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## **KAZAKHSTAN IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (EHEA)**

This paper is devoted to the analysis of higher education in Kazakhstan in the process of its integration the European education area. The results of the comparative sociological researches carried out among the academic experts and students of the country, are presented here.

The empiric material obtained during the research enables to give the latent assessment to the positive and negative attitude of the university academic society to the ongoing changes, to the modernized education processes, to the new

education services, and determines the perspectives of further development of education institutions in Kazakhstan.

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## 1. Introduction

At present the process of intensive reforming of Kazakhstani education system is under way. It is aimed, first and foremost, at achieving the international standards of education and at integrating into the European education area.

The research has been carried out within the frame of the official entry of Kazakhstan to the Bologna agreement in 2010. The main task was to foreshorten the attempts of analyzing the two main aspects:

1. what changes the Kazakhstani education model has undergone since the period of gaining its independence and up till now;
2. how the process of adapting of the main principles of the EHEA, for example, adoption and comparability of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), quality management, academic mobility of students, teachers of higher education institutions (HEIs), etc.

Three types of measurements have been used in order to get reliable and authentic data - questionnairing of experts, survey of students and focus –group research. The academic survey of experts used by the European scholars in the project “Trends 2010”<sup>1</sup> was the basis enabling us to obtain the accurate data, to compare the results and to reveal national contexts and education standards of the country.

## 3. The Kazakhstani national model in the context of the European education area

The global competitiveness makes a powerful impact on all the sides of life of Kazakhstani society, in particular, on the system of education, involving it into the process of internationalization. The Constitution of the RK, the Law on Education (2007) and the State Programme of Education Development for the period of 2011 – 2020 are the three pillars of the main education reforming policy in Kazakhstan.

These documents have introduced serious changes into the structure and contents of education. The three –cycle system of higher and post-graduate professional education (Bachelor - Master – PhD degrees) has been created.

Considerable changes have taken place in HEIs management by setting up the Trusteeship Councils and by introducing corporate governance. The credit system has been adopted. The system of quality controls and management has been established, as well as the National Accreditation Centre. In 2012 it was reorganized into the Bologna Process Centre and Academic Mobility under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Bologna Process: Trends 2010 – A decade of change in European Higher Education Source: <http://www.iu.qs.com/2010/07/27/the-bologna-process-trends-2010-%E2%80%93-a-decade-of-change-in-european-higher-education/>

<sup>2</sup> Presented in Astana Center Bologna process and academic mobility Source: <http://www.zakon.kz/4517888-v-astane-prezentovan-centr-bolonskogo.html>

The Law on Education was adapted to the integration of Kazakhstani higher education into the Bologna Process. It was the implementation of such trends as transition to 12 – year school education, legalizing of the status of specialized schools, increasing the quality of textbooks, etc. The unified centralized controls and monitoring of the quality assurance of education have been introduced. Besides, “new types of higher education institutions as national research universities have been included into the system”<sup>1</sup>. As a modern research university have been “established Nazarbayev University (NU), which combines the best international educational models, scientific practice and national priorities. Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU) is leading university of the country which is in the process of transformation into a research university that meets international standards”<sup>2</sup>.

«The State Programme of Education for the period of 2011-2020»<sup>3</sup> has provided support and continuity in modernizing the Kazakhstani education system, has promoted has shaping of the national model of competitive multi-level higher and post-graduate education and its integration into the international education space. In the late of the 90s, Kazakhstan cooperated fragmentarily with the European partners making attempts to modernize its education system in conformity with the Bologna process model. The main arguments that spoke in favour of transformations were quality of education, enhancing autonomy of HEIs, scientific –research independence, seeking new schemes of finding, which, as a result, expanded strategic opportunities and professional qualifications in the country. After gaining independence in Kazakhstan the number of private education institutions, including universities, has been rapidly growing. In 1990 there were 55 HEIs with 300,000 students. But in 2006 the number of HEIs increased by three times (181), and correspondingly, the number of students also increased. The state policy on education dictates the rational number of HEIs but encounters resistance. Diagram 1<sup>4</sup> shows the change of the number of HEIs during different periods of time.

### **Diagram 1**

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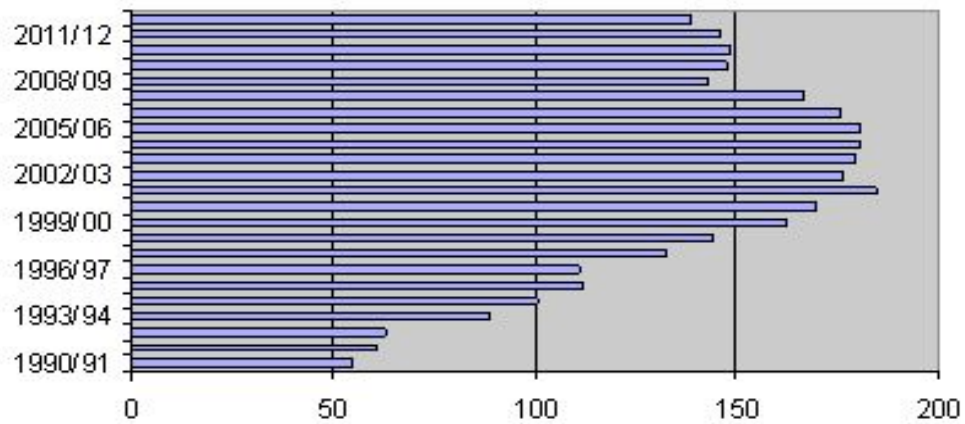
<sup>1</sup> Damitov, B.K. et al (2009), National Report on the status and development education. Ministry of education and science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. National Centre for educational quality assessment. Astana, 2009

<sup>2</sup> Mutanov G., Burkitbayev M. Al-Farabi Kazakh National University: Transformation toward Positioning in the International Rankings. IREG-6 Conference The academic Ranking and Advancement of Higher Education: Lessons from Asia and Other Regions. April 19-20, 2012. Taiwan. Pg.314-315.

<sup>3</sup> The State Programme of Education Development for the period of 2011-2020” [www.edu.gov.kz](http://www.edu.gov.kz) – site of Ministry of education and science of Kazakhstan.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.stat.kz/digital/obraz/Pages/default.aspx>

## The Number of HEIs (units)



According to the data of the Ministry of Education and Science of the RK there are 9 national, 32 public, 1 international, 13 military and more than 80 private AELs functioning in Kazakhstan<sup>1</sup>. On the agenda of the MES of the RK there is a plan of reducing the number of universities to 2-3 HEIs in each oblast centre, placing the leading HEIs in such large cities as Almaty, Karaganda and Astana till 2015<sup>2</sup>.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis reveals the following trends of Kazakhstani education. First, it is the unregulated growth of the number of HEIs in the early 90s. Second, commercialization of education due to the emergence of the first private HEIs, including foreign ones. Third, modernization of education, transition from the traditional post-soviet education system to the norms of the European education standards.

### 2.1. Specifics of a Kazakhstani national model and transformations in conformity with the European standards

Education is a system shaping part of national culture of any country. Kazakhstan is not an exception. That's why the process of joining the country to the European education area is also the process of seeking the model of education, where there should be the synergy of world and national priorities of education systems<sup>3</sup>.

As it is known that in Kazakhstan, as well as in all the post-Soviet space, there existed a three-staged system of higher education – Institute (5 years) – postgraduate course (2 years) – doctorate (3 years). 20 % of the content of education programs were defined by the Republic, the rest 80% - the all – union

<sup>1</sup> Materials of the National report of the MES of the RK in 2010 <http://www.do.ektu.kz/laws/goso/15ru.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan\\_news/kolichestvo-chastnyih-vuzov-v-kazahstane-budet-sokrascheno-do-2015-goda--229619/](http://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/kolichestvo-chastnyih-vuzov-v-kazahstane-budet-sokrascheno-do-2015-goda--229619/)

<sup>3</sup> Order of the MES of the RK of 17.06.2011 №261 On Approval of State General Mandatory Standards for Higher and postgraduate education Source: <http://www.edu.gov.kz>

Ministry of Education. Kazakhstan, after gaining its independence in early 90s, was confronted with the task of reforming the system of education in order to enhance the competitiveness of the country under the market conditions. The former model was not effective; the country needed a new one.

The philosophy of the Bologna Declaration has become attractive for education reforms in Kazakhstan. It has given the HEIs the right to choose education programmes without any restrictions by using market mechanisms are meeting the needs of society. A new model has changed the HEIs system of financing, providing special grants for education programs and projects. The priorities of this model were dictated by the market economy. But there were opponents of transformations who considered that a new form of financing would deprive HEIs of fundamental science, that HEIs would become the performers of immediate demands of the economy. There were some other difficulties beginning from the enrolment of applicants on the basis of the Unified National Testing to the change of state education standards and administrative structures of universities. The fact that Kazakhstan regards Education as the factor of sustainable development of the social system, has enabled us to promote reforms by standardization and to reconsider goals, contents and technologies of teaching in conformity with the “requirements and demands of employers, i.e. consumers”<sup>1</sup>.

## **2.2. Genesis of implementing the European standards of education into the education area of Kazakhstan**

Transition to the European system of education according to the scheme: Bachelor Degree (4 years) – Master Degree (2 years) – PhD (3 years) has lasted long, but it has been aimed at achieving the main goal: to create a competitive education area adapted to the conditions of Kazakhstan.

In 1994 some universities transferred to a Bachelor degree system as an experiment. But since 2001 all the universities of Kazakhstan have started to confer a Bachelor’s degree. A Master’s degree was introduced in 2001 at 75 HEIs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. For instance, since 1996 al-Farabi Kazakh National University has started training Master degree students on 29 specialists and 108 specializations<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, more than 50% of Kazakhstani HEIs have participated in a two-staged system of HEIs, except the curricula in medicine, veterinary and military specialties.

At present Master degree level has taken its place in the system of post-higher education as a specialized part the main goal of which is to train specialists for scientific-research, scientific-pedagogical and managerial activities.

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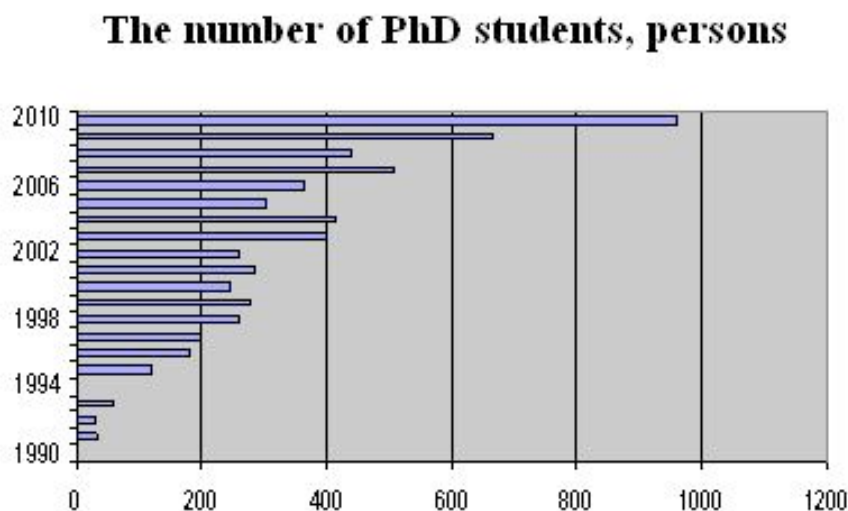
<sup>1</sup> Actual problems of scientific –pedagogical education (Master’s Degree). Materials of the scientific-practical conference of 30-31 May, 2002. Almaty: Kazakh universiteti, P.350

<sup>2</sup> Kozhamkulov T.A. Conceptual basis of Master degree students training at al-Farabi KazNU, Collection of works: Scientific-methodological aspects of implementing credit technologies in the system higher professional education. Almaty – 2003 P 7-9f.

The HEIs are provided with doctors and candidates of sciences by 45,5% on average<sup>1</sup>.

PhD level was officially introduced into the system of education in 2005. The enrolment number was 300. Diagram 2<sup>2</sup> demonstrates the growth of the number of PhD students (by more than three times) by 2010<sup>3</sup>.

**Diagram 2**



There was a great need in universal specialists easily adaptable to the local Kazakhstani peculiarities and meeting, the international standards of knowledge. That was the main sense of reforming, i.e. to create a unique system of education which has started this process since the first days of the state's independence.

There were a lot of contradictions and complexities on the path of these developments in Kazakhstan. On the one hand, globalization has created favourable conditions for the state by integrating it into the international education area; on the other hand – the country is actively seeking its national identity. Education under these conditions has become a significant factor of transformations in the Kazakhstani society, it is an integral part of national culture. For the first time after gaining independence in the country, the revival of the nation's and spiritual elite's potential has taken place; the culturological stratum of the nation has been generated. The state has created favourable conditions for introducing the world education standards in the Kazakhstani education area enhancing competence and competitiveness of Kazakhstani specialists. This corresponds to the contemporary trends of world education by functioning within the frames of the global market system, promoting migration processes and involving more and more Kazakhstani citizens in this process. At the same time the

<sup>1</sup> Sarsembaeva G., Kaigorodtsev A. Kazakhstan in the Bologna Process Source <http://www.group-global.org/publication>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.stat.kz/digital/obraz/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> The data from the National report of 2010. The MES of the RK. Source: <http://www.edu.gov.kz>

issue on including of the “Kazakhstani content”<sup>1</sup> in the education process is becoming actual.

### **2.3 Key reforms in Kazakhstani education and putting this issue on the agenda**

Transferring from one administrative education model to another liberal model, from the strictly regulated model to more flexible and more adaptable to the needs and demands of the market has been perceived by the academic circles of Kazakhstan differently. Some opponents expressed their fear that the HEIs might lose their fundamentality, national contents inherent in classical universities. The others emphasized that the common education area was a mere beautiful motto, that the European model of financing might lead to the loss of fundamental sciences.

Step by step the advantages of modernization of education have forced their way through the blocks of mistrust. For instance, the administrative system was very tough in dictating the trends of training specialists in conformity with the state education standards; HEIs were dependent. Subjects of education. They could issue diplomas only according to the established rules. The philosophy of the European education area gives more freedom in choosing education programmes, does not restrict the number, and is guided by the market mechanisms meeting the needs of society.

A new model enables to change the system of financing of the HEI, provides special grants for implementing education programmes and projects, the priorities of which are dictated by the market economy. The liberal model of education created in Kazakhstan is not a formal integration into the common European education area, but it is a whole set of changes, beginning from the enrolment of applicants on the basis of the Unified National Testing (UNT) to the «changes of the system of state standards, administrative structures»<sup>2</sup> of universities. Modernization of education in Kazakhstan is a type of integration of education area, which creates unified standards of higher education, and guarantees the competitiveness of both the state and its citizens.

That’s the challenge of the agenda that Kazakhstan is to integrate into the unified European education area by increasing opportunities for academic mobility, by making available foreign professors and researchers. These novelties have already made considerable changes in the sphere of standards and forms of teaching, in the organization of the academic process and controlling of the quality assurance of knowledge. A right transfer to the 3 – cycle education system with conferring Bachelor, Master, PhD degrees, introduction of the European Credit transfer and Accumulation System (ECTAS), academic mobility of students and teachers, the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibrayeva G., Abazov R. Can Kazakhstan’s education reforms dodge in face of the global economic meltdown? Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst 01/14/ 2009 CACI Analyst <http://www.cacianalyst.org/files/090114>



European supplement to the diploma quality assurance of higher education, creation of the unified European Research Area, etc., have been widely applied in practice of Kazakhstani education.

## **Conclusions**

Thus, the implementation of the ideas of the European standards of education has taken place, on the one hand, under legislative state support; on the other hand, the university society has been deeply interested in the process. The synergy and combination of purposes have enabled us to promote the reforms of education in conformity with the international standards of education ensuring competitiveness of future specialists.

But it does not mean that all the positive processes in reforming the Kazakhstani system of education are being carried out without problems and difficulties.

The reforms, being caused by the changes in the society, are to be relied on the system of indicators and indexes which will show the effectiveness / non-effectiveness of the results obtained, and consequently, giving an opportunity to concretize them in due time.

### **4. Kazakhstani experts on modernization of higher education in the country**

Using the advantages of sociological methodology has enabled to characterize the subjective perception of reforms in the sphere of education by direct participants of this process – by the heads of subdivisions and by the teaching staff. The main purpose of the expert survey held in April 2013 in the HEIs of Almaty (24), is to study the systematic nature of the Bologna process and introducing of its main principles into the system of higher education in Kazakhstan and to rethink the positioning and adherence to the basic academic values by the Kazakhstani experts –scholars and students.

#### **3.1. Social diagnostics of the national education system**

Concretization of the empiric data obtained from the results of the expert survey has enabled us to clarify the issue “whether the HEI has the structure of degrees based on two or three main cycles in the majority of the academic fields”. As far as this issue is concerned, the experts emphasized that “this structure has been introduced” due to the Bologna Process – (90%), “not so far, but it is planned” – (5%), “no, we are not planning to do it” – (5%).

**Adaptation of new programmes.** The experts –respondents expressed their attitude to the functions of a 2-3- -cycle education structure: (80%) marked as ‘very good’,(15%) – ‘rather good’, (5%) – ‘difficult to answer’. The HEIs which have reconsidered their curricula due to the Bologna Process, were offered to express their attitude to the process of adaptation of programmes in new structures.

The experts noted that (80%) of academic curricula had been adapted in all the departments, (10%) of experts answered “yes, in some departments”, (10%) – not so far, but we will do it in the near future”.

When asked the question ‘how is training at a doctoral level carried out’, (50%) of experts answered “thanks to the existence of doctoral scientific schools” including Master and PhD levels; (50%) – thanks to doctoral programmes including the courses taught; (40%) – doctoral scientific schools including only doctoral level students.

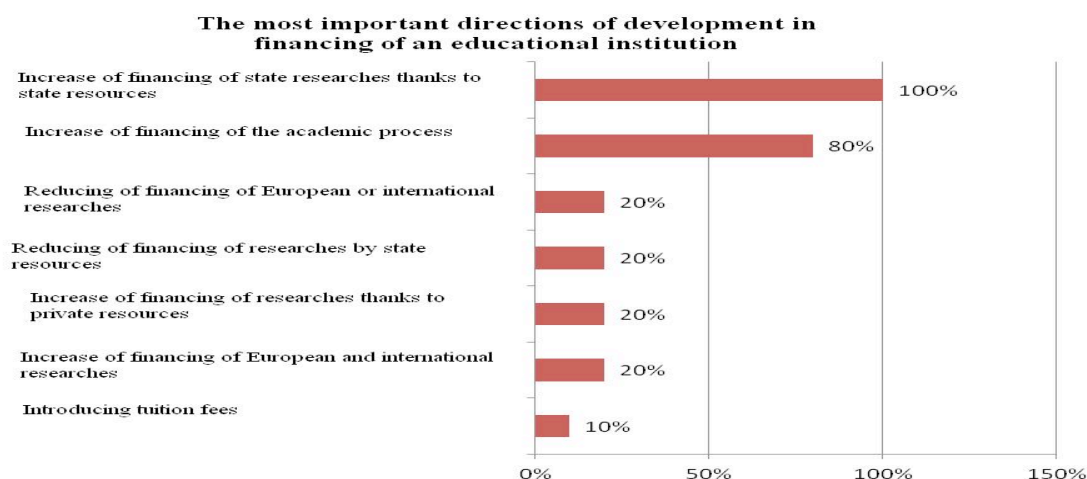
**Internationalization of education.** It is one of the main indicators of joining Kazakhstan to the world education area. But the questionnaire survey showed that (50%) of experts consider this process “very important”, while the rest (50%) position neutrally to this factor. It means that a considerable part of the teaching staff outwardly demonstrating their agreement with the ongoing reforms, in fact, they have treated the process of “internationalization of education” with mistrust. In this case the factor of uncertainty might have played some role because this term is not associated with a certain region and reforms of education. 80% of respondents answered affirmatively to the question “to what extent it is important to implement the principles of the Bologna Process”.

**Financing.** The attitude of experts to the ongoing processes in the field of education is quite different. For instance, (60%) of respondents consider them “very important”, while (40%) are indifferent. This is an alarming symptom, because it is the representatives of the academic environment who are to be the main performers of innovations. It is vividly seen in their attitude to the reforms in financing of higher education within the frame of joining to the European education area. For example, only (40%) of experts consider the issue of financing “very important” and (60%) do not support this point of view.

Consequently, the experts from the academic circle have not acknowledged the advantages of the reforms or they have not been informed sufficiently about the new mechanisms of financing. Only (30%) of experts marked the point “changes in the tuition fee payments” “very important”, while (70%) – “not so important”. (50%) of experts marked the point in the Questionnaire “diversified financing” as “very important, (50%) – “not so important”.

Thus, the display of a kind of indifferent attitude to financial aspects of education seem to be natural.

To answer the question on more important trends of development and financing of the HEIs, the experts were offered 10 ranking variants of answers. They were to choose three points. The analysis of the results obtained showed that the point asserting that financing of state researches had increased thanks to the state resources was supported by (100%) of experts . But at the same time, the experts noted that financing of researches by private resources is extremely low (20%). Financing from international, in particular from the European resources, had also decreased. The dynamics of financing is vividly seen on **Diagram 3**.



**University Rating.** The attitude of experts to the rating system is rather positive. It shows an active positioning of experts. Some few years ago, not every representative from the academic circle understood the significance of the rating system for the HEI. (90%) of experts agreed that this trend was really “very important”, only (10%) did not agree to this assertion. “Now several universities of KZ are included to the World Universities Ranking. Al-Farabi KazNU achieved a significant progress and rich the position at 390 at the QS World universities Ranking”<sup>1</sup>.

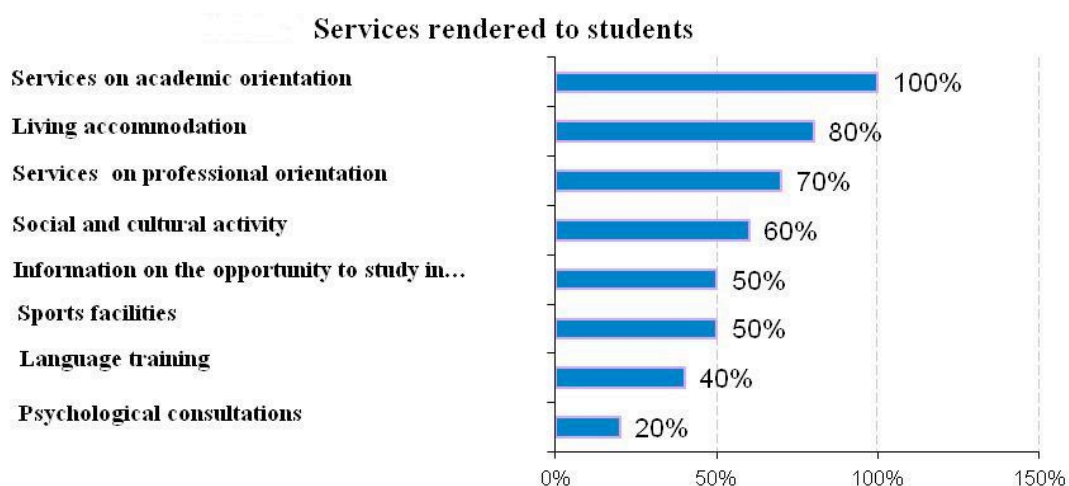
**Demography.** The answers of experts to the point “demographic changes” turned out to be differential. (30%) consider them “very important”, (70%) – “not so important”. This variant of the answer can be explained by the state policy which creates favourable conditions for all the social groups to get higher education without aggravating relations between the so-called “oralmany” (repatriates) from China, Mongolia, etc., foreign students, e.g. from Afghanistan, because of quotas for the Kazakhs from the CIS and so on.

**Participation of students in the university management.** The question on the involvement of students in the HEI management in particular, in implementing the main principles of the Bologna Process let the experts mark such points as “yes, students are involved but formally” – (10%), while (70%) of respondents answered “information on the issue under discussion is permanently given”, (50%) – supported students participation in the discussion of these questions. The positive dynamics can be seen in the survey of experts on the point “providing services for students”. (80%) of experts marked that the HEIs provides “hostel accommodation”. All the experts noted that HEIs render “assistance in the

<sup>1</sup> Mutanov G., Burkitbayev M. Al-Farabi Kazakh National University: Transformation toward Positioning in the International Rankings. IREG-6 Conference The academic Ranking and Advancement of Higher Education: Lessons from Asia and Other Regions. April 19-20, 2012. Taiwan. Pg.317

academic orientation”. (70%) of experts – “services on professional guidance”, (60%) – “social and cultural activity”. Such points as “language training” and “psychological consultations” have been highly estimated.

**Diagram 4.**



### **3.2. World tendencies of bringing the programmes together: realities and perspectives**

**Modules and teaching results.** The block of the Questionnaire “Modules and teaching results” reveals the attitude of experts to drafting modules in conformity with the European standards. Being asked the question “Have the organization of study programmes based on units and modules”, (80%) of experts answered “yes, in all the academic programmes”. (10%) – “not yet, but we will do it in the near future”, another (10%) – “no, no need in it”. These results show that HEIs express their readiness to work by using new standards adapted to the new realities. But there are some contradictions in their estimation revealing the process of introducing these module programmes. For example, (50%) of experts consider that module programmes give more flexibility to students in their choice of courses, (50%) of experts think that nothing has changed.

Consequently, it means that not all the representatives of the academic environment clearly understand the goals of module programmes. There was some confusion in the estimation of the role of introducing modules while making a conclusion. For example, (30%) of experts think that this system has led to the reduction of the number of examinations. (60%) of experts noted that nothing had changed.

**A credit system.** One of the most serious questions is the issue when students returning home from study abroad encounter certain problems with the recognition of their credits. (60%) of experts noted “yes, some of them encounter problems”, (30%) – “practically they do not encounter any problems”, 10% - “most of them encounter problems”.

Being asked the question “Does your HEI use a credit accumulation system for all Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes”, (60%) of experts answered – “yes, we use

ECTAS; (30%) – “yes, but not according to the European programme”; (10%) – “not planning to use it so far”. These answers correspond to the rate of introducing the Bologna principles in order to get the authentic results.

(80%) of experts marked the use of the Credit transfer system for Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes as an important trend; (10%) are intending to use this system, another (10%) expressed their disagreement in using this system. These indexes show that there are still those among the academic representatives who are latently against the ongoing reforms of education .

**Degrees.** The experts show different positioning towards the issue of responsibility of this or that HEI structure in the recognition of foreign degrees conferred by other HEIs of foreign states. For example, (50%) of experts consider that it is the responsibility of the faculty; (20%) – Rector’s Office; (10%) – Chairs; (20%) – “difficult to answer”.

Consequently, the perception of the process of the independent recognition of the academic degrees by the hierarchical HEI structures is not clear enough.

### **3.3. “Labour Market”: world education standards implemented within the frame of the Bologna Process**

The world standards of education implemented within the frame of the Bologna Process are concrete enough and have the exact and clear number of criteria concerning both the structure and the levels/cycles of education and their content dimensions.

**Employers.** In the course of the research it was expected to assess the effect of associations and participation of employers in drafting the academic curricula. Experts gave their answer to the question “Do professional associations and employers participate in drafting and restructuring the academic curricula” “yes, very closely”. Thus, the Bologna Process promoted the employers to participate actively in the process of drafting the academic programmes (curricula), but this process was not so efficient as it had been expected.

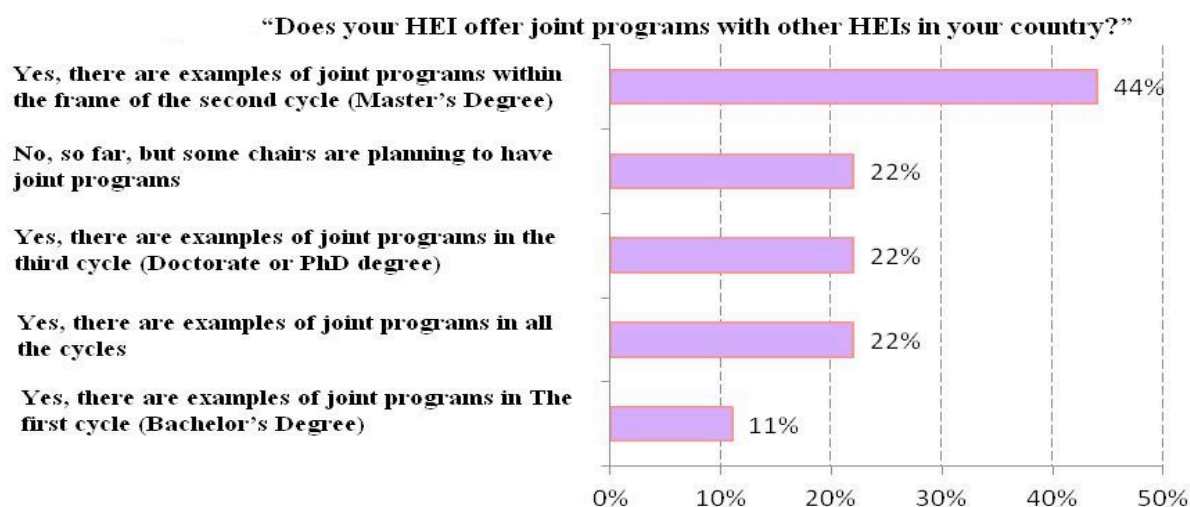
Being asked the question “How do you think what your students will do after the first cycle (Bachelor’s Degree)?”, (30%) of experts consider that most of them will apply for a job at the Labour Market, and a smaller part will continue their studies for a Master’s Degree. (50%) of experts consider that “Some of them will apply for a job at the Labour Market and some of them will continue their studies for a Master’s Degree”. (10%) of experts consider that the minority will apply for a job at the Labour Market, but the majority will continue their studies for a Master’s Degree; (20%) – “difficult to answer”. Consequently, (50%) of respondents consider that education they have got, have promoted the shaping of professional competences of future graduates and they are in demand at the Labour Market.

Being asked the question “Does your HEI look after graduates’ employment systematically?”, (70%) of experts answered “yes, to a full extent”, and only (10%) of respondents answered the rest of the questions; (10%) didn’t answer the question. It shows the result of intensive work of HEIs with their graduates, though the same work was done, but formally.

**Academic Mobility.** Being asked the question “To what extent has academic mobility of the teaching staff increased?”, (80%) of experts answered – “yes, considerably”. (10%) of experts answered – “yes, not so much”, another (10%) of experts – “no, mobility of the teaching staff has not increased”. The establishment of close and strong relations with other foreign HEIs, the real integration with the European education area have become a vivid proof of a high involvement rate in the academic mobility.

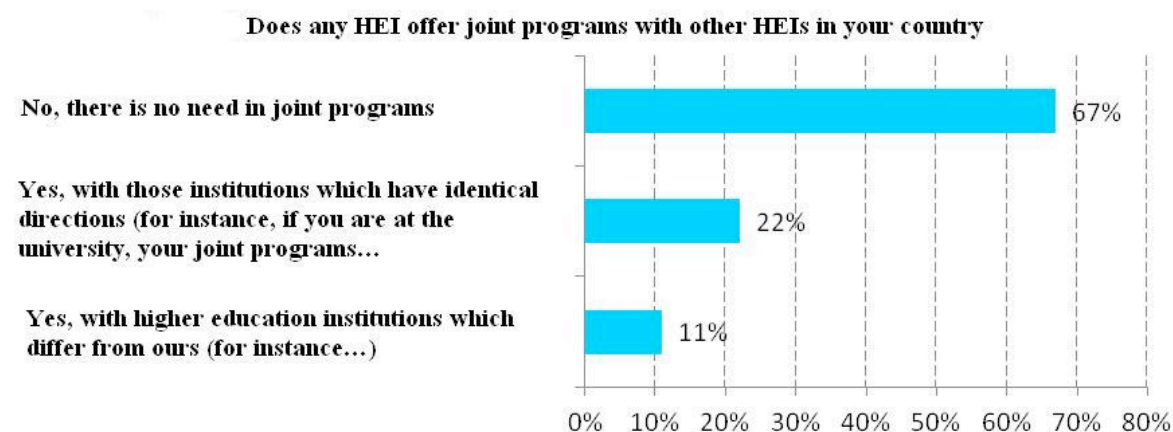
Diagram 5 gives the experts an opportunity to estimate whether their HEI has joint programmes with other HEIs abroad.

**Diagram5**



As a result, (44%) of experts stated that HEIs have joint programmes for a Master’s Degree, and equally proportional for other levels.

Being asked the question “Does your HEI offer joint programmes to other HEIs in your country?”, most of experts (67%) answered negatively, as it is shown in **Diagram 6.**



Summing up the results of this section, it should be mentioned that concerning the main criteria of implementing the structural components of the Bologna Process, Kazakhstan has achieved tangible results – it has been reflected in the answers of experts – professional, academic and research groups.

## **Conclusions**

With the integration process of Kazakhstan into the European education area, it has become necessary to modify and to improve higher education, to reconsider the contents of the academic policy of HEIs, and to design the main education programmes of a new generation. The state, on its part, is doing its best for implementing the principles of European education in Kazakhstan. The legal basis has been brought in line with international norms.

Favourable conditions have been created for implementing it in the education system of Kazakhstan. Organizational structures such as the Centre of the Bologna Process and academic mobility under the Ministry of Education and Science of the RK have been established.

Nowadays an intensive process of modernizing the system of education is going on:

- a 3 – cycle structure as one of the main trends of the Bologna Process, is being implemented;
- the European Credit System as one of the tools for enhancing transparency of the results and the teaching process is on the initial stage of implementation;
- there exist some latent resistance to the reforms in education, to the integration with the European education area;
- one third of the Kazakhstani academic society do not have a clear idea of the advantages of the Bologna Process and of new models of financing.

### **4. Kazakhstani students on the European perspectives of developing national education**

Within the frame of the Bologna Process heated discussions on the issue of implementing the programmes of academic mobility of students and teachers in the HEIs of Kazakhstan fueled up. It should be noted that at present the programs of academic mobility are being actively introduced into the Kazakhstani HEIs at different levels of the education process, especially at Master's and PhD levels.

#### **4.1. Internal and External Academic Mobility**

In many HEIs of Kazakhstan normative – legal conditions for supporting the academic mobility have been drafted special subdivisions relevant to these conditions have been set up. The provisions on the academic mobility have been adopted. The European Credit transfer and accumulation system has been introduced (ECTAS). In order to reveal the positioning of students to this process, in 2011-2012 the Ministry of Education and Science of the RK organized the QS on the issues of internal and external academic mobility<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Higher education in Kazakhstan [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/doc/quality\\_ru.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/doc/quality_ru.pdf)

The research has shown that approximately the equal number of Bachelor, Master and Doctoral Degree students have chosen Kazakhstan as well as the countries of far and new abroad, for implementing the programmes of the academic mobility. The Questionnaire survey has revealed the attitude of Kazakhstani students in four dimensions: “The quality Assurance in teaching disciplines”, “The quality of elective disciplines”, “Internal evaluation of the quality of teaching performance”, “The Quality of the administrative –organizational Management”. The analysis shows that the respondents have chosen the receiving HEI conscious motivating by the following enhancement of the level of knowledge and language training; availability of programmes in specialization at the HEI chosen, and favorable conditions for scholarship programmes. The positive dynamics has been seen in the results of mastering the teaching material. Besides, the research has revealed the problems in the issues related to the academic mobility. More than half of the respondents (students) marked the point as “language training” and one fourth of the respondents were not satisfied with low comparability of the content, level and periods of programmes. The students also expressed their dissatisfaction with the drafted credit transfer and accumulation system and insufficient financing of programmes. The research of 2011-2012 showed that it is necessary to study thoroughly the impact of the Bologna Process on the Kazakhstani students area in order to enhance the effectiveness of the education process and the competence of the future specialists.

#### **4.2. Estimation of the impact of the Bologna Process on the education potential of students**

In 2012 the Centre of Sociological Researches and Social Engineering of Al-Farabi KazNU carried out a sociological research aimed at representing the views of students to the European perspectives for developing national education<sup>1</sup>. For getting more detailed information the following trends have been outlined:

- advantages of academic mobility;
  - new opportunities and quality assurance issues;
  - implementation of the ideas and main provisions of the Bologna Process.

##### **4.2.1. Academic mobility advantages**

Table 1 demonstrates the views of students to the academic mobility advantages. The analysis of the results showed that only (29,5%) of Kazakhstani students have some idea about the main advantages of the academic mobility. (70,4%) of

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<sup>1</sup> The research was carried out in May-June 2012 in Almaty, Astana, Aktyubinskaya oblast. There were 1500 respondents -students from 12 HEIs. Abdiraimova G., Mukhamedzhanov B. Higher Education in Kazakhstan: social practice, subject and interests. Almaty, 2011 p.143.



respondents do not have any idea about academic mobility. It was difficult for them to answer.

The students from KazNU were the most active in answering this question.

Such points of the survey as “experience exchange”, “language training”, “acquisition of quite new knowledge and skills”, “cultural exchange, establishment of international communications and contacts”, were prevailing in the variants of answers.

**Table 1. Academic Mobility** (in % out of the overall number of respondents)

<b>№</b>	<b>Variants of answers</b>	<b>%</b>
1	Exchange of Experience	4,6%
2	Language Practice	3,9%
3	Acquisition of new knowledge	3,8%
4	Cultural exchange, adjustment of international communications and contacts	2,3%

In the world education practice there are various types of academic mobility. Among them the case when a student spend one semester in another HEI.

The opinions of the respondents on the advisability of this novelty are quite different. Most of the respondents – students stick to the point that it is necessary to introduce this practice on a Bachelor Degree level (21,1%); it is desirable to spend 1 semester in foreign HEIs (21,5%). Besides, some other forms of academic mobility can be mentioned. They, are as follows: short –term stay in a foreign HEI for exchanging experience; gathering information, etc. (58,5%); joint scientific – research projects (40,8%).

#### **4.2.2. New opportunities and issues of quality**

The students, who gave an affirmative answer to the question on the study in the HEIs of far and near abroad, were asked to estimate the quality of Kazakhstani education using the comparative approach. (Table 2.)

**Table 2. The assessment of the quality of education** (in % out of the overall number of respondents who studied in foreign HEIs)

<b>№</b>	<b>Variants of answers</b>	<b>%</b>
1	The quality of study in my HEIs higher than abroad	14,8
2	The quality of study in my HEI and abroad is comparable	36,5
3	The quality of study in my HEI is lower than abroad	48,6

(48,6 %) of the respondents –students assert that foreign education is more superior than national standards. At the same time (51.3%) of the respondents estimated the Kazakhstani system of education as corresponding to the world standards; (14,8%) consider that the quality of education is not simply comparable, but even higher than at HEIs abroad.

One of the main obstacles hindering a more large - scaled introduction of the academic exchange programs may be considered as lack of resources (50,5 %), language barrier (49,8 %), organizational –procedural (visas, document formalities, everyday problems (42,7 %), etc. It becomes clear that a high rate of the academic mobility of students may be available not only thanks to financing resources. It also needs a developed infrastructure which is far from being fulfilled easily.

#### **4.2.3. Implementation of the ideas and principal provisions of the Bologna Process**

Representing the views of young scholars and students to the implementation of ideas and provisions of the Bologna Process was in the focus of our research. As it is known, the entry of Kazakhstan into the Bologna Process has set certain requirements to the quality of higher education and to the creation of conditions for promoting academic mobility of teachers and students and for enhancing their social and professional self-realization.

The analysis of the obtained data in the course of the focus-group research<sup>1</sup>, shows that most of Bachelor, Master and Doctoral Degree students are aware of the main ideas of the Bologna Process, pointing out the positive and negative aspects of innovation.

Taking into account the level of readiness of the system of education to novelties and conformity of the Kazakhstani education programmes with international standards, the researchers have outlined the following tasks in developing the academic mobility:

- ensuring the quality of external mobility;
- ensuring the quality of stay of foreign teachers, researchers and students in Kazakhstan (incoming mobility);
- further implementation of the principles of multilingual education (proportional teaching of the Kazakh, Russian, English and other foreign languages; language training courses and teaching programmes based on the synergy of language and culture).
- expanding direct communications with foreign HEI –partners and international organizations;
- improving the normative –legal basis of academic mobility.

#### **Conclusions**

- The Bologna Process has marked the integration process with the European education area and has outlined the main principles, which are to be observed by the Kazakhstani HEIs now –openness of education, transparency and responsibility.

- In the course of perceiving the main provisions of the Bologna Process by the researchers, there can be seen a variety of contexts:

### **Pluses (+)**

- the integrity of the education system (openness of the system, expanding of the scientific –research borders, integration with the European system, etc.)
- from the point of organizing the academic process (introducing of a 3 –cycle system of training specialists, using the credit technologies in organizing classes and the rating system for evaluating students’ knowledge, etc.)
- from the point of the content renewal of education and development of the academic mobility (students have an opportunity to choose and build up their own trajectory of study; teachers have an opportunity to enhance their professional performance).

### **Minuses (-)**

- absence of the thoroughly drafted credit transfer and accumulation system;
- insufficient financing of programmes;
- probability of decreasing the quality of fundamental education;
- convertability of diplomas may lead to ‘brain drain’
- correlation of national and international traditions: establishment of the trajectory of education in conformity with the European traditions
- destruction of the established system of higher education and academic scholarly degrees.

### **Conclusions**

Kazakhstan’s higher education system has undergone serious changes during the last two decade. The State Program on Development of Education until 2020 envisioned ambitious goals, including an increase gradual decentralization of the higher education system, introduction of a western-style credit system, improvement of education standards, and an increase in international cooperation in the field of education. These reforms addressed the most painful legacy of the transitional reforms in the 1990s – chronic under-funding and neglect of the education system. The positive social and economic climate of the last two decade allowed many problems that Kazakhstan's education had faced in the 1990s to be addressed, and much needed structural changes in the education system to be introduced. Practically all universities received access to the Internet and modern communication technologies, and funds to equip computer classes and to expand university libraries. The country’s entire banking system was on the verge of collapse and only a massive multi-billion dollar bailout by the government brought some sense of stability. Nonetheless, economic growth has definitely slowed down, and with it, spending on many state-run programs. On of the reason, there is considerable pressure on the reform efforts, as government and public attention is diverted to other pressing issues related to the economic problems, and education

reformers receive less high-profile support in their efforts to keep the reforms rolling.

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