlighting how discourse functions not only as a reflection of policy but as an active site of governance and identity formation. It underscores the need for scholars and policymakers alike to critically assess the narratives that underpin reform especially in transitional societies where modernization

is often conflated with Westernization.

As Kazakhstan and other post-socialist nations continue to engage with global education agendas, this study raises two critical questions for further exploration. First, how can such states participate in global policy networks without reinforcing asymmetrical knowledge hierarchies? Second, how might locally grounded, culturally responsive discourses be reclaimed and integrated into policy frameworks dominated by neoliberal norms?

Ultimately, this study underscores that education policy is never ideologically neutral. It is a narrative of the future, crafted through language, and bound up in the political economies of the present.

To move beyond this discursive dependency, future policy iterations must actively create space for local pedagogical voices and regional epistemologies. Only by balancing global aspirations with local realities can Kazakhstan transition from importing reform to generating authentic educational innovation. Thus, the next stage of SPED should prioritize not just the translation of global standards, but the cultivation of indigenous educational sovereignty.

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## Кеңестік мұрадан неолибералдық көзқарасқа дейін: Қазақстанның 2011–2020 жылдарға арналған білім беруді дамытудың мемлекеттік бағдарламасына баға және сыни дискурстық талдау

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**Аннотация.** Бұл зерттеу Қазақстан Республикасының 2011–2020 жылдарға арналған Білім беруді дамытудың мемлекеттік бағдарламасына сыни дискурстық талдау (СДТ) мен бағалау жүргізуді мақсат етеді. Зерттеудің басты мақсаты – ұлттық білім беру саясатын қалыптастыратын жасырын дискурстарды, идеологияларды және жаһандық ықпалдарды анықтау және бағалау. Зерттеу әдістемесі ретінде Фәрклоудың үш өлшемді СДТ үлгісі мен Ризви мен Лингардтың саясатты талдау сұрақтары қолданылды. Талдау тілдік, дискурстық практика және өлеуметтік практика деңгейінде жүргізілді.

Сөз жиілігін сандық талдау “даму”, “модернизация”, “адам капиталы” секілді басым тақырыптарды анықтауға мүмкіндік берсе, сапалық талдау білім экономикасы, нарықтандыру, стандарттау және интернационалдандыру секілді жаһанданған дискурстардың басымдығын ашып көрсетіп, оларға сыни көзқарас танытады. Зерттеу нәтижелері бағдарлама мәтінінің кеңестік үлгіден неолибералдық, Батысқа бағытталған білім беру жүйесіне өту үдерісін қалай сипаттайтынын ғана емес, сонымен қатар бұл үдерістің тиімділігін де бағалауға мүмкіндік береді. Мұнда бәсекеге қабілеттілік, жекешелендіру және жаһандық стандарттарға сәйкестік басымдылыққа ие.

Сонымен қатар, зерттеу бағдарламаның экономикалық құралға айналуы және ОЭСР, ЮНЕСКО, Дүниежүзілік банк сияқты халықаралық үйымдармен өзара байланысы аясында туындағын салдарларды да сыни тұрғыда бағалайды. Бағдарлама білім беруді деколонизациялауға және Қазақстан болашағын адам капиталы арқылы қайта құруға ұмтылғанымен, неолибералдық жаһандану жағдайындағы “жұмсақ” отарланудың жаңа түрін тудыруы мүмкін деген маңызды сұрақтарды алға тартады.

Талдау нәтижесінде, бағдарлама бір мезетте ұлттық бірегейлікті нығайтуды және жаһандық білім беру үрдістерімен үйлесуді мақсат еткен гибридті көзқарасты бейнелейді деген қорытынды жасалды. Бұл зерттеу постсоциалистік өзгерістер, жаһандану және білім реформасына қатысты пікірталастарға бағалау тұрғысынан үлес қосады. Сыни дискурстық талдау Қазақстандағы білім саясатының қалыптасу үдерісіндегі қайшылықтар мен билік қатынастарын ашып көрсетеді.



**Кілтті сөздер:** сыни дискурстық талдау, білім беру саясаты, жаһандану, Қазақстан, неолиберализм, саясатты көшіру, білім экономикасы

## От советского наследия к неолиберальному видению: оценка и критический дискурсивный анализ Государственной программы развития образования Республики Казахстан на 2011–2020 годы

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**Аннотация.** Данное исследование представляет критический дискурсивный анализ (КДА) и оценочное изучение Государственной программы развития образования Республики Казахстан на 2011–2020 годы. Целью исследования является выявление и оценка скрытых дискурсов, идеологий и глобальных влияний, формирующих национальную образовательную политику. В качестве теоретико-методологической базы используется трёхмерная модель КДА Н. Фэрклуэра в сочетании с вопросами анализа политики по Ризви и Лингарду. Анализ проводится на трёх уровнях: языковом, дискурсивной практики и социальной практики.

Количественный анализ частотности слов позволяет выявить доминирующие темы, такие как развитие, модернизация и человеческий капитал, тогда как качественный анализ раскрывает и критикует преобладание глобализированных дискурсов, включая экономику знаний, маркетизацию, стандартизацию и интернационализацию. Полученные результаты не только демонстрируют, но и оценивают, насколько эффективно текст программы транслирует переход от советской модели образования к неолиберальной и ориентированной на Запад системе, подчеркивая конкурентоспособность, приватизацию и соответствие международным стандартам.

Более того, в исследовании критически осмысливаются последствия продвижения экономического инструментализма и взаимодействия с международными организациями, такими как ОЭСР, ЮНЕСКО и Всемирный банк. Несмотря на заявленную цель деколонизации образования и переосмысливания будущего Казахстана через развитие человеческого капитала, программа вызывает вопросы относительно возможного появления новой формы мягкой колонизации в условиях неолиберальной глобализации.

Анализ приходит к выводу, что программа отражает гибридное видение: с одной стороны, стремление к укреплению национальной идентичности, с другой — к интеграции в глобальные образовательные тренды. Таким образом, исследование вносит оценочную перспективу в текущие дискуссии о постсоциалистических трансформациях, глобализации и реформах в сфере образования. Этот КДА позволяет выявить и критически оценить сложные взаимосвязи, противоречия и властные механизмы, заложенные в процессе разработки образовательной политики Казахстана в глобализированном контексте.



**Ключевые слова:** критический дискурсивный анализ, образовательная политика, глобализация, Казахстан, неолиберализм, заимствование политики, экономика знаний

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