

## OLGA NESSIPBAYEVA

### BOLOGNA PROCESS PRINCIPLES INTEGRATED INTO EDUCATION SYSTEM OF KAZAKHSTAN

#### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the fulfillment of the parameters of the Bologna Process in the education system of Kazakhstan. The author gives short review of higher education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan with necessary data. And the weaknesses of the system of higher education are identified. Moreover, implementing recommendations of the Bologna Process based on international cooperation and academic exchange are given.

Key words: Bologna Process, higher education system, Kazakhstan

*Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.*  
Mahatma Gandhi

#### Introduction

Kazakhstan became a member of the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe in March 2010, thereby gaining full membership in the Bologna process. Currently, the work of implementation is in progress in Kazakhstan. 60 universities of Kazakhstan signed the Great Charter. The Great Charter was adopted in 1988 in Bologna. By signing this document the universities commit to development of autonomy of universities, democratic principles of management, academic freedom of students, freedom of scientific research, etc. The objectives of Kazakhstani higher education are high – to achieve a world level of education and entry into the unified educational space. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev set the task of including the Republic among the 30 most competitive countries of the world. Improving the educational system plays an important role in achieving this task. President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev said in his speech “We have to ensure the provision of high quality services of education at the level of world standards all over the country” (World Didac Astana, 2011).

#### Benefits to Kazakhstan’s universities and students

Implementing the Bologna Process is a long and complex process. Nevertheless the Bologna Process is a pre-requisite for reinforcing institutional collaboration and for the exchange of students and staff within the countries of the Bologna process. The Bologna Process is an important instrument to enhance the internationalization of higher education, an essential driver for widening reforms, and also process of the legitimacy of current governance structures and mechanisms (TEMPUS Study, 2012).

Obviously, Kazakhstan's accession to the Bologna process provides **real benefits** to Kazakhstan’s universities and students. These are: bringing domestic educational programs and curricula in line with European standards, recognition of

national qualifications and academic degrees, ensuring academic mobility of students and teachers, implementation of double diploma education programs, convertibility of the Kazakh higher education diplomas in the euro area, the right of the graduates for employment in any of the member countries of the Bologna process.

The system of higher education of Kazakhstan underwent restructuring. The three level model of education was introduced: **Bachelor's program, Master's program and PhD's program**. Now, in the country one degree – PhD and two academic distinctions are awarded by the ministry of education – **associate professor** (docent), and **professor** (Zhumagulov, 2012, Higher Education section, para. 2). New principles of financing of higher education were introduced. 38 universities of the country perform two diploma education, 131 universities conduct the education process accordingly with credit technology and 42 higher education universities conduct distant teaching.

The fulfillment of the parameters of the Bologna Process in the education system of Kazakhstan will allow to provide quality services at the level of world standards in view of integration into the European Higher Education Area. Reforms in higher education are based on legislation and government programs. The State Program on development of education for 2020 provides for fulfillment of obligatory and recommended parameters of the Bologna Process. The State Program provides for establishment of the Bologna Process Center and the Center of Academic Mobility. Besides, the developed in April 2011 new rules of organization of education process on credit technology provides for scale of evaluation of credit technology in Kazakhstan and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and mutual excepting of education programs, organization of academic mobility within Kazakhstan's model of excepting credits on the ECTS basis, using of the European system of transfer and accumulation of credits in education process and module building of education programs. The program on development of education for 2020 provides for the measures that will promote autonomy of the national research universities since 2015, national higher education institutes – since 2016 and since 2018 all the rest higher education institutions of the country (World Didac Astana, 2011).

The legal framework for development of academic mobility has been created. It is one of the effective ways to increase the quality of training personnel. The first steps in development of academic mobility have already been made. In 2011 the state for the first time supported the study in foreign higher education institution for one academic period in the best universities of Europe, South East Asia and the CIS. Besides, the mechanism of internal academic mobility was developed. The principle of this mechanism is 'regional higher education institution – national university' and it means that the students from the regional higher education institutions will be able to study in the leading higher education institutions of the country (World Didac Astana, 2011).

The system of higher education of Kazakhstan also feature unique project now implemented in form of the Nazarbayev University. This University works in partnership with universities of the top 30 universities of the world. Students of the first enrolment began their study already. "Educational programs that meet the best world standards, new principles of autonomy and academic mobility are conducted

in the Nazarbayev University and later will be introduced in all higher education institutions of the country” said Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Karim Massimov. The overall goal of educational reforms in Kazakhstan is the adaptation of the educational system to the new socio-economic environment.

### **Current state of higher education in numbers**

Higher Education in Kazakhstan can be obtained by persons with:

- General Secondary Education or
- Technical and Vocational Education or
- Postsecondary Education.

Professional education programs of Higher Education are provided in higher education institutions (universities, academies, institutes, as well as in conservatoires, higher schools and higher colleges which equated to higher education institutions). Those students, who passed final attestation and mastered professional education program of Higher Education, are awarded qualification and Bachelor’s academic degree: I cycle degree – Bachelor’s degree (requires minimum 4 years of study, 142-148 credits).

The Government allocated 35425 education grants for the 2010-2011 academic year for training specialists with higher education (among them 34425 full-time courses and 1000 by correspondence form of study). In comparison with education period 2009-2010 the amount of state order was increased on 1085 education grants.

Average state expenses for one student are 318400 Tenge (approximately 1600 Euro). Budgetary funds for the invitation of foreign professors from world leading universities are annually allocated for two HEIs - Al Farabi Kazakh National University and to the L. Gumilyov Eurasian National University.

Postgraduate Education can be acquired by persons with Higher Education and consists of two levels:

II cycle – Master’s degree:

- On main specialty – requires 1-1.5 years of study beyond the Bachelor’s degree, 36 credits;
- On scientific-pedagogical specialty – requires 2 years of study beyond the Bachelor’s degree, 47 credits.

III cycle – PhD degree (requires minimum 3 years of study, 66 credits) (System of Education).

In 2009 in Kazakhstan there were 144 higher education institutions (55 State HEIs and 89 private). The number of non-state (private) institutions was gradually increasing until 2001 and began to decline in 2002. On November 26, 2012 after an optimization process there remained in Kazakhstan – 139 universities. For the 2009-2010 academic year, the total number of students in higher education institutions was 610.2 thousand. On average, there are 232 students per 10 thousand persons in the world. In Kazakhstan, this figure is 422.5 people (Higher Education in Kazakhstan). In Kazakhstan, the number of teaching staff in higher education institutions is 39.2 thousand; of those 41% have scientific degree (Higher Education in Kazakhstan).

The share of funding of Kazakhstan is still insufficient to provide sustainable development of the education system at the level recommended by UNESCO – 6-7% of GDP. At present the share of government funding for higher education in the

overall education budget remains low – less than 10.0% (Higher Education in Kazakhstan).

To date, the level of the population with higher education in percentages (%) in Kazakhstan is 39.5% (Human Development Reports). But, first of all, the structure of specialties is important, on which the preparation is followed in higher education. Education of professionals in management, marketing, and of course specialists in manufacture are necessary in the modern situation of Kazakhstan. Technical staff is the foundation of development of the industry for any economy. And our economy, above all, needs to focus on training in higher education institutes and preparation of manufacturing staff (manufacturing, high-tech industry, and so on) (Kazakov, 2010).

### **Problems in higher education of Kazakhstan**

Despite the increasing of the state budget, payment for university education, which did not exist before independence, limits access to education for poor young people. The gap in education between rich and poor families is growing rapidly, and also between the inhabitants of large cities and rural areas. Despite the introduction of tuition fees, the real earnings of tutors in Kazakhstan are still very low, which negatively affects the quality of education: many university teachers are forced to work more than one job. Corruption at universities has a negative impact on educational standards, and it has forced the administration of the universities to introduce a system of unified university entrance examination as a means of combating bribes.

In response to some of the urgencies, new universities and educational institutions have appeared. In the republican education market, universities offer traditional state and western diplomas, and they all depend heavily on tuition fees, as both public and private universities are struggling for funding and students. At the same time, the collapse of state atheism, and the revival of religion, particularly Islam, has led to the emergence of new religious educational institutions throughout Kazakhstan. Students from Kazakhstan are also trained in the madrassas, or religious schools in the Middle East and South Asia.

Given the weakness of the system of higher education, the government of Kazakhstan has adopted programs to finance the education of students abroad. Special program of providing presidential scholarships were established (Bolashak program). The Bolashak list includes 100 universities from 17 countries for academic programs. Over the past three years 3,194 people have been awarded with the Bolashak Scholarships. JSC “Center for International Programs” has a broad network of partners abroad (more than 500 foreign partners). The graduates of the Bolashak program are employed both by Kazakhstan’s government agencies and private organizations (JSC “Center for International Programs”).

The European and American Programs (AISEC, British Council, Campus France, Education USA, DAAD) help students from Kazakhstan to study in Europe and the United States under the Program of the support of higher education (2.3 Higher education section, para. 4).

For achieving its goals higher education of Kazakhstan is striving to implement the important Bologna process parameters based on international cooperation and academic exchange that is attractive to students and teachers. They are next:

- (1) facilitate the mobility of students, graduates and staff of higher education institutions;
- (2) prepare students for future careers and to become active citizens in democratic societies, and to support their personal development;
- (3) ensure broad access to high-quality higher education, based on democratic principles and academic freedom.

There is a need to review the structure and content of higher education. University system should be brought in line with international standards, and for it is important:

- to bridge the gap between universities and the labor market and improve the system of admission to universities;
- to increase public control over the quality of education through corporate governance;
- to give autonomy in administration of universities;
- to develop a strategy for academic mobility (transfer of credits) of higher education within the country and abroad;
- to successfully develop higher education on the basis of the synthesis of three major components – **education, science and innovation**.

## Conclusion

Because our future depends on the youth, giving them the best opportunities is undoubtedly the key to a dynamic aimed at the development of new advances. State authority of Kazakhstan has set the reform of higher education at the heart of its actions in support of national development strategies. Higher education is a privileged means to provide better perspectives for future generations. Education is a key element of better relations, in terms of further modernization and development of human capital for sustainable growth.

## References

- Anonymous (2011): World Didac Astana. Bologna Process principles integrated into education system of Kazakhstan. <http://www.worlddidac-astana.com/press/press-releases/bologna-process-principles-integrated-education-system-kazakhstan> Accessed January 2013.
- Higher Education in Kazakhstan. [http://tempuskaz.kz/downloads/kazakhstan\\_review\\_of\\_higher\\_education.pdf](http://tempuskaz.kz/downloads/kazakhstan_review_of_higher_education.pdf) Accessed December 2012.
- Higher Education in Kazakhstan. 2.3 Higher education section, para. 4. [http://tempuskaz.kz/downloads/kazakhstan\\_review\\_of\\_higher\\_education.pdf](http://tempuskaz.kz/downloads/kazakhstan_review_of_higher_education.pdf) Accessed December 2012.
- Human Development Reports. Official site of UN. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2011/download/ru/> Accessed December 2012.
- JSC “Center for International Programs” <http://bolashak.gov.kz/News-en-US/exhibition> Accessed January 2013.
- Kazakov, D. (2010): Higher education in Kazakhstan. BRIF Research Group. <http://www.brif.kz/blog/?p=851> Accessed December 2012.
- System of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (short review). About educational system of Kazakhstan. (2011): [http://www.nac.edu.kz/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=60&Itemid=141&lang=ru](http://www.nac.edu.kz/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=60&Itemid=141&lang=ru) Accessed January 2013.

TEMPUS Study. State of Play of the Bologna Process in the Tempus Partner Countries (2012): [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/tools/documents/study09\\_SoP\\_Bologna\\_0412\\_en\\_web.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/tools/documents/study09_SoP_Bologna_0412_en_web.pdf) Accessed January 2013.

Zhumagulov, B. T. (2012, August): Speech of Education and Science Minister on meeting of education employees of Kostanai region "Modernization of education system". [http://www.edu.gov.kz/ru/press\\_sluzhba/vystuplenija\\_ministra/vystuplenie/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=3842&cHash=c520976af3a2d0d2ccffa78ffdad063](http://www.edu.gov.kz/ru/press_sluzhba/vystuplenija_ministra/vystuplenie/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=3842&cHash=c520976af3a2d0d2ccffa78ffdad063) Accessed December 2012.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Olga Nessipbayeva  
Suleyman Demirel University  
Almaty, Kazakhstan  
[olga\\_nessip@mail.ru](mailto:olga_nessip@mail.ru)