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## **LEARNING BEYOND BORDERS: INDIA VS. KAZAKHSTAN'S EDUCATION SYSTEMS**

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Education is a powerful tool for national progress, and India and Kazakhstan, despite their vastly different histories and cultural contexts, share a common emphasis on improving their education systems. Analyzing their access to education, curricula, and higher education opportunities reveals both shared challenges and unique strategies in their pursuit of educational excellence.

### Access to Education and Literacy Rates:

India and Kazakhstan have made significant strides in increasing access to education, but they face distinct challenges. India's literacy rate is approximately 77%, with significant disparities between rural and urban areas and between genders. Initiatives like the Right to Education (RTE) Act aim to provide free and compulsory education for children aged 6-14, but implementation challenges persist, particularly in rural regions where infrastructure and teacher quality often lag.

Kazakhstan, with a literacy rate of 99.8%, benefits from its Soviet-era legacy of universal education. Education is compulsory for 11 years, starting at age six, and the government has invested heavily in modernizing schools, particularly in rural areas. However, disparities between urban and rural schools, though less pronounced than in India, still exist. Kazakhstan has also embraced digital platforms and technology to bridge educational gaps, a strategy that India is increasingly adopting.

### Differences in Curricula, Testing, and Emphasis:

India and Kazakhstan differ significantly in their curricula and testing systems. India's education system is highly diverse, with multiple school boards such as CBSE, ICSE, and state boards, each with varying curricula. The Indian system places a strong emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) due to its critical role in the country's economic growth, but this often comes at the expense of creativity and arts. High-stakes exams like the CBSE Board exams and entrance tests for engineering and medical colleges dominate the education landscape, leading to an overreliance on rote learning.

Kazakhstan's education system, influenced by Soviet traditions, is undergoing a transformation to align with international standards. The curriculum aims to balance STEM and arts education, promoting multilingual learning in Kazakh, Russian, and English. This approach fosters global competitiveness and cultural integration. Testing in Kazakhstan is less centralized than in India, though the Unified National Test (UNT) serves as a major benchmark for university admissions. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills are increasingly emphasized in Kazakhstan, contrasting with India's focus on memorization.

### Higher Education Opportunities and International Rankings:

India's higher education system is one of the largest in the world, with over 1,000 universities and renowned institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs). These institutions have gained international recognition for their focus on STEM fields and management education. However, access to high-quality higher education in India is highly competitive, and there are significant disparities in quality among institutions.

Kazakhstan's higher education sector, though smaller, is growing rapidly. Leading universities like Nazarbayev University and Al-Farabi Kazakh National University are increasingly recognized for their focus on research and innovation. Kazakhstan has adopted the Bologna Process, aligning its education system with European standards to enhance global mobility and collaboration. While it lacks the global prominence of India's IITs, Kazakhstan's efforts to modernize and internationalize its universities are promising.

### Conclusion:

India and Kazakhstan represent two distinct approaches to education. India's scale and focus on STEM drive its global reputation, while Kazakhstan's balanced curriculum and multilingual focus position it as a rising player in

international education. Both nations face shared challenges, such as rural-urban disparities and the need for critical thinking skills, but their tailored strategies reflect their unique developmental priorities. Addressing these challenges could unlock their full educational potential.

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## THE PROBLEMS OF YOUTH IN PAKISTAN AND KAZAKHSTAN: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Youth, as the backbone of any society, play a crucial role in shaping the future of their nations. However, the journey of young people is often marred by challenges that test their resilience, adaptability, and potential. In the contexts of Pakistan and Kazakhstan, the problems faced by youth are multifaceted, shaped by their socio-economic, cultural, and political environments. A comparative analysis reveals both common struggles and unique challenges, necessitating tailored approaches to empower the younger generations in these countries.

#### Socio-Economic Challenges

Economic hardships form a significant barrier to youth development in both Pakistan and Kazakhstan. Unemployment stands as a critical issue, with many young graduates finding it difficult to secure meaningful employment. The causes of this unemployment include a mismatch between educational curricula and market needs, limited economic diversification, and insufficient job creation. In Pakistan, this issue is further exacerbated by the rapid population growth, which places immense pressure on the labor market. Many young Pakistanis are forced to take up informal or low-paying jobs that fail to utilize their skills or provide long-term stability.

In Kazakhstan, while the population growth is more manageable, the economy's transition from a Soviet model to a market-oriented structure has created its own set of challenges. The young workforce often lacks the skills required in a modern economy, and rapid technological advancements have widened the gap between available jobs and the capabilities of job seekers. Additionally, rural-to-urban migration in both countries has led to urban centers being overwhelmed, leaving rural areas economically stagnant and young people there with fewer opportunities.

Poverty remains a pervasive issue in Pakistan, where nearly 40% of the population lives below the poverty line. This financial strain limits access to quality education and healthcare, trapping families in a cycle of deprivation. In Kazakhstan, poverty rates are lower, but economic inequality persists, particularly in rural areas where youth are less likely to benefit from the country's oil-driven wealth.

#### Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health is another pressing concern for the youth in both countries. The stigma surrounding mental health conditions is deeply entrenched, discouraging many young people from seeking professional help. In Pakistan, societal expectations regarding academic performance, familial responsibilities, and adherence to cultural norms create a highly stressful environment. The prevalence of anxiety and depression is rising, but mental health services remain scarce and expensive, particularly in rural areas.

In Kazakhstan, the issue is compounded by a lack of awareness and limited public discourse on mental health. Rapid modernization has introduced new stressors, such as the pressure to compete in a globalized world, which often leaves young people feeling alienated. The transition from traditional values to a more liberal outlook has created identity conflicts, further contributing to mental health issues. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive mental health policies, awareness campaigns, and affordable counseling services to provide the necessary support.

#### Substance Abuse and Delinquency

Substance abuse among youth is a growing concern in both nations. In urban areas of Pakistan, the lack of recreational facilities and limited opportunities for constructive engagement drive some young people toward harmful behaviors, including drug use. Peer pressure, easy availability of substances, and limited parental supervision exacerbate the issue.

Similarly, in Kazakhstan, substance abuse has been linked to the socio-economic changes following independence. While the government has implemented anti-drug campaigns, the lack of youth-specific initiatives often leaves this demographic underserved. Delinquency, often fueled by substance abuse and socio-economic