

Higher Education in Kazakhstan

Educación superior en Kazajstán

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ABSTRACT:

This article shows the higher education system in Kazakhstan, taking into account the social survey of the population and considering from different angles determining negative aspects of the educational system and decisions made to solve the problems in this area. The relevance of the study is determined by the need for real modernization of the Kazakhstan education system, its integration into the global and European educational space.

Keywords: higher education system, survey, population, institution of education

RESUMEN:

Este artículo muestra el sistema de educación superior en Kazajstán, teniendo en cuenta la encuesta social de la población y considerando desde diferentes ángulos los aspectos negativos del sistema educativo y las decisiones tomadas para resolver los problemas en esta área. La pertinencia del estudio está determinada por la necesidad de una verdadera modernización del sistema educativo de Kazajstán, su integración en el espacio educativo mundial y europeo.

Palabras clave: el sistema de educación superior, encuesta, población, Institución de educación

1. Introduction

The entry of Kazakhstan into the world economic space assumes, among other things, its participation in the global labor market, which makes certain demands on the quality and character of the training of professional personnel.

The old institutions of education have become obsolete and have ceased to be adequate, the challenges of the modern information society, the need for changes in the sphere of education have become evident, the urgency of quality education is determined by the high level of informatization of the educational process.

Fundamental changes in the educational system of the Republic of Kazakhstan have become an indispensable condition for the future state, the preservation of intellectual potential, international authority with its own spiritual traditions, rich language, without losing the spiritual continuity of generations, but, borrowing Western educational standards, spiritual cultural unification.

Modernization of the education system implies not only the possibility to find opportunities

for their labor, career implementation abroad, but also, first and foremost, the growth of the intellectual elite, which will raise the authority of its state at the world level. However, our education system should in no case be "lagging behind" and always play the role of "catch-up" modernization, only because it requires the prevailing world economic and social situation.

In civil society, education has become one of the most extensive areas of human activity. It employs more than a billion students and nearly 50 million teachers. The social role of education has increased markedly: today human development depends on the orientation and efficiency of education systems. In the last decade the world has changed its attitude towards all forms of education. Education, especially higher education, is seen as a major leading factor of social and economic progress. The reason for this focus is to understand that the most important value and the main capital of modern society is the person capable of identifying and exploring new knowledge and acceptance of non-standard solutions.

All this makes it quite clear that in addressing the most pressing global problems of mankind, a huge role should belong to education.

The higher education system in Kazakhstan, as well as throughout the world, gives people of all ages equal and open access to learning opportunities of high quality and various aspects of the educational process.

All the events, changes and additions in the Bologna Process aimed, of course, to create optimal conditions for the best student training. As a student should not only be the object but also the subject of the educational process, it is clear that without the active participation of students no changes can be completely effective.

Students must clearly understand the objectives and goals of the Bologna Process, their voice should be heard when making certain decisions.

There are a great number of tools for taking into account the point of view of students in solving those problems of higher education.

This representation of students is in the academic councils of universities, and a systematic survey of students to determine their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with teaching and promoting the administration of higher education institutions in the organization and functioning of the student government.

There is an organization 'National Unions of Students in Europe' (ESIB), which unites more than 60 national student unions of 40 countries, thus representing more than 15 million students. This organization is actively involved in all activities related to the development of the modern education system.

Today with a huge number of higher education institutions in Kazakhstan, we are acutely aware of the shortage of highly qualified specialists. If we compare higher educational institutions of Kazakhstan with those of the United States and Europe, then by quantity we occupy one of the highest places, but in quality Kazakh schools are lost in competition, not only in Western countries, but throughout the world. Why such paradox does exist?

If we look at the history of education reforms since the independence of Kazakhstan, we will clearly see the difference in education that existed in the USSR and the miscalculations of reforms in the 1990s.

During the existence of the USSR, higher education could be obtained only in state universities, where the recruitment of students was carried out only under state orders, and only a small part of those who wanted to obtain higher education had the opportunity to study at universities. Independence of the republic gave us the opportunity to review many of the issues of the past and disclose "white spots" in the history of Kazakhstan, however, taking into account the independence and prosperity of the economy, market relations in all spheres of life, including in education. In the system of higher education, it was introduced the opportunity to receive tuition on a fee-paying basis, while graduates passed exams only nominally. Under these conditions, the education market has a new opportunity for open private universities. The further private business in the sphere of education, the wider the network of branches of such educational institutions throughout the country. This led to the

creation of a substandard, not having the proper material and technical support of educational institutions.

Of course, we are not talking about all the universities of the republic, national, state higher educational institutions are in some privileged position with the state than private universities, although all graduates receive the same state diploma.

Gradually, over time, the adult population of Kazakhstan made conclusions about the compulsory need for the education of their child in a higher educational institution. It became, almost a panacea for parents, and, at the same time, it became an obligation to give their child a higher education.

This was one of the reasons for the expansion of the opening of private universities in the republic. In this regard, the competition between universities has sharply increased, where private universities have been harshly losing, not only in terms of the material and technical base, but also in terms of the teaching staff.

Non-state universities in this situation were forced to make big concessions because they automatically became dependent on students who paid for their education.

The students were convinced that if they pay for their education, there can be no question of their expulsion. So the quality of education began to fall, in general. The value of the diploma quality has decreased several times, in this situation; employers were forced to put certain conditions in which the main criterion was work experience.

As a result, graduates of higher educational institutions were more affected, since those who had no experience and, practically, the possibility to receive it, they were forced to employ not on their specialty or to get education in secondary specialized educational institutions, where the opportunity to get a job was initially clear. The work of even the middle and lower ranks is sharply reduced.

Under such conditions, the people went all ways to get an education in the university, thereby, causing a sharp decline in the status of higher education in the republic.

Thus, we have a large number of specialists in the republic with diplomas of universities, but at the same time half the number of actually qualified professionals.

The Republic of Kazakhstan signed the Bologna Declaration, thereby agreeing with the tasks that it sets itself. First of all, it is the creation of an open space based on close cooperation, removal of barriers for the academic mobility of students and teachers and the search for international equivalents for comparing and mutual recognition of cycles of education and diplomas of higher education.

Kazakhstan allocates huge funds for the modernization of education, but not every educational institution can afford active mobility of students and teachers, especially private universities. They do not have time to implement in their program all the innovations required in the work of a modern employee.

In the 1990s, a huge number of graduates of the economic and humanitarian area (accountants, lawyers, etc) "engrafted" when the country was sorely lacking engineers, technicians, biotechnologists and other specialists, these fruits began to "reap" from the beginning XXI century. But, as they say, "every cloud has a silver lining", the state began to highlight these specialties, financed grants, sending huge funds for the development of exact and natural sciences.

1.1. Literature review

Efficiency problems of education were studied by scientists in the nineteenth century. The first to investigate the influence of education on economic and social development were Adam Smith, Karl Marx, James Mill.

Currently there are a huge number of research scientists who devote their attention to the problems of researching various stages of human education, especially Baydenko V. I. (2004); Smirnov S. D. (2005); Soloviev V. P. (2003); Tatur Y. T. (2001).

Problems of social and cultural aspects in higher education are studied by the following

researchers, among others, Alexandrov I. A. (2002); Belovolov B. A. (2002).

The article deals with problems in educational institutions and as a means of forming the civil culture of a future specialist (Shulenkova, 2016).

The current education system is the backbone of such strategic documents as the Law on Education (1999), the State Program on Education (2002), the Education Development Strategy until 2030 (1997), and The State Program Development of Education for 2011-2020 (2010), Nazarbayev N. A. (2015) The Concept of the development of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2015.

Knowledge and professional skills are the key reference points of the modern system of education, training and retraining, as was stated in Strategy Kazakhstan-2050 (Nazarbayev, 2012).

Since the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan, there also began the formation of new approaches to the development of higher education as a determining the general condition of the entire system of education. In order to solve the problems of formation of the Republic as a sovereign state, national laws and other legal acts are urgently needed. In other words, the first stage of socio-economic formation of young and independent Kazakhstan began, including the sphere of education, the first stage of reform of the education system can be designated 1991-1994 and call it the stage of formation of the legislative base and survival of the education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Mukhametkaliev, 2012).

The main goal of modernization is to ensure a qualitative transformation of the education system in a market economy, taking into account globalization. Speaking of globalization, we mean a single international standard, in this case the standard of education.

The purpose of the university should be grounded in the concept of citizenship rather than the promise of increased future earnings and research consultancy work (White, 2013).

Nowadays the following things are important: normative orientation to the person as an active creative subject of knowledge and management; propaganda of the Kazakh idea of individual openness as a national idea of the civil nation of Kazakhstan; propaganda of the objective system of values; formation of free legal consciousness; introduction of the methodology of personality-oriented approach instead of "competence-based"; strengthening of fundamental theoretical knowledge as the basis of the operational component of the cognitive scheme, minimizing the accumulation of knowledge as the sum of constantly changing facts; modern list of academic disciplines with unified manuals, consistent with the methodological, logical and methodological requirements, with updated scientific content (Nurov, 2011)

Higher education, especially that leading to a degree from a high-prestige university, is strongly related to social status and employment opportunities in East Asian countries. This is a consequence of both traditional Confucian attitudes to education and the social and economic changes accompanying industrialization (Choi & Nieminen, 2013).

Modern society can be called as informational, because the level of its development to a decisive extent is determined by the quality and the amount of used and accumulated information and its availability. The current process of informatization of Kazakhstan's society entails cardinal changes in education strategy, the fundamental element of which should be information technology an environment with an ever-evolving learning environment space (Stukalenko, 2013).

In the early XXI century, higher education has become a competitive enterprise. In many countries students must compete for scarce places in universities and in all countries admission to the top institutions has become more difficult. Universities compete for status and ranking, and generally for funding from governmental or private sources. While competition has always been a force in academe and can help produce excellence, it can also contribute to a decline in a sense of academic community, mission and traditional values. Universities have always been affected by international trends and to a certain degree operated within a broader international community of academic institutions, scholars, and research. Yet, XXI century realities have magnified the importance of the global context

(UNESCO, 2009).

New quests in the philosophy and methods of educating people necessitate rethinking of some approaches – which de facto exist at schools – under a general umbrella term. This term is suggested as Positive Education. Beyond doubt, education essentially has to be positive. The core principles of positive education – that is different from the mission of the classical education – is twofold: The first principle of positive education is to create learning climate in class where individual learners should take information and creatively construct it according to their own capacities and views (Hayes, 2006; Hurlock, 1925; Muscott, Mann & Le Brun, 2008); the second principle which is at least as crucial as the first is to promote a living climate at schools that will foster intellectual, emotional and physical “wellbeing” in students; so as to prevent the potential academic and emotional problems before they occur or reoccur (Gilman, Huebner & Furlong, 2009; Martin et al., 2009; Murray, 2003).

Positive education extends the role of schools beyond academic competence to further preparing the ‘whole child’ (Huitt, 2010; Noddings, 2005). Therefore, it would appear schools have a duty of care to educate their students on wellbeing and implement interventions aimed at increasing the optimal functioning of their students, staff, and community. Thus positive education has two missions reflected on the academic achievement and wellbeing of students to be handled from a holistic perspective (Seligman et al., 2009).

The academic mission of positive education comes in view in the context of how students learn. Positive education claims to enhance learning by creating positive emotions and experiences through deliberately designed methods in classrooms and at schools. Thus, among variety of methods that facilitates learning of students, positive psychology calls attention to the positive feelings that school and classroom climate can build (Bozkurt, 2014).

It is argued that creativity, in the educational context, should be conceptualized as a transversal and cross-curricular skill, which everyone can develop.

In order to develop creative learning approaches, it is crucial that teacher training prepares new teachers to become reflective practitioners able to discern how a teaching method or activity can stifle or trigger creativity in their students. Results from this study show that teachers who were trained on creativity held more positive views about its relation to education. Similarly, teachers who had received training in ICT were more likely to sustain that new technologies are important for learning. This study also shows that teachers with most interest for innovation and changing pedagogic methods were those who have already some years of experience of teaching practice after the initial training (Cachia et al., 2010).

University students have been identified as an “at-risk” population, because the age at which the majority of young people start higher education coincides with the age of onset of a range of problem behaviors (e.g., substance abuse and internet addiction) and mental health problems (e.g., depression and anxiety; Wynaden et al., 2013). These psychosocial problems have been progressively highlighted for not only their increased incidence and severity, but also the close link to negative quality of life, such as poor academic performance, decreased life satisfaction, and even suicidal thoughts (Eisenberg et al., 2009). In addition, the transition to higher education itself is a great challenge, which may cause physical and psychological distress and negatively affect the quality of university students' academic life (Tobolowsky, 2008; Wynaden et al., 2013).

The major changes are needed in the overall educational culture towards more creative learning and innovative teaching. People outside the classroom, such as school leaders, national policymakers and pupils' parents should also be involved in this change. Creativity and innovation are often perceived to be present in the school culture, however, they are often not a priority. Therefore, innovative teachers' personal classroom practice is not necessarily aligned with the culture they experience as their working context, nor is it rewarded or appreciated by school leaders. This highlights the importance of school leadership in supporting and appreciating teachers' efforts in implementing innovative pedagogic practices and experimenting with them. There is a need for a holistic strategy for implementing change towards more creative learning and teaching, taking into account

curricula, assessment, teacher training, and funding, with joint dialogue between all stakeholders. The European Year 2009 of Creativity and Innovation had visible effects in most of the countries studied and similar European and national awareness raising events should be organized.

A high majority of teachers believe that creativity plays an important role in the curriculum. Teachers in Italy and Latvia, United Kingdom and Cyprus (72%) were the ones who agreed most, or strongly agreed with this statement. Some cases, where creativity is infrequently mentioned in the curricula, but is nonetheless very present in schools, have also been observed. A case in point is the Netherlands. In the curricula analysis for this country, we found that the number of times the term creativity was mentioned was one of the lowest when compared to EU27. In contrast, experts' consultation and data from the survey show that creativity is highly practiced in schools in the Netherlands. When asked what activities take place during their lessons, the teachers in the Netherlands (92%) were the ones who were most engaged in activities which are understood to foster creativity. The discrepancy in the data could be interpreted in terms of the status of the curricula in this country. Schools are free to choose how they are run and how the curriculum is interpreted. There is a distinction between 'what do children learn?' and 'how do they learn?' The latter is the responsibility of schools. Results from this study show that creative learning is often taken into account in the way they implement this responsibility. It is important to highlight that what is specified in the curricula is not necessarily reflected in practice (Cachia et al., 2010).

Positive experiences with faculty and a favorable campus environment may in part complement for the insufficient personal well-being, thus attenuating the relationship between lack of personal competencies and undesirable learning achievement. In other words, external dimensions of university engagement may moderate the relationship between personal well-being and university learning achievement (Lu Yu et al., 2017).

2. Methodology

The peculiarity of the research tools used - questionnaires, interviews, observations - in sociology is such that the social processes occurring in social organization are reflected through the mirror of public opinion, the statements of ordinary people about what surrounds them. The results of the sociological research are not only of managerial value, but also of diagnostic significance, they serve as a kind of magnifying glass, in the focus of which both the successes achieved and the shortcomings are clearly visible.

Majority of students who study and work at the same time believe that the education system is moving in the right direction (75.8%). Almost 22% of working students are also satisfied with the educational reform that has occurred in the Republic of Kazakhstan over the past ten years. Among high school graduates and college students, approval of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan is at 71.9%, including 17.7% who fully support the current policy of the education system in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

12.8 % of students are opposed to the modern model of education; among students and employees it is 24.1%. 15.3% of students found it difficult to answer.

Among the majority of students in higher education to the modern education system has more understanding and support. Among students in higher education in one major city in Kazakhstan 75.4% of respondents support the changes, and 21% strongly disapproves. Accordingly, 13.6% do not support it, while 11% were undecided.

In Kazakhstan, there are institutions that are privately owned. Today, the quantity of private universities has decreased, the number is around 30. 69.5% of students (in private universities), believe that the education system is noticeably inferior, and 15.6% support it fully. However, the quantity of negative evaluations of students from private universities is no higher (12.7%), with 17.8% finding it difficult to answer. It can be concluded that students in private universities are not so much supporting or against the education system in Kazakhstan, they know much less about and cannot comment on the education system.

Those who pay for education are more critical in evaluating the education system. It is clear, that when students pay for education, they are interested in learning efficiency. According to

the survey, 17% of students on a fee basis fully support the transformation of education and 20.1% who are studying on a grant.

In total, complete and conditional support of the education reform by those students who pay for education at the University of the city reached 68%, the students who learn on the grant 76.6%.

If we consider the character of the estimates of the respondents, all the changes that have taken place in education over the past ten years tend to be measures of external character, but the quality and content of inside are not affected as much.

More than 60% of respondents believe that in particular the conditions of higher education institutions are necessary for the development of educational programs. In other words, the students have the necessary premises, and reach the necessary educational standards. In addition, they have equipment, food, a functioning library and so on. But it is basic, without these things it cannot provide any education.

Secondly, the fact that the expansion of international relations and educational informatization are possible. This was said by 54.3% and 54.8% of respondents respectively.

This is the second stage, when our education system is progressively integrated into the world educational space. It is scientific contact, attracting foreign teachers, innovative breakthroughs in education. 51.4% of respondents believe that over the last 10 years, Kazakhstan has actively introduced new learning technologies.

What needs to be done? First of all, it is necessary to look at the problem more broadly and not only to confront the problems of educational institutions, but to seek a comprehensive solution. This problem is related to the interests of different participants in the labor market. First of all, it is necessary to determine whose interests are primary, and whose interests are of secondary importance. To do this, it is necessary to conduct a clear gradation of interests of labor market participants.

The interests of the state should become primary, and the next place should be given to the interests of the employer. Further, it is necessary to indicate the interests of applicants and only the interests of educational institutions should be considered only in the last place.

1. Needs of the state
2. Needs of the employers of the state
3. Needs of the applicants of state
4. Needs of educational institutions

To date, all these interests are not closely connected. For example, educational institutions in their work do not fully take into account the interests of employers and are more focused on the demand of the population and the attraction of students. As a consequence, there are excesses in the training of certain specialties (economy, lawyers). Considering that among a certain part of the population there is a demand for formal training and subsequent graduation, some of the educational institutions are going on about this demand and provide the opportunity to undergo training without much effort.

Upon completion, they provide an official diploma and thus, satisfying the interests of only applicants and educational institutions, without taking into account the interests of the state and employers.

It should be noted that in this aspect, states and employers are of interest to coincide and they need to ensure that graduates do not have formal diplomas, but have real applied knowledge. In this regard, the labor market requires a player who will be the link between the interests of all participants in the labor market and first of all will represent the interests of employers.

To solve the problem, it is necessary to create an independent organization where it was possible to confirm the qualification of a university graduate, approximately, as IELTS or TOEFL.

An example is the TOEFL test centers, these centers conduct testing around the world to determine the level of knowledge of the English language. At the same time, this center guarantees and provides complete objectivity testing of knowledge of the tested. And if

some foreign universities or employers want to be sure that you know English, they ask you to take a test in this center and if the test is successfully passed, the employer will be sure that you really know English and no matter where you were graduated from high school in Kazakhstan or France.

This check should not be mandatory at all, but should be carried out only on a voluntary basis, since the mandatory form will inevitably lead to negative results. The main task of this check should be to provide the applicant with really good knowledge the possibility of documenting the evidence of good knowledge (it should be noted, that the Ministry of education and science of republic of Kazakhstan introduces a certification system in the institutions, considering, compulsory and conducted through universities as result will be de facto ordinary State exam). To date, employers who are already tired of formal diplomas have begun to implement the practice of examinations among potential applicants, in this regard, they expand their HR staff and build mini-universities with HR departments that not only select applicants, but also retrain already recruited employees in accordance with the knowledge, which they really need. But such a practice can only be afforded by large companies, and smaller companies should be reconciled with the current state of affairs.

In other, this is only one example of the work of this player, the main thing is that this player was completely independent of all market participants, in case of any dependence, a conflict of interests may arise.

3. Results

In spite of serious problems and shortcomings in higher education, it can be quite accurately said that the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan is constantly struggling with the goal of correcting the mistakes of the reforms of the past. Universities permanently undergo scheduled accreditations, and the requirements for inspections of universities are very often changed, and these changes are not eased, but, on the contrary, are constantly becoming tougher.

However, the result did not lead to a positive outcome, employers continue to be in search of employees with practical work experience, and universities cannot yet prepare the highly qualified specialists, at least in the mass flow. Kazakhstan cannot yet boast of mass flows of graduates who would satisfy the internal needs of the labor market on all its necessary criteria.

Currently higher education gives students the opportunity to choose the means of professional self-determination, research and production practices during training, and the possibility of getting a job on a part-time basis in companies and other organizations.

The problem of quality of education, of course, is central to any changes. It is believed that the benefits of education reform are relative, if it does not lead, ultimately to improvements in the quality of education, while the reform is harmful if the quality of education deteriorates.

Joint educational programs and a high level of academic mobility - all of this assumes a comparable (and rather high) level of quality of training of specialists with higher education.

A way of ascertaining what problems exist in the education system and how young students assess the reforms taking place can be found in the results of a poll conducted among students in Almaty, of Association of Sociologists commissioned by the Office of Internal Policy Akimat of Almaty.

The students of Kazakhstan have different opinions about all the changes in the education system, the results of the survey show that students tend to see the changes in the education system as positive overall, compared with the previous.

A survey in Almaty showed that in the opinion of the students, in general, the education system in Kazakhstan is moving in the right direction.

However, relatively few students are absolutely confident about this (18.5% of respondents). Most prefer to talk about it in a moderate tone, giving the answer "well rather than wrong" 54.1%.

Many students do not agree with the policy in the education system in Kazakhstan. The percentage of dissenting students is 13.1%, but only a sixth of them are openly opposed to any radical changes and reforms in the education system, because they believe that it will lead to additional unnecessary costs and increased fees for education.

If those who disagree with the educational system of Kazakhstan are added to those students who could not answer, it turns out that more than a quarter of the students surveyed did not say anything positive about the development of the education system in Kazakhstan.

4. Conclusions

The higher education system in Kazakhstan consists of quite a large number of educational institutions. The majority of the main educational institutions are concentrated in Almaty and Astana, and there are several strong regional universities, but otherwise, there are only very small schools. Many experts say there is a significant oversupply of graduates. In society were founded trend formal higher education and the demand for secondary education has dropped.

Kazakhstan's higher education system is experiencing an acute shortage of teachers. Young people do not consider going to work in high school because of low wages and go into science, the older generation of teachers, unfortunately, leaves the profession. The main reason, of course, is the low teachers' salaries.

Teachers think about making money, and not about their professional development. In addition to the lack of teachers' time, other factors affect the quality of education, for example, the absence of relevant scientific literature, and the necessary tools for the job. University administration, citing a lack of funds, do not update its library collections and logistics.

Abroad the higher education systems produce high-quality human capital, professionals, with a high demand in the economy. Demand is a measure, so higher education is seen as a competitive industry, part of the market economy, business. Our initially incorrect view has distorted the reforms, therefore providing inefficient business models for universities: management, marketing, business processes. Human resources management should play an important role, because the university has a key asset – The Teacher. If teachers who give knowledge and skills to create technology and research make the learning process interesting, then the output is the people who are professional, intelligent and expert thinkers.

If we consider the activities of the university sector in a market economy, as in any effective corporation, their activities should be accountable and transparent.

In addition, the regulation - the Ministry of Education and Science of the substitution of concepts to improve process of evaluations, so teacher instead of focusing on the creative process are mired in bureaucracy, the paper reports.

Another key factor that needs to be stressed today: there is no connection with the labor market. The fragmentation chain "Business - Science – Education" affects the quality of education.

In conclusion, the paradigm for Higher education has been set wrongly. The higher education system is seen as a social, humanitarian sphere, and therefore this should be the direction of the relevant reforms.

The decision seems to change the paradigm of higher education as a sector of the market economy.

In order to raise higher education in Kazakhstan to a new international level, we need constant and stable investments in education and science that will help maximize the opportunities for preparing competitive domestic personnel. Only by increasing the salaries of teachers and adopting strict laws of measures, corruption in universities should be reduced. All necessary measures should be taken to modernize the system of higher education in the country; in particular, it is necessary to pay special attention to improving

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