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DIPLOMA THESIS

**THE OUTBOUND MOBILITY OF HIGHER
EDUCATION STUDENTS FROM KAZAKHSTAN**

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Master's Thesis

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this particular Master thesis work is my own work.
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July, 2020

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Abstract

As many other young and developing countries, Kazakhstan is also trying to implement various educational reforms to get stabilized and improve its education system after the collapse of the USSR. Respectively, the country carried out certain reforms and internationalization projects in higher education system to move and keep pace with today's globalized and internationalized times. However, an insufficient number of researches have been carried through to investigate and analyze the follow – ups of the internationalization process and its consequent outbound mobility specifics. This particular research paper explores the higher education internationalization projects implemented by Kazakhstan, and their subsequent dynamics, figures, funding, and many other detailed data. Moreover, it investigates both explicit and implicit factors impacting the outbound mobility of Kazakhstani higher education students on the basis of both qualitative and quantitative methods, giving certain recommendations how to tackle the obstacles successfully.

Keywords: education, higher education, internationalization, outbound mobility of students

Annotace

Stejně jako množství jiných mladých a rozvojových zemí se Kazachstán také snaží provést různé vzdělávací reformy, aby mohl stabilizovat a zlepšit svůj vzdělávací systém po rozpadu Sovětského Svazu. S souladu s čím země provedla určité reformy a internacionalizační projekty ve vysokoškolském systému, pro postoupení a udržování kroku s dnešní globální a internacionalizovanou dobo. Byl však proveden nedostatečný počet výzkumů, aby bylo možné prozkoumat a analyzovat dopady a následky procesu internacionalizace a jeho specifika odchozí mobility. Tento konkrétní výzkumný dokument probádá internacionalizační projekty vysokoškolského vzdělávání prováděné Kazachstánem a jejich následnou dynamiku, čísla, financování a mnoho dalších podrobných údajů. Kromě toho zkoumá jak explicitní, tak implicitní faktory ovlivňující odchozí mobilitu kazašských vysokoškolských studentů na základě jak kvalitativních, tak kvantitativních metod, přičemž poskytuje určitá doporučení, jak úspěšně překonat překážky.

Klíčová slova: vzdělávání, vysokoškolské vzdělávání, internacionalizace, odchozí mobilita studentů

ABBREVIATIONS

BIL – Bilim Innovation Fund

CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States

ECTS – European Credit Transfer System

EHEA – European Higher Education Area

ENU – Gumilyov Eurasian National University

ERA – European Research Area

EU – European Union

F2F – Face – to – Face

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

HE – Higher Education

KTL – Kazakh – Turkish Lyceum

MESRK – Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan

MNERK – Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan

NIS – Nazarbayev Intellectual School

NU – Nazarbayev University

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co – operation and Development

RPhMSh – Republic Physics and Math School

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNHCR – the UN Refugee Agency

UNT – Unified National Test

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WHO – World Health Organization

ZU – Zhezkazgan University

ZSU – Zhetysu State University

Table of contents

Acknowledgements.....	4
Abstract.....	5
Abbreviations.....	6
Part I. Introduction	8
<i>Problem definition</i>	9
<i>Objectives</i>	9
<i>Research questions</i>	9
<i>Kazakhstan in Context/ Historical background</i>	10
<i>Outbound and inbound mobility, destination countries, degrees pursued</i>	12
<i>Brain Drain</i>	13
<i>Internationalization policies and reforms</i>	14
<i>Bolashak International Scholarship</i>	14
<i>The Bologna Process</i>	15
<i>Erasmus+ Program</i>	16
<i>International cooperations</i>	17
<i>International Universities</i>	17
Part II. Methodology	18
<i>Interviews</i>	18
<i>Data collection and analysis</i>	19
<i>Interview transcriptions</i>	22
<i>Sociological survey</i>	41
Part IV. Findings/Results	43
<i>Findings from the interviews and survey</i>	43
<i>Findings from the secondary research</i>	45
<i>ENU database results</i>	45
<i>Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education research results</i>	45
<i>Survey and interview responses of 126 students and lecturers from ZU and ZSU</i>	48
Part III. Theoretical Background	49
<i>Internationalization</i>	49
<i>Knight and the Wit's rationales</i>	51
<i>Globalization</i>	52
<i>Historical Institutionalism/ Path dependency</i>	53
Part V. Discussion	55
<i>Educational inequality in Kazakhstan</i>	55
<i>Public spending on education</i>	56
<i>Corruption/clientalism in HE institutions</i>	57
<i>Liberalization</i>	59
<i>Participation in higher education: gender</i>	60
<i>High expectation from family, social pressure, UNT and high rate of youth suicide</i>	61
<i>Correlation of lower quality education and regional disparities in youth labor market</i> .	63
<i>Religious and cultural values</i>	65
<i>Marriage vs Education</i>	65
Recommendations	68
Part VI. Conclusion	70
Bibliography.....	71

Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990s, the Republic of Kazakhstan had significantly weakened in many spheres, including educational system. Thus, as many other developing countries Kazakhstan tries to tackle challenges and improve the current educational situation in the country. Currently, Kazakhstan has established number of reforms and policies to develop the internationalization of higher education system. However, it still faces some barriers that cease the process of internationalization.

This particular research paper aims to find out main causes and obstacles ceasing students' outbound mobility from Kazakhstan. Only few researches on HE internationalization have been done since the implementation of internationalization projects in the higher education system in Kazakhstan. Thus, this thesis is focused on the study of the current state of the HE internationalization in the country, trying to figure out main factors influencing students' choice to stay in Kazakhstan or study abroad. The author uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to carry out the research.

The first section of the paper explains historical background of Kazakhstan's education system in alliance with path dependency theory. Consecutively, statistics of the contemporary outbound and inbound mobility of students, their destination countries and degrees pursued abroad were indicated. Furthermore, the paper introduces all major ongoing internationalization projects and reforms in the HE system, such as the Bolashak International Scholarship program, the Bologna Process, Erasmus + Program, some vast international cooperations and universities.

Next, methodology part with conveyed interviews, sociological surveys and empirical data analysis are presented, which is followed by the theoretical background. Crucial research – related theories are composed of internationalization theory along with Knight and the Wit's rationales, globalization and its advantages and disadvantages, enclosed by the path dependency - historical institutionalism theory.

Subsequently, the fourth part of the paper reveals major findings and results of the sociological surveys and interviews. Additionally, main obstacles ceasing the HE students'

outbound mobility were considered based on the previous researches carried out by following 4 universities of Kazakhstan: ENU, NU, ZU, ZSU. Afterwards, a discussion part endeavours to collect the findings and explain the major trends ceasing the HE internationalization process. Some of these tendencies were regional low quality education, disparity in quality teachers' allocation across the country, lack of public budgeting, social pressure and mental issues leading to the high rate of the youth suicide, and cultural values, such as marriage, religious beliefs and maintenance of the traditions. Lastly, the research paper suggests possible recommendations how to overcome the barriers effectively and develop the Kazakh HE internationalization system successfully.

Problem definition

- To explore the international outbound mobility of Kazakh students and identify both explicit and implicit barriers and suggest recommendations how to tackle them successfully.

Objectives

- To find out current state of HE internationalization of Kazakhstan
- To find out main causes and obstacles ceasing students' outbound mobility from Kazakhstan
- To find out new factors influencing students' choice to study in Kazakhstan or abroad

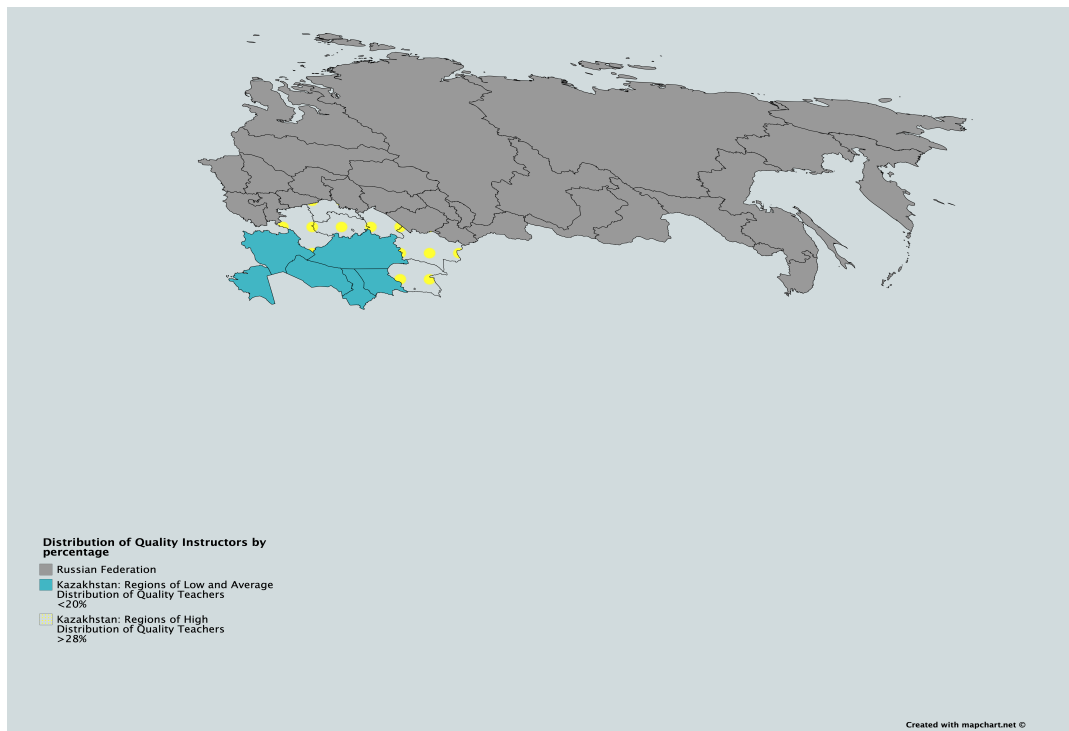
Research questions

- Why does majority of students studying abroad choose neighbouring countries?
- To what extent is the level of English language command low in Kazakhstani schools?
- What are the main factors of relatively low level of outbound mobility of Kazakhstani students in the current era of globalization?
- What are the additional/hidden factors of relatively low level of outbound mobility of Kazakhstani students in the current era of globalization?

Kazakhstan in Context/ Historical background

During the USSR, educational system was highly centralized in Russia and highest quality teachers, scientists and researchers had worked under Kreml, which is used to address the territory of Russia geographically. After the USSR collapse, Kazakhstan got its independence in 1991, and established its own independent political, social, economic and educational system. However, a historical post – Soviet path had impact on Kazakhstan's further development, including educational system. After the breakdown of the Soviet Union, most high quality teachers had been left in the Northern part of Kazakhstan, where it borders with the Russian Federation. That is how, Kazakhstan still faces postcolonial consequences and residual geopolitical impact in educational context.

Map 1. Distribution of quality instructors by percentage across the country



To visualize a historical institutionalism theory in a practice, the above - inserted map was presented. Two main actors, such as Kazakhstan (blue and yellow – spotted area) and Russia (grey area) are demonstrated on the map. Yellow – spotted area is the territory of Kazakhstan, which has been affected by Russia's interest that was constituted historically; and which has consequential outcomes on education in terms of quality up today. Thus, yellow – spotted territory might be interpreted as the regions of Kazakhstan with high distribution of quality teachers; whereas blue – colored area is the regions of lower

concentration of quality teachers. This pattern might be explained by an influence Russian political actors and agents of history had on Kazakhstan as an object. Up to date, highly qualified teachers and instructors are mostly allocated in the Northern – Eastern side of Kazakhstan, closer to the borders with Russia, where mostly Russians live. In 1931, when Kazakhstan was under the USSR, Russian leaders migrated hundreds thousands of Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians to the northern and Eastern part of Kazakhstan. Consequently, they were receiving privileged conditions, including education from the Russian USSR (History.kz, 2019). Thus, most professional and highly qualified instructors are still in those regions, due to the historical institutionalism.

The Table 1 below shows the same data as the map above. It can be seen that highest category instructors are situated asymmetrically across the country and closer to the borders with the Russian Federation, which explains the post – colonial path dependency features. All cities (urban area) with the highest number of high – quality teaching staff, such as Astana city (28.9), Pavlodar (32.4), North Kazakhstan region (29.1) are located closer to the Russian Federation. Kyzylorda (5.9), Mangystau (12.6), West Kazakhstan (15.7) as urban areas have significantly lower number of quality teachers and these regions are situated very far from the Russian Federation territory, which is one of the reasons of lower level education.

Table 1. Distribution of teachers across categories in urban and rural areas, by location, 2010

Region	Urban				Rural			
	Highest Category	First Category	Second Category	No Category	Highest Category	First Category	Second Category	No Category
Akmola	24.1	32.0	26.6	17.3	8.8	28.8	33.6	28.9
Aktobe	18.5	28.1	33.0	20.4	8.0	25.6	31.6	34.8
Almaty	21.0	33.1	24.1	21.8	12.9	32.7	28.1	26.3
Atyrau	16.7	43.4	22.0	17.9	9.5	36.4	29.4	24.6
East Kazakhstan	24.2	30.3	27.2	18.3	9.6	34.2	30.1	26.1
Zhambyl	25.6	25.9	23.9	24.5	15.8	26.0	31.1	27.1
West Kazakhstan	15.7	36.3	29.7	18.3	7.4	35.6	31.3	25.7
Karaganda	21.6	30.8	28.1	19.5	11.9	36.1	27.5	24.6
Kostanai	23.6	29.5	25.6	21.2	9.5	26.6	30.5	33.3
Kyzylorda	5.9	35.6	31.1	27.5	2.0	33.1	34.0	30.9
Mangystau	12.6	28.8	30.0	28.6	6.6	31.5	29.8	32.1
Pavlodar	32.4	30.4	22.6	14.6	11.2	31.2	28.8	28.8
North Kazakhstan	29.1	31.5	22.4	17.0	10.5	32.0	29.7	27.9
South Kazakhstan	21.2	26.6	29.9	22.4	11.3	31.1	34.9	22.6
Astana City	28.9	26.0	25.9	19.3	-	-	-	-
Almaty City	28.8	25.1	26.6	19.5	-	-	-	-
Country average	22.6	29.6	27.2	20.6	10.4	31.4	31.3	26.9

Source: OECD 2017, Reviews of National Policies for Education: Higher Education in Kazakhstan 2017, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Outbound and inbound mobility, destination countries, and degrees pursued

According to OECD, the highest category instructors are mostly distributed in capital city and economically developed region, such as Astana, Almaty, as well as in the East and North Kazakhstan (2014). In addition, according to ICEF, outbounding Kazakhstani students are mostly from Astana and Almaty, state capital city and big financial cultural city of the country (2016). The students are self – funded as well (ICEF, 2016). Majority of students studying abroad are self – funded (export, gov., 2019).

According to experts' predictions, the outbound mobility of Kazakhstani students will raise in near future (2020 and further). But due to the current pandemics, many educational institutions temporarily stopped accepting students and most universities of the world postponed the start of classes. Thus, students and faculty mobility has stopped for the moment.

According to the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Committee on Statistics 2015, the highest number of foreign students in HE in Kazakhstan was in 2009 (12 000 students), following up by 2013 (11 000), and 2008 (10 500 students). The lowest number of foreign students in Kazakh HE was almost 8 000 students in 2012, which was possibly related to economic crisis.

Mostly, students go for studying abroad by self funding, then Bolashak program, and exchange programs for one semester. Since Bolashak cut the budget and discontinued contract for the Bachelor Degree scholarships in 2011, only Master's and Doctoral degrees could be pursued (bolashak.gov.kz). According to the Economic Research Institute Astana and OECD 2016, during last 5 years, Kazakhstani students migrated mostly seeking general secondary (MA) and professional education (PhD) (2016).

The list of countries that most often serve as the destination for Kazakh HE outgoing students are Russian Federation (mostly), Kyrgyzstan, the United States, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Malaysia, Germany, Poland, United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, France, Saudi Arabia, Korea, Belarus, Australia, Italy, Canada, Tajikistan, Latvia, Austria (Data for reference year 2014, UNESCO International statistics database 2016). Meanwhile, Georgia (mostly), Uzbekistan, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, People's Republic of

China, Mongolia, Tajikistan, India, Afghanistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Korea, Ukraine, Pakistan, Armenia, Germany, Syrian Arab Republic, Belarus, Iran are the countries from which the HE students most often come to take HE courses at Kazakh HEIs (Data for reference year 2014, UNESCO International statistics database 2016).

Kazakhstani students mostly go to the neighbor countries, such as Russia, China and Kyrgyzstan. According to UNESCO statistics, 84 % of Kazakhstani students chose Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and China as study destination countries in 2015. Less amount of students chose the USA and Europe, especially the UK as a study destination country (ICEF Monitor, 2016).

UNESCO International statistics database for reference year 2014 states that top 6 HE country destinations for Kazakhstani students were Russian Federation (35 106 students), Kyrgyzstan (4357), United States (1884), United Kingdom (1725), the Czech Republic (1174), and Malaysia (1089). Germany (695), Poland (401), the UAE (377), Ukraine (350), France (346) are considered as the second popular list of HE destinations for students from Kazakhstan. Saudi Arabia (291), Korea (211), Belarus (206), Australia (142), Italy (132), Canada (126), Tajikistan (123), Latvia (116), and Austria (105) are in the closing list of destination countries (OECD, 2017).

Why most students go to Russia for studying at HE institutions? First of all, because during the Soviet Union quality education was centralized on the territory of Russia, mostly in Moscow. Secondly, Russian language is the second language of many Kazakh people, thus they find studying in Russian language in Russia quite convenient. Thirdly, Russia is the neighbor country, which makes it easier for parents and students to travel. And lastly, the currency rate difference is relatively low between Kazakhstani Tenge (KZT) and Russian Rubl (RUB) in comparison with Euro (EUR) or US Dollars (USD).

Brain Drain

At the same time, Brain Drain issue is present in Kazakhstan. Many young people prefer to stay abroad after getting higher quality education. A large amount of those people have a professional education and they are fluent speakers of a foreign language (mostly English) (OECD, 2017). Kazakhstani people mostly chose CIS countries (Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova), Germany, Israel, the

United States, and Canada as destination countries to migrate to (OECD, 2017). However, CIS countries might be historical homelands of many people, who were migrated to Kazakhstan under the USSR.

Internationalization policies and reforms

Bolashak International Scholarship

Bolashak International Scholarship was established in 1993 by the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The program's main aim was to give talented Kazakh youth to go study abroad and gain highly – qualified education. The Bolashak program was established right after the collapse of the USSR and gaining the independence. It was one of the first development reforms issued by the government. Students can move abroad and study Bachelor, Master and PhD programs there. After the graduation students were expected to return home country and work for it minimum for 5-7 years depending on a field of education. Many Bolashak alumni worked as the state authorities and in various civil organizations of the Republic of Kazakhstan. At the beginning of the program implementation, Kazakhstan has had international cooperation and partnerships with HE institutions located only in 4 following countries: the USA, the UK, Germany and France. The list of the cooperating countries increased so did the number of foreign HE institutions. If before 2000s only students majoring in economics, social sciences and humanities could apply for the Bolashak Scholarship (so as they had higher level of foreign language knowledge than students of technical field of study), since 2000s the scope of majors at HE institutions that could apply for the program expanded. In compliance with the Presidential Decree No. 470 of October 12, 2000 “On Approval of the Rules of Applicants Selection and Bolashak International Scholarship Award” students of technical and engineering fields of studies were allowed to apply for Bolashak Program and study at top technical HE universities abroad. The number of foreign HE institutions rose up to 13 ones by 2004. As time passed, the geography of foreign HE institutions were expanding up to 33 states of the world, including HE institutions of Japan, South Korea, China, Malaysia, Singapore and the other top universities from the world's List of Recommended Universities. In 2008, the Bolashak program extended the scope of educational opportunities, creating “rural youth” and “civil servant” categories, permitting students from the rural areas of Kazakhstan to get a scholarship and study abroad, gaining high – quality education. Moreover, the government started focusing on scientific, research and innovation development of the country and began

funding and supporting these directions under the program. Since 2012, teaching, medicine and engineering spheres are priority ones for getting a scholarship. According to Bolashak database, 11 126 Kazakhstani students have won Bolashak Scholarship and studied in 200 best universities of 33 states of the world (JSC “Center for International Programs”, 2020).

The Bologna Process

The Bologna Process is another step Kazakhstan made towards internationalization and development of the education. Kazakhstan joined European Higher Education Area and in particular, the Bologna process as the 47th member state in 2010 (Yergebekov, et al., 2012). Kazakhstan is the first Central Asian country that joined EHEA as a full member. The Budapest – Vienna Declaration papered the entry of Kazakhstan to EHEA in 2010 (National Report of the Bologna Process – Kazakhstan, 2015).

Currently, the Bologna process includes following obligatory parameters:

- 3 level HE system;
- ECTS Academic Credits
- Academic Mobility of staff, faculty, and staff;
- European Diploma Supplement;
- HE Quality Assurance;
- European Research Area Formation (Enic – Kazakhstan, 2020).
- Implementation of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees;
- Doctoral studies and cooperation between the EHEA and ERA (Yergebekov, et al., 2012).

Some recommended parameters:

- European Assessment;
- Active student participation;
- Socio – economic support for low – income students;
- Life – long education (Enic – Kazakhstan, 2020).

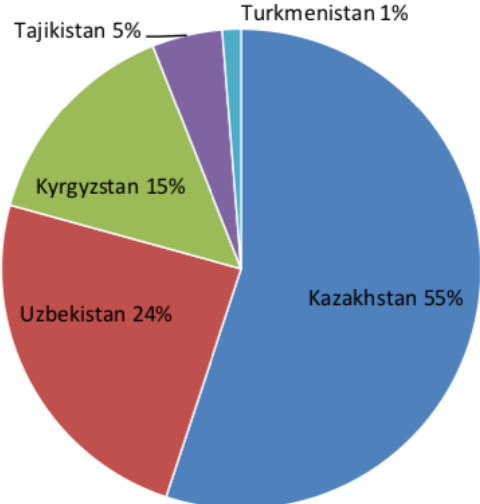
After joining the Bologna Process, Kazakhstan faced some clash while harmonizing still existed Soviet Union educational system and newly implemented Bologna system. For example, the Bologna system uses ECTS, mandatory and optional courses; whereas Soviet Union system offered only obligatory courses program asserted by the government so students had not really had a chance to choose neither courses nor teachers (Yergebekov, et

al., 2012). Thereby, it was really challenging for Kazakhstan to switch from the post – Soviet officially affirmed number of courses and hours to the credit system accompanied by a range of optional courses.

Erasmus+ Program

European Union (EU) presented Erasmus + Program encouraging youth and their education, sport activities and trainings in between 2014 and 2020. Erasmus + aims to develop and maintain academic mobility and international cooperation projects with 28 EU member states + 5 other European countries (including “Programme Countries” and “Partner Countries”) (European Commission, 2018). Erasmus Program exists for more than 30 years allowing students, researchers and staff to move around other countries and gain an experience in a foreign country and get international credits counted. According to the European Commission 2018 Report, Kazakhstan gets the largest part of the funding allocated on Central Asia. In compliance with the Figure 1 below, Kazakhstan kept receiving 55% of the total global budget distributed on Central Asian region between 2015 and 2017. Correspondingly, 462 students and staff moved to Europe for studying and training in 2015 and 2017, while in 2016 the number of students and faculty rose up to 556 (European Commission, 2018).

Figure 1. Erasmus regional budget allocation: Central Asia



Source: European Commission, 2018

International cooperations

Kazakhstan established international cooperation with following organizations:

- USA Fulbright;
- Germany DAAD;
- India ITEC;
- International agreements and cooperation with Chinese HE institutions, such as the University of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (USCO);
- Network of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

International Universities

Another significant movement towards internationalization of the education system in Kazakhstan was to establish international universities that meet international standards and recognition within the country (Tampayeva, 2016). Following universities operate as complete analogues of Western HE institutions: Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics, and Strategic Research, Kazakh – British Technical University, Suleiman Demirel University, international Academy of Business, International Information Technology University. These universities were founded with partnership with American and British top universities. The program, faculty staff, and many other details are identical to partner universities ones'. The general pattern seems successful and contributing to the ongoing process of internationalization.

Taking into consideration all above – mentioned internationalization steps taken by the Kazakh government in a short period of time after getting the independence, it can be viewed as Kazakhstan's aspiration to develop HE internationalization as well as the liberation act from the post – Soviet Russia dependence (Tampayeva, 2016).

Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this particular research paper.

Limitations:

- There is a scarcity of research studies conducted, national reports and data about HE Internationalization process in Kazakhstan, so as Kazakhstan is a young country, which got its independence only 30 years ago and is on its way to policy development, including education.
- Covid – 19 and closed borders. Due to coronavirus, part of the methodology had to be cancelled. Due to the restricted travelling, the author could not travel and meet with HEI authorities in Kazakhstan, and conduct F2F interviews with students studying in Kazakhstan.

Literature review of secondary research data, such as:

- Research articles on HE internationalization in Kazakhstan;
- National reports on HE;
- International reports on HE and internationalization process in Kazakhstan;
- National database documents on educational policy and reforms;

Test survey was conducted first to get initial image of the research and current situation, to have a clear idea who to interview and what information to look for.

Interviews

11 interviews with students were conducted; 7 females and 4 males. 6 of them study abroad at the foreign HE universities, whereas 5 of them study/studied at Kazakhstani HE institutions. Both category students were chosen for the interview for getting detailed views from both perspectives. Respondents from different parts and regions of Kazakhstan were chosen so that the results will not get biased. Students were interviewed from Almaty, Astana, Taldyqorgan, Atyrau, Pavlodar, Shymkent, Turkistan, Qyzylorda, and Oskemen regions of Kazakhstan. All respondents were chosen from the 4 different parts of Kazakhstan: West (Atyrau), North (Astana, Pavlodar), East (Oskemen, Taldyqorgan), and the Southern region (Shymkent, Turkistan, Qyzylorda, and Almaty).

- Interviews with national and international university authorities in Kazakhstan – got cancelled due to the COVID – 19 pandemics, F2F;
- Interview with the researcher from Astana, whose research on Internationalization of students from Kazakhstan was sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan – got cancelled due to the COVID – 19;
- Interviews with international university students in Kazakhstan – cancelled due to the pandemics;
- Interviews with national university students in Kazakhstan – online;
- Interviews with international university students studying abroad – online;
- Online survey;
- Secondary literature, national and international reports, national documents and educational policies were reviewed.

Data collection and analysis

Due to the pandemics, I could not proceed my research as I had planned it in the beginning. I could perform only interviews and surveys remotely. This is the main limitation of my research due to the current Covid – 19 pandemics.

I could reach senior and junior researchers, who work in the field of “Internationalization of Kazakhstan” studies, but due to the pandemics, I could not travel to Astana (Kazakhstan), where their research center with the data located. They could share the research statistics and data only in person and getting my signature under special consent, so as the research project was funded by the MESRK.

I emailed few deans and directors of the HE institutions and managers of International faculties but did not get any response to give me an interview. Probably, the remote regime caused some difficulties with communication and did not allow to convey F2F interview.

One of the major difficulties of conducting interviews was the interviewee’s lack of time. The second vast issue was the different time zones of interviewer and interviewees.

During interviews, I as an interviewer was only asking questions and sometimes developing / upgrading questions, when I see that interviewee was willing to share information, opinion

and observation. I never was imposing my own points of view or opinion and mostly listening and typing down the answers. I was constantly listening and writing down the answers and asking questions, but never interrupted interviewees so that they could give me open answers without distracted flow of thoughts. Some interviews lasted a long time for about 1 hour, whereas other ones lasted less than 40 minutes. Some interviewees were inspired and willing to contribute to the research, meanwhile few interviewees were very short and concrete in their answers.

All interviews were conducted via Skype and Telegram social network. Interviews were carried in three languages, such as Kazakh, English, and Russian. I asked each interviewee before we started about the preferred language of interview. So, the language choice depended on interviewees.

Regarding interview transcriptions, “I” stands for Interviewer and various letters, such as “R”, “M”, “T” stand for the first capital letter of the interviewees’ names. For the transcriptions I used two models of transcription method, such as “naturalism” and “denaturalism”. Naturalism is used to address the detailed and original text and speech; while denaturalism is known as a process of skipping some idiosyncratic elements of interview, such as pauses, parasite words, repetitions, non – verbal messages, laughter, coughing, and stutters (Tampayeva, 2016). All interviews that were taken in Russian and Kazakh were translated to English keeping the meaning and ideas.

I chose interviewees based on two following features: HE institution students studying in Kazakhstan and HE institution students studying in the West and Southeast Asia. Moreover, I conveyed pre – interview surveys in order to select interviewees with different socio – economic, educational, and religious background so as I had some predictions and hypotheses before I carried interviews. Interviewees were chosen on the basis of survey and communicated in order to get a consent to participate and choose a day/time.

Interviewees were asked following questions:

- ✓ How old are you?
- ✓ Where are you from?
- ✓ How many children are in your family?
- ✓ What is your educational background?

- ✓ Have you ever wanted to study abroad? Have you tried to apply for a foreign university and study abroad? Have you applied at least once?
- ✓ How did you decide to go study abroad?
- ✓ What is your English proficiency level? What was your English level at school? How did you learn the language? Where?
- ✓ What are the main obstacles for students to study abroad and get good quality education? Top 3 reasons as a minimum?
- ✓ To what extent it is important to get higher education in your society/environment/family? What is a role of marriage in your family ?
- ✓ Have you been told that you are expected to marry soon? Have you experienced any social pressure from your fam, parents, relatives, friends, society/environment?
- ✓ What could be done better or differently in HE Kazakh internationalization to make it more successful?

Interview transcriptions

1) Kamila

Female, 22 years old, from Almaty, 4 children in the family

Background of education: Physics/math Lyceum, Bachelor Degree in Engineering, Electronics, and Radio - communication. Currently studying at National University, Almaty.

[I]: Have you ever wanted to study abroad? Have you tried to apply for a foreign university and study abroad? Have you applied at least once?

[K]: Yes, but it was too late – I started preparing for applications and tests while studying at the last year of my bachelor studies and it was too late to improve my English.

My English language skills were unsatisfactory/ not enough for the passing IELTS exam.

I studied one semester in Saint Petersburg, Russia. It was an exchange program at the first year of my Master's. It was an only option for me to go studying abroad without passing any IELTS or English exam so I took a chance. The classes were in Russian.

[I]: What is your English proficiency level? What was English language quality at school? How did you learn the language? Where?

[K]: English language classes at school were poor – quality to be honest. We didn't really have an "English" class. It was only 2 times per week and teachers didn't really teach us or we didn't have enough motivation to study it. I personally had low motivation because we had not really traveled abroad at all, thus there was no need to speak English. All neighbor countries where we traveled for vacation – all speak Russian fluently enough. But generally analyzing English classes at school – it was really weak.

[I]: What are the main obstacles for students to study abroad and get good quality education? Top 3 reasons as a minimum?

[K]: 1) Insufficient English language quality classes at school;
2)The second reason is the money. At that moment I couldn't afford a life abroad and had nothing to give as deposit for Bolashak program.

3)And the last but not the least factor is that my father has a traditional mentality and he strongly believes that the main role of a woman in this life is a marriage and family. Moreover, he was constantly stating that if I go studying and living abroad by myself then I would get bad/spoilt/perverse/immoral. The western lifestyle is more likely to influence your beliefs and life and as a result you can start drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, doing

drugs and might lead messy sexual life”. He strongly believed into that and thus encouraged me to stay in Kazakhstan and continue the higher education studies here in Kazakhstan.

[I]: To what extent it is important to get higher education in your society/environment/family? What is a role of marriage in your family ?

[K]: Getting a HE is important within my family, friends and society in general. It is elementary must do thing. Similarly, getting married is important as well. I think that is obvious expectation of my family and relatives.

[I]: Have you been told that you are expected to marry soon? Have you experienced any social pressure from your family, parents, relatives, friends, society/environment?

My mother was supportive to let me go study abroad, but my father has the last word and clearly stated that I could study at one of the good universities in Kazakhstan, not leaving the country. His main argument was to keep me under control and make me marry only a Kazakh guy in Kazakhstan. Everyday he reminds me that I have to get married and that must be the most important thing for me as a girl.

My father didn't give me permission to go study in Saint – Petersburg, Russia at the beginning. It took some time. But finally, he agreed because it was only for 1 semester out of 4. He knew that I would come back home to Kazakhstan anyways and finish my program here.

[I]: As a person, who had international education experience, based on the comparisons between Kazakhstani and non – Kazakhstani education, could you please name major obstacles and problems Kazakhstan's educational system is facing now? What could be done better or differently in HE Kazakh Internationalization to make it more successful?

[K]: 1) Financial support and lack of budgeting: truly – involved and dedicated researchers do not get money on the researches. Educational sphere should make greater contributions towards partnership and communication with the global educational arena.

2) General absence of diploma value. Youth gets a job using connections (which was regular thing during communist USSR and apparently still exists as a leftover of communist era, like a “chronic disease”. From the other hand, even if you have 5 diplomas, but no connection, then you're less likely to get that job; while a person, who has no diploma but has an uncle who is a friend of company owner, could get it.

3) It is “more important” and “mature” to work than studying in our society, which means that it is more respectful when you earn money rather than you just study. This might break the youth’ perception and outlook on education.

2) Anelya

Female, 22 years old, Astana, 5 children in the family

Background of education: Ordinary school, Bachelor Degree in Business Administration. Currently working in Astana.

[I]: Have you ever wanted to study abroad? Have you tried to apply for a foreign university and study abroad? Have you applied at least once?

[A]: Yes, I wanted to study abroad. I applied once but my level of English language was unsatisfactory. Moreover, it was financially difficult to afford studying in a foreign country. I chose China because it is a neighbor country and I could visit my family often, plus studying in China was twice cheaper than in Korea.

[I]: What is your English proficiency level? What was your English level at school? How did you learn the language? Where?

[A]: I am taking English language courses now. Currently my level of English is Intermediate. However, it was even worse at school, because we did not have “normal” English classes. We were just studying grammar – 5 tenses per year, and memorizing texts. I couldn’t speak English neither studying at school nor when got graduated from school.

[I]: What are the main obstacles for students to study abroad and get good quality education? Top 3 reasons as a minimum?

[A]: 1) Money. Weak socio – economic condition in the country is the main obstacle towards internationalization of HE.

2) Lack of English skills of students. My English level was Elementary during the whole school life – for 11 years. Thus, I definitely think that poor English language quality at schools is the second factor stopping students to go study abroad.

3) Fear of parents for the safety of their children abroad. Many parents do not allow their children to study abroad, especially girls.

[I]: To what extent it is important to get higher education in your society/environment/family? What is a role of marriage in your family ?

[A]: Everyone in family has HE degree. It is quite important to get HE in my family.

Marriage is also important. I guess it is two things that coexist in our society.

[I]: Have you been told that you are expected to marry soon? Have you experienced any social pressure from your family, parents, relatives, friends, society/environment?

[A]: Yes, I do not feel strong pressure but they remind me that I am expected to get married and have a family; that career is not the most important thing in the life, that family is much more important.

[I]: What could be done better or differently in HE Kazakh internationalization to make it more successful?

[A]: 1) Funding – if government increases the number of scholarships and programs to study abroad- the situation would improve.

2) The quality of English classes in schools should be improved, so that every student has an equal chance to pass language exam (IELTS, TOEFL) not attending any extra English course classes.

3) Lastly, I think government should create more educational opportunities for the young generation.

3) Timur

Male, 22 years old, Taldyqorgan, 3 children in the family

Background of education: Linguistic gymnasium, Bachelor Degree in Business, Management and Corporate Finances, currently studying in Prague.

[I]: How did you decide to go study abroad?

[T]: I didn't want to study in Kazakhstan because I don't like the educational system there. For example, there is a corruption in many HE institutions. Even if you know the subject – you need to pay money for getting a good grade. I can state that based on my brother's and friend's experience.

[I]: What is your English proficiency level? What was your English level at school?

How did you learn the language? Where?

[T]: I am fluent speaker of English language. English level at school varied depending on teacher – in linguistic school my teachers were proficient enough. Then I changed the school

and studied in private school for economically privileged kids – English was also good there. I had Upper – Intermediate level when graduated from school.

[I]: What are the main obstacles for students to study abroad and get good quality education? Top 3 reasons as a minimum?

[T]:1) Financial issues – some families cannot afford it. Significant currency rate difference of Kazakhstani Tenge to Euro for example, 1 Euro is 470 KZT. It is really challenging for parents to provide for the children's life abroad.

2) Parents are scared to let their children go abroad, maximum they let them go to China, Russia, and Turkey I guess. Because China and Russia are pretty close neighboring countries, and Turkey is a Muslim country thus it might be better for more traditional and religious parents.

3) Students' attitude towards education – they do not value it, no motivation to study and implement the knowledge.

4) Corruption and disrespect towards teachers – the whole system is corrupted. For example, son of the city mayor might not attend university classes and then require a teacher to give him a good grade – A or B to pass the course. He can either try to buy a grade or his father might give a call to the teacher forcing and threatening him to let his son pass, otherwise he could get fired. Corruption and connections destroy the education system.

5) In comparison with other countries – HE institutions are less digitalized, however it is one of the main requirements of the modern time full of innovations.

6) Lack of information abroad international scholarships and opportunities to study abroad.

[I]: To what extent it is important to get higher education in your society/environment/family? What is a role of marriage in your family ?

[T]: It is important to get HE in my environment. The role of marriage is similarly important. I think it might be a barrier for studying abroad. Especially for girls , so as parents are less likely to allow them study abroad. For example, relatives from my Afghan side didn't allow their daughter to study abroad – they had nobody to control and save her from any issues, unsafety and from inappropriate behavior.

[I]: Have you been told that you are expected to marry soon? Have you experienced any social pressure from your family, parents, relatives, friends, society/environment?

[T]: Yes, I feel some pressure from my father's side from Afghanistan. They say that I should marry soon, that family is first. They even found few brides for me – now they wait when I finish my studies and come back home and get married. I think it is our traditional and cultural values.

[I]: What could be done better or differently in HE Kazakh internationalization to make it more successful?

[T]: - Funding;
- Elimination of corruption and clientalism;
- Increase of people's awareness about HE opportunities abroad;
- Increase of value of education among the youth;
- Improvement of English classes at educational institutions since the early years of school.

4) Daniyar

Male, 23 years old, Atyrau, 2 children in the family

Background of education: Kazakh – Turkish lyceum, Bachelor Degree in Mathematics and Physics, currently working in Astana

[I]: Have you ever wanted to study abroad? Have you tried to apply for a foreign university and study abroad? Have you applied at least once?

[D]: Yes, I wanted to study abroad. I applied for few universities and got enrolled but my parents did not let me go study abroad.

[I]: What is your English proficiency level? What was your English level at school? How did you learn the language? Where?

[D]: I studied in English and Turkish languages at school. Thus, I think I am pretty fluent. The faculty staff was very professional, we had great teachers.

[I]: What are the main obstacles for students to study abroad and get good quality education? Top 3 reasons as a minimum?

[D]: 1) Religious and traditional values as it was in my case. Parents think we might lose our cultural and religious values abroad, especially in the Western world.
2) Social inequality – only privileged children have a choice to study or not study abroad, whereas children with poorer economic background are less likely to have a chance to get foreign education.

3) Parents' sense of fear that children might behave inappropriately abroad. For example, they think that their children will start smoking, drinking alcohol and doing many other inappropriate things, which are considered as a poor behavior in our society. I think they avoid this probability of their children "dishonoring" the image of the family.

4) Our cultural values – overvalued role of marriage and undervalued role of education. Girls try to get HE diploma so that they could get more "Qalyn mal" – more money when they get married. For example if a girl graduated from ATU, qalyn mal would be X sum, and if she got graduated from NU – the sum would be 100 times higher, and the girl'd be much more respected in both her family/relatives circle and her groom's family.

[I]: To what extent it is important to get higher education in your society/environment/family? What is a role of marriage in your family ?

[D]: Both education and marriage are very important for my family.

[I]: Have you been told that you are expected to marry soon? Have you experienced any social pressure from your family, parents, relatives, friends, society/environment?

[D]: Yes, I feel pressure from my parents.

[I]: What could be done better or differently in HE Kazakh internationalization to make it more successful?

[D]: - Change of traditional values and beliefs – in Kazakh society it's mostly believed that the main aim of the life for girls is to get married and have a happy family and give birth to children. While, for the guys, it is to stick around their family and provide for the family, take care of the family (parents and siblings) and never leaving parents alone. There is an expression in Kazakh "Kenzhe bala ata – anasy na qarau kerek, birge tury kerek", which means that the youngest boy in the family should stay and live with parents, even if he gets married and has a wife and kids. He and his wife have to take care of the parents and live with them by default. So, obviously the role of marriage and "familyness" is much higher than "education".

-Corruption.

- Education level. In ordinary schools the level of education leaves much to be desired. And it can't compete with the standard international education level. If all schools were as Nazarbayev Intellectual School, RFMSh, KTL, BIL, the overall picture would be different.

So as the graduates of those schools mostly study abroad, which means a good foundation creates more opportunities for students.

-Financial factors – government should make educational scholarships more available.

5) Rami

Female, 24 years old, Pavlodar, 3 children in the family

Background of education: Linguistic lyceum, Bachelor Degree in Economics at Nazarbayev University, Astana; currently doing Master's degree in Estonia.

[I]: How did you decide to go study abroad?

[R]: I never wanted to study abroad when studying at school.

Didn't know that it would be possible. I thought that you have to pay for it and it is expensive. But I thought if I want to study for free, it would be possible only by getting a scholarship to some Kazakhstani university. Secondly, I think due to the lack of information I never thought that it is possible. Lastly, high level of stress and expectation from my family stopped me from applying abroad. I couldn't fail if I applied then. I thought that there are so many other talented students and I might be not good enough. I think high expectation from both family (relatives included) and school faculty (who mostly care about the school rating/ranking) might make students to get mental issues. I felt a huge responsibility to my school, parents, and relatives that was highly stressful and I knew if I do something I couldn't fail. Thus, I decided to stay in Kazakhstan and study at International University rather than applying for a foreign university and get rejected. I would have a sense of guilt and disappointment to everyone. I think it is a significant problem in our society and that is why; teen suicide rates are crazily high in Kazakhstan. That is a problematic behavioral pattern in our society – that parents always compare us with each others' children while we grow up; and at the end of the day, we think that we should be better, we can't fail and embarrass the family, we shouldn't disappoint them and should always match their expectations.

[I]: What is your English proficiency level? What was your English level at school?

How did you learn the language? Where?

[R]: I studied Bachelor and Master's in English, so I'm fluent speaker now. But My English was quite bad when I studied at school. I had to take English classes outside of school curriculum. I attended few language course schools and studied both in groups and individually with native speakers. It was very costly, I have attended courses for 3 years.

[I]: What are the main obstacles for students to study abroad and get good quality education? Top 3 reasons as a minimum?

[R]: 1) Cultural values and beliefs. For example, I wasn't allowed to go study Bachelor abroad when I was 18, because I am a girl, female. My family didn't allow me to go abroad at the early age (18), but allowed me to go study Master's Degree when I was 23. They didn't trust me or had a fear that it will be unsafe, probably. However, when my older brother left to study in China – there was no obstacle cause he was a guy. They let him go study right after school, when he was 17-18 years old. Thus, I think it is more cultural value.

2) Financial reason. Learning a language, applying for Visa, studying and living abroad, especially in the Western part of the world is costly, especially taking into account constantly increasing currency rate.

3) Lack of information, lack of support and lack of opportunities from the government.

[I]: To what extent it is important to get higher education in your society/environment/family? What is a role of marriage in your family ?

[R]: Education was always prioritized, however marriage was a co – factor to education. My family kept telling me that I have to be educated and meet similarly educated person after. However, I see many people in our society, who think that women are born for reproduction and being wife and mother. I think it comes from religious and traditional beliefs. Even when I read Aitmatov's book called "Aq Keme"[White boat], I realized that our society was accepting many behavioral patterns as normal, but they are not. For example, he tells the story how a man has constantly beating, shaming, and blaming her because she could not give a birth. After processing it I realized that we have lots of cultural cliché that restrict people's choice and independence. And actually, education is independence, and I think it's all correlated with each other.

[I]: Have you been told that you are expected to marry soon? Have you experienced any social pressure from your family, parents, relatives, friends, society/environment?

[R]: I have some family pressure, relatives' pressure; now after gaining Master's Degree I am expected to go back home and get married. Also, I noticed that parents want their children marry within nation – I would say 8 out 10 people would want their children to get married the same nation, which is Kazakh.

"Kazakhs should marry kazakhs" idea is prevailing in our society. I think people generally pay too much attention on marriage. If they marry foreigner – it's bad – the idea of keeping

blood clean and unmixed. May be it is connected to the great famine years during USSR – Kazakhs lost the half of its population – may be that is why it is so important to continue the generations increase – some historical consequences

[I]: What could be done better or differently in HE Kazakh internationalization to make it more successful?

[R]:

- Subsidies from the government – financial support from the government
- Changes on the governmental level – eliminate corruption - for the beginning.
- More opportunities and programs should be created for women. To literate women and agitate women to study and work, to arise their motivation and aspirations. To support women to study abroad, get financial independence, to allow work at the same perspective jobs places as men do.

6) Zhaniya

Female, 23 years old, Shymkent, 4 children in the family

Background of education: Phys/math lyceum in Shymkent, studying Bachelor Degree in Vienna, Austria

[I]: How did you decide to go study abroad?

Didn't consider studying abroad in the beginning, because: firstly, my parents didn't want to let me go far (to the West); secondly, traditional beliefs – that I'm a girl- I have to stay home, fear they couldn't control me, fear that I would drink alcohol, smoke, do drugs, meet a bad company, could get pregnant. They even tried to convince me – they offered me a new car if I stay in Kazakhstan. Then, my father's friends told them they could help me and take care of me, and my father agreed to let me go study abroad.

[I]: What is your English proficiency level? What was your English level at school?

How did you learn the language? Where?

[Z]: Level of English was advanced after graduating from school. I learned English in extra curriculum classes outside of school. I took individual classes and studied in groups – from 5 to 11 grades, 6 years in total. It was costly.

[I]: What are the main obstacles for students to study abroad and get good quality education? Top 3 reasons as a minimum?

- 1) Financial conditions
- 2) Overprotective parents
- 3) English improficiency
- 4) Fear of – social pressure – parents compare with other children – fear you can't compete and succeed. Parents are scared of allowing children to let go; parents imbed some inconfidence into children.
- 5) Lack of information.
- 6) Traditional values and beliefs – children should stay closer to the family.

[I]: To what extent it is important to get higher education in your society/environment/family? What is a role of marriage in your family ?

[Z]: Education first, marriage second. I'm 23 already – I am expected to get married before 25.

[I]: Have you been told that you are expected to marry soon? Have you experienced any social pressure from your family, parents, relatives, friends, society/environment?

[Z]: Yes, I have a pressure. My family keeps reminding me that I should get married soon. "If you meet someone, you should choose marriage, you can quit education, and your career will wait," they say. I know many girls from my school, region and city in Southern Kazakhstan, who think that marriage is more important than education. I think it's traditional South values.

[I]: What could be done better or differently in HE Kazakh internationalization to make it more successful?

[Z]:

- Financial support
- Increase people's awareness about Internationalization
- VISA and documents issues – uneasy to get – may be some support should be done from the government to encourage the process of internationalization
- Improve English language classes at schools, so that children will have same opportunity to apply for foreign universities as privileged students do.
- Try to decrease the level of "traditionality"

7) Mariyam

Female, 23 years old, Turkistan, 1 child in the family

Background of education: Studied at private school, currently studying in Prague, Czech Republic

[I]: How did you decide to go study abroad?

My mother wanted me to study abroad, because she visited Finland – and wanted me to study abroad and get a high – quality education.

[I]: What is your English proficiency level? What was your English level at school? How did you learn the language? Where?

[M]: I think upper – Intermediate. English was good at private school; however teachers had bachelor degree only. I didn't attend any English courses.

[I]: What are the main obstacles for students to study abroad and get good quality education? Top 3 reasons as a minimum?

[M]: 1) Fear that something will happen – and you can't help out, parents' overprotectiveness. They are afraid of letting them study abroad
2) Financial opportunities
3) Conservative view – some parents don't want their children study and live abroad.
Fear of western culture – “early development” – sex, drugs, alcohol.

[I]: To what extent it is important to get higher education in your society/environment/family? What is a role of marriage in your family ?

[M]: Education is more important – yes

[I]: Have you been told that you are expected to marry soon? Have you experienced any social pressure from your family, parents, relatives, friends, society/environment?

[M]: My father has conservative traditional views. He wanted me to get married and stay in Kz, saying that marriage and family is more important than education. He was comparing me to some of my sisters. The fact that they are married successfully is much more important for him than my education, for example.

So yes, I get some social pressure that I have to get married before 25.

Education is important to get self – confidence and financial independence.

I know girls refused from the studies abroad because of the marriage – under the family pressure at the age of 21-22.

[I]: What could be done better or differently in HE Kazakh internationalization to make it more successful?

[M]: - Corruption and clientalism stop the whole process of development;
- Social education – promotion of value of education and women’s role in society (science, businesses, academy)
- Increase the awareness of people about foreign education and try to present more democratic views to traditional families, demonstrate a healthy, real and positive image of the Western world.

8) Nazerke

Female, 25 years old, Qyzylorda, 2 children in the family

Background of education: Linguistic gymnasium, graduated from National University in Kazakhstan

[I]: Have you ever wanted to study abroad? Have you tried to apply for a foreign university and study abroad? Have you applied at least once?

[N]: Yes, I wanted to study abroad. I even went to China as an exchange student when I was freshman. Then I went to London for 2 month by exchange program as well. I liked it so much that I can say I definitely wanted to study abroad. Then I got married and stayed in Kazakhstan. Now I have 2 children and temporarily cannot move anywhere.

[I]: What is your English proficiency level? What was your English level at school? How did you learn the language? Where?

[N]: I studied English because we were traveling w my family and I saw the world, wanted to communicate easily with people – I had a motivation.

English classes were well – taught at school since it was linguistic school. My level was intermediate.

[I]: What are the main obstacles for students to study abroad and get good quality education? Top 3 reasons as a minimum?

[N]: 1) Family pressure. Parents mostly do not support their daughters' decision to study abroad. They have some "block" reaction or they have some fear and believe that their daughter should be under the control until she gets married. Similarly, guys undergo a huge pressure from their family, and society in general. They are expected to take care of the family, to work, earn money and feed the whole family. They are mostly considered as financial supporters, bread – winners, who are expected to provide for the family. Thus, they don't even dream and set goals to study abroad in most traditional families. That is why; they mostly stay home, closer to parents.

I think in more traditional families guys don't think that education is important or they don't see the opportunities, don't want to get good education. They work, support family, and value work more than education.

2) Financial reasons

3) Lack of motivation, consciousness about importance of education.

[I]: To what extent it is important to get higher education in your society/environment/family? What is a role of marriage in your family ?

[N]: Both education and marriage are important. I would say one couldn't exist without another one.

[I]: Have you been told that you are expected to marry soon? Have you experienced any social pressure from your family, parents, relatives, friends, society/environment?

[N]: I got married at the age of 21, now I'm 25 and have two kids. 21 is normal age in our society to get marry, isn't it? My parents supported me.

[I]: What could be done better or differently in HE Kazakh internationalization to make it more successful?

[N]: 1) Complete changes should be done on the governmental level. Scientists and researchers are fully into the process in HE institutions abroad. Instructors and professors are very well – qualified, real professionals. I saw it when studied in China and London. They always fly to various countries and attend conferences and constantly share their experience and new knowledge with each other; and it is continuous process. They are constantly upgrading their knowledge and skills. Thus, I think teachers, researchers' and scientists' dedication and work should be appreciated and valued appropriately enough. Government should create advantageous and favorable conditions for the academic faculty

in Kazakhstan. Budgeting on education should be increased. More investors should be attracted, so that, researchers could work with students and contribute to the new findings and explorations.

2) Financial support should be provided for students, so that they have some opportunities to participate in internationalization process.

3) Mentality or cultural values should be slightly democraticized/ liberalized. Many parents stop their children themselves; stop their educational and international development in exchange to marriage, family, and kids.

9) Assel

Female, 25 years old, Oskemen, 3 children in the family

Background of education: NIS, Bachelor Degree in Biological Sciences, Master's Degree in Public Health at NU, Astana, Kazakhstan

[I]: Have you ever wanted to study abroad? Have you tried to apply for a foreign university and study abroad? Have you applied at least once?

[A]: Yes I wanted, but I didn't know that it was possible to win the scholarship. I think there was a lack of information. That is how I stayed in Kazakhstan. Then, I applied for Master's programs abroad and won scholarship to Hungarian University, but I didn't like the town. I would like to study in Korea, but there was no sponsorship for my year of application, but they contacted and invited me to study a following year. But I was about to get married soon and thus, I decided to continue studying at NU (Kazakhstan). I liked the program; everything was familiar and easy for me to enroll to the studies.

[I]: What is your English proficiency level? What was your English level at school? How did you learn the language? Where?

[A]: My English was good enough, because it was International School and we had classes in English.

[I]: What are the main obstacles for students to study abroad and get good quality education? Top 3 reasons as a minimum?

[A]: 1) Corruption;

2) Financially difficult to afford it for many families

3) Lack of information

[I]: To what extent it is important to get higher education in your society/environment/family? What is a role of marriage in your family ?

[A]: Both education and marriage are important. So as my mother is originally from the Southern Kazakhstan, she has strong traditional values regarding marriage. She believes it is the most important thing in the life, especially for women.

[I]: Have you been told that you are expected to marry soon? Have you experienced any social pressure from your family, parents, relatives, friends, society/environment?

[A]: Yes, I have been told and reminded that I should marry at the end of the day before I got married. For example, when I said that I could go study Master's Degree abroad, work and live there for some time, my mother seriously worried that it could be late to get married then.

[I]: What could be done better or differently in HE Kazakh internationalization to make it more successful?

[A]: 1) Students should have interest, first of all. They could get aspirations at school, for example, which mean a significant change in educational system of our country should be preceded.

2) It should get publicity; the idea of HE Internationalization should get a public eye.

3) More programs and opportunities should be created for the youth who is willing to study abroad.

10) Alikhan

Male, 25 years old, Almaty, 2 children in the family

Background of education: Public school in Almaty, Bachelor Degree in Engineering, currently studying in Malaysia.

[I]: How did you decide to go study abroad?

[A]: My parents wanted me to get a high quality education, and they believed that I could get it abroad only. Actually, I wanted to study in the Western part of the world, because they have quite good education there, but my parents thought that I could lose my cultural, traditional and religious values in the western society. They had some fear. Moreover, there are mostly churches in many Western countries and no mosques. That was another decisive aspect considered as a minus and thus they sent me to Malaysia. I am studying at Malaysian

– British University, with high – quality faculty and Western education. At the same time, Malay society is a quite religious and traditional, and I think that my parents wanted exactly this type of environment for me abroad.

[I]: What is your English proficiency level? What was your English level at school? How did you learn the language? Where?

[A]: I speak English fluently now. However, I can't say that English classes were satisfactory or so at school. I had to take extra courses outside of school curriculum and learn English by myself.

[I]: What are the main obstacles for students to study abroad and get good quality education? Top 3 reasons as a minimum?

[A]: 1) Financially unaffordable;
2) Parents' overprotectiveness;
3) Lack of English language skills.

[I]: To what extent it is important to get higher education in your society/environment/family? What is a role of marriage in your family ?

[A]: The role of marriage and having a family is very important. Education is important because it allows you to get a good job and earn money, so that you can provide for your family.

[I]: Have you been told that you are expected to marry soon? Have you experienced any social pressure from your family, parents, relatives, friends, society/environment?

[A]: My mother had some concerns about my private life when I was 23. She was scared that I won't marry anyone and will stay alone, which is unacceptable for her. I also hesitated a little thinking if I should stay and continue my studies abroad or should I return home. I feel some social pressure from my family and friends.

[I]: What could be done better or differently in HE Kazakh internationalization to make it more successful?

[A]: 1) Budgeting;
2) More programs and opportunities for young people;

- 3) Raise the awareness of people about benefits of Internationalization of HE and support the youth to take risks and go study abroad even if they are scared.
- 4) Increase the value of education, especially in traditional society.

11) Nursultan

Male, 25 years old, Almaty, 3 children in the family

Background of education: Physics/math lyceum in Almaty, Bachelor Degree in Engineering, 12 years of study in Malaysia, 2 years in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

[I]: How did you decide to go study abroad?

[N]: I read, learnt about the program and took the opportunity to go abroad and study there. If I didn't see/hear about the program, probably I would not go anywhere abroad to study. We chose Malaysia because it is a religious country. My family was scared of letting me go to the West, because they thought that I will gain Western culture – drinking alcohol, gay propaganda, that their children will become gays, alcoholics, cause they are unformed yet. Fear of refugees, danger connected to refugees. Terrorist attacks

[I]: What is your English proficiency level? What was your English level at school?

How did you learn the language? Where?

[N]: Upper – Intermediate. English was weak at school, approximately 90 minutes per week for 25 students in a classroom. I had individual English classes and that is how I learned English.

[I]: What are the main obstacles for students to study abroad and get good quality education? Top 3 reasons as a minimum?

- [N]: 1) Material reasons;
- 2) Lack of information about HE programs and scholarships;
 - 3) Corrupted system – truly talented students cannot get scholarship, whereas children of rich families or families with connections get HE at the best universities of the developed world.

[I]: To what extent it is important to get higher education in your society/environment/family? What is a role of marriage in your family ?

[N]: Two things complement each other. Both are identically important.

[I]: Have you been told that you are expected to marry soon? Have you experienced any social pressure from your family, parents, relatives, friends, society/environment?

[N]: I think there is a constant pressure from the family and society in general in our culture. My family wanted me to marry as soon as possible. All of my friends got married. Thus, I can say I experienced some sort of pressure. After studying in Malaysia for 2 years, my family called me back to Kazakhstan. Firstly, because my mom got sick I and I wanted to take care of my mom; secondly, my family was scared that I would marry some other girl of different nationality. Then I returned back, took care of my mother. Also, I married a Kazakh girl when I was 23.

[I]: What could be done better or differently in HE Kazakh internationalization to make it more successful?

- [N]:
- Governmental change of educational system;
 - Financial support from the government
 - More and higher quality of language classes at school
 - Raising awareness of people about HE Internationalization

Sociological survey

Total number of respondents: 35

35 responses from the survey were examined within the [statistics by IBM data process]

For this particular survey I have used IBM statistics method.

I have used nominal and cardinal (scale) variables so that I could range, sort and compare.

Nominal variable is a gender, which has two values: Male and Female.

Male = 1

Female = 2.

Cardinal variable is age, which has various values that can be sorted and compared.

Descriptive statistics method was used.

Missing value = 0

Mean value of the gender variable is equal to 1.55, which means that female is an average gender, which participated in this particular survey more than males.

Missing value = 0

Mean value of age cardinal variable is 23.94, which means that average age of 35 respondents is 24.

In this particular survey respondents were asked to answer with 1 if they have never felt any social pressure regarding education and marriage/ never met any high expectation leading to the mental issues; and answer with 10 if they have experienced above – mentioned things in their lives.

Questions:

Have you ever been told by your family, friends, relatives and any other people from your environment about the importance of getting married with some age limit (before 23-25 for females and 23-27 for males for example)?

Have you experienced any pressure/high expectation from your parents, family, relatives or friends regarding education goals / high expectation/ UNT?

Have you at least once experienced a social pressure or been told that you have to get married and it is more prioritized than getting higher education?

Result:

The mean value for the “pressure/expectation” dataset is 7,03, which implies that respondents have mostly felt both social pressure and high expectations from the family/relatives/school. The mode and median were also 7, which means that social pressure and high expectations are central tendency that mahority of respondents faced so far. Skewness is normal, even though results are a little kurtic. The median and mode indicators are the same for both gender groups: male and female.

The most common answer for open-ended questions, were following:

What did you learn from your family, friends, and society – what is more important in this life: being married and having a family or getting high quality education first and succeed in your career?

-Education first, marriage second, but they can complement each other.

Why do you need an education?

- To get a well – paid job and provide for the family and needs.

What is the value of education in Kazakhstani society in your opinion? Rate from 1 to 10 points.

After calculation the average was ~ 3.75 points.

Findings

Results from the interviews and survey

- ✓ Socio – cultural, religious and traditional beliefs that staying home country is safer in terms of cultural values, security, and religion. Strong traditional values - people seem to be conservative with strong traditional values and beliefs. Girls are mostly not allowed to go study abroad because it is believed to be not safe for her, her reputation and cultural values. Thus, making them get married first is considered as safer decision – traditional values and beliefs. Boys are not let to go far abroad due to the cultural value and traditional belief of responsibility. They are expected to work and provide for the family with everything, and to take care of parents, not to leave them far away, especially abroad – mission/ duty for them.
- ✓ Overprotectiveness of parents; fear of parents for the safety of their children abroad. Many parents do not allow their children to study abroad, especially girls.
- ✓ High expectations for students; high educational standards are set by parents; related could be related to the high youth suicide rate. Parents compare children with other children – fear they can't compete and succeed. Parents are scared of allowing children to let go; parents imbed some inconfidence into children.
- ✓ Overvalued role of marriage and undervalued role of education. Importance of marital status in the society and decrease of HE value among the youth; correlated to the cultural values and post – communist decrease in belief of existence of social lift (destroyed by clientalism and corruption).
- ✓ Low level of diploma value.
- ✓ Insufficient English language quality classes at school.
- ✓ Difference in educational system between Kazakhstani national universities and foreign ones; fear to apply.
- ✓ Lack of funding from the government.
- ✓ Financial burden – living expenses abroad are higher, insurance, VISA expenses;
- ✓ Lack of interest for getting HE abroad, studying in foreign university.

- ✓ Poorly digitalized HE institutions, which might cease the process of development, especially today at the era of remote regime.
- ✓ Lack of information about international scholarships and opportunities to study abroad. Low level of people's awareness about HE opportunities abroad;
- ✓ Social inequality – only privileged children have a choice to study or not study abroad, whereas children with poorer economic background are less likely to have a chance to get foreign education.

Frequent phrases from the survey responses

“UNT isn't the most important thing in this life, lucky marriage is much more important”- one respondent's mother said.

“You won't go anywhere abroad, you will better stay in Kazakhstanz under family's control. Marry first, then do whatever you want” – parents said.

“Choose any university you want, but in Kazakhstan, you're not allowed to go abroad. Girls lose their cultural moral values, they hav bad lifestyle, drink, smoke in the West. Boys forget about their families, and might marry some foreigner and leave us”.

“We will pay for any university you want to study at, we will buy you a car you want, but with one condition – that you will stay in Kazakhstan and will not go live abroad. Your cultural and religious values might disappear there under the persistent propaganda of things that clash with our culture and traditions”

Findings from the secondary research

ENU database results

In compliance with the Eurasian National University research database, following factors were recognized as the ones ceasing international academic mobility development in Kazakhstan:

- 1) Signed bilateral agreements or memorandums;
- 2) Inconsistency and inflexibility of nationally asserted curricula and programs, which do cease the process of international integration;
- 3) Lack of foreign language proficiency to meet the international standards.

Additionally, Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education conducted a research based about Internationalization of HE in Kazakhstan, which was funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. After considering major aspects in HE Internationalization, they highlighted following factors:

- Lack of public budgeting;
- Lower quality of education;
- Lower level of students and faculty mobility;
- Centralized system and lack of autonomy imposed by the government;
- Unequal allocation of quality teachers
- and the language gap

as the main factors terminating process of HE Internationalization in Kazakhstan.

Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education research results on the HE Internationalization process in Kazakhstan funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan

The below – mentioned research project was conducted by the researchers from Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

So as Kazakhstan a young country, which is only 30 years it is quite difficult to sum its educational policies up so far. After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Kazakhstan implemented new policies and reforms from the scratch. Moreover, those reforms had been updated in the last two decades, thus it is hard to state any results and findings concretely at

the moment (Ashirbekov and Li, 2014). Similarly, it is unclear how to assess and measure the degree and success of Kazakhstan's internationalization process yet. That is why, strong and solid answers could be provided only with the help of statistics done by both internal and external actors.

According to the Strategy for Academic Mobility in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2012 – 2020, the government set up a new target of student and faculty mobility increase up to 20% by 2020 (Ashirbekov and Li, 2014). The internationalization process was stated to be financially supported by the Academic Mobility Scholarships of the Republic of Kazakhstan. At the beginning of the academic mobility policy implementation, the government funding had been used improperly: students were sent abroad just for sightseeing/campus visits or language courses just to fulfill the government mission. Students mobility increased, but they had neither got any actual knowledge nor academic experience abroad. After such a misuse of scholarships, the Center for International Programs has been established in order to monitor the mobility process and control the quality. According to the survey carried among respondents from the Center for International Programs, the internationalization process went smoothly and successfully with some foreign institutions and faculty members; but failed with the other ones due to the lack of long – term strategy or undeveloped road map. Thus, the impact of internationalization strategy remains unclear (Ashirbekov and Li, 2014).

As the research shows, one of the most important factors ceasing academic internationalization in Kazakhstan is the centralization of the educational process. As stated in the interviews with university deans, centralized funds, centralized time frames and centralized goals are the main constraints and barriers to fully develop internationalization process. Centralization reforms are set up by the government and thus there is a lack of authority, which makes it difficult to cooperate/communicate with the higher authorities, such as ministry bodies to implement international projects and researches (Ashirbekov and Li, 2014).

The second largest issue internationalization of Kazakhstani education faces is a deficit of quality instructors. Higher education institutions are lack of qualified professionals, who cannot meet the basic requirements and skills for running international cooperation and international office in general. The research found out that some of the current international

office representatives in higher education institutions are unable to maintain basic conversation in English and are incapable of writing formal letters and e – mails in English. Obviously, they need more language and qualification trainings in order to run international projects. However, there are highly qualified professionals in the Republic but they are accumulated unproportionally across the country. Higher quality professionals tend to move to big cities such as capital city Nur – Sultan (Astana) and financial capital – metropolitan Almaty. Thus regional institutions have comparatively poor staff in terms of internationalization (Ashirbekov and Li, 2014).

Moreover, the research indicates the fact that although university deans showed their willingness to cooperate with more American and European institutions, in reality they keep having a large amount of partnerships with Russia, other post USSR countries and China. The respondents of this particular study claimed that recruitment of the students from neighbouring countries should be more prioritized for the internationalization rather than putting emphasis on the European countries.

A poor proficiency in English language was found as another significant obstacle to fully develop internationalization process in Kazakhstan. The respondents of the interviews stated that low level of English knowledge cut the opportunity of students and faculty mobility abroad, as well as international cooperations and research collaborations. Considering internal situation – faculty's and students' poor proficiency in English doesn't allow higher education institutions to embed courses in a foreign language. Consequently, it decreases the probability of attracting students from foreign countries. So, lack of English language knowledge has negative impact on both external and internal process of internationalization. The respondents of the research state that knowing the language could be a significant step towards new international partnerships and academic collaboration with the foreign institutions. For the moment, university deans claimed that the higher education institutions are making steps towards foreign language proficiency improvement.

The Kazakhstani government set a clear goal to fully develop internationalization process both internally and externally but major issues in Kazakhstani educational system do not allow to reach those goals. There is a huge gap in between government bodies and higher education institutions leaders in terms of miscommunication, centralized system and lack of autonomy; another significant gap in between metropolitan city university system and

faculty and regional ones; serious gap in English proficiency between few top universities and regular ones, etc.

The Kazakhstani government supports internationalization process both financially and politically, implementing new reforms and policies. But, clearly, the lack of autonomy and open dialogue between government and the institution leaders cease the internationalization process, making it more complicated (Ashirbekov and Li, 2014).

Sociological survey and interview responses of 126 students and lecturers from Zhezkazgan University and Zhetysu State University

According to the sociological survey and interview responses of 126 students and lecturers from Zhezkazgan University (Central Kazakhstan) and Zhetysu State University (Taldykorgan, Southern – Eastern Kazakhstan), 84% of respondents stated that education quality and research level should be improved up to the international standard as the basic principle of internationalization process. 73% of respondents pointed out that educational documents and qualifications must be upgraded in order to reach internationalization process on a global arena. 56% of people claimed that lack of access to the international education system ceases the process of internationalization, whereas 31% voted for an internationalization of knowledge (teaching). Meanwhile, 14% of respondents think that diverse development of personality (open – mindedness) could be the basis for the internationalization process in Kazakhstan; whereas only 7% answered that higher education accessibility for foreign students in Kazakhstan could develop the internationalization process (Maudarbekova, et al., 2014). According to the respondents of Zhezkazgan University and Zhetysu State University, top 3 mostly contributing factors to the internationalization of higher education in the Republic of Kazakhstan are 1) development of international research programs/projects; 2) efforts to comply with international standards; and 3) exchange programs both for staff and students. Also, respondents named 3 main obstacles to the internationalization process at the university level, such as 1) lack of funding (97%); 2) lack of knowledge of English/German (82%); and 3) significant difference between local university curriculum and international one (78%) (Maudarbekova, et al., 2014). Only 32% of faculty stated they speak foreign language other than Russian, which also could be a consequence of the Soviet Union politics, which discouraged students from learning any foreign language, simply by dismissing it in the higher educational

institutions' curriculum. However, all students, whose first language was Kazakh were forced to learn Russian as mandatory foreign language course.

Theoretical background

Internationalization

Internationalization of education is an interrelationship of different countries that pursue integrated international aim of providing quality higher education by creating/international associations and organizations (Bekbauova, et al., 2017).

Internationalization of education is the long – lasting process, which consists of different international factors in teaching, administrative sector of educational institutions and organizations, and in a research (Maudarbekova, et al., 2014).

List of sectors internationalization includes following (objects):

- Students: students studying abroad, recruitment of foreign students to Kazakhstan, and exchange programs (moving abroad per academic semester or academic year);
- Staff/faculty: collaborated research programs, staff exchange, trainings and qualification (upgrade) courses in foreign educational institutions, summer courses and summer semesters abroad.
- Official recognition documents: certificates, double diplomas, transfer of credits, international recognition of the educational institution and assessment of the quality of the educational institution;
- International cooperation: administration, consulting, human resources and material resources exchange programs, and infrastructural cooperation (Maudarbekova, et al., 2014).

Knight defines *internationalization* at the institutional level as a whole process of international, intercultural and global integration with a functional goal to deliver postsecondary education (2005). In today's world international education might be described by related terms, such as *transnational education*, *borderless education*, and *cross – border education*. The first term was *borderless education* and it first emerged and was used in the UK and Australian reports in 2000. The term was used to define new format of education that was blurring the concepts and frames of geographic borders and traditional higher education discipline. The second appeared term was *cross – border education*, which was indicating on

the existence of the geographical borders, distance, and study destination. As time passed, the term and process of internationalization kept evolving. At this stage, term *international*, *intercultural*, and *global dimension* are the 3 main inseparable concepts of internationalization, which function as one entire unit. The term international refers to a relationship that countries, states, nations and cultures have among each other. Meanwhile, term intercultural refers namely to a cultural diversity existing in those states, nations, communities and institutions. Eventually, global dimension is related to the worldwide scope. To sum up, these three terms are inseparable and together they make concept of internationalization complete and profound (Knight, 2005).

According to Knight, a higher education institution or postsecondary education system should have three main attributes, such as *purpose*, *function*, and *delivery* (2005). Purpose is used in the sense of objectives and aims higher education has for a state and institutions within the state. Term function is used to address tasks and actions higher education system and individual institutions are expected to do: for instance, teaching, managing, doing research, and sharing knowledge and experience. Lastly, diversity is about offering variety of educational curriculum and programs, researches and service function within and out of a state.

Internationalization of Higher Education has an impact on institutions, education system, individuals and national economy development as well. Moreover, it takes crucial role in income generation, geopolitics, migration (rate), and dynamics of different forms social identity. Moreover, internationalization of HE usually comes along with a tourism of that particular country. Students, their visiting parents, friends and relatives have a significant contribution to the state economy. Also, due to the internationalization and tourism, a level of understanding other cultures and tolerance increases, which can be considered as a benefit. Obviously, funding is a basic material requirement for the internationalization, which follows “no funding – no internationalization” principle.

- Turkey was funding into Central Asia, particularly to Kazakhstan – internationalization motivation is – strengthening inter – cultural learning (sharing same Turkic roots), geopolitical, and religious patterns.
- State university scholarships and study abroad scholarships – both are the good investment to human capital at a national level (Curaj et al, 2015).

Along with internationalization advantages, there are possible disadvantages as well. If students massively leave for the more developed countries with better higher education institutions, it might have long – term negative consequences on a home country, such as socio - economic recessions and brain drain. Scientists and experts might leave for foreign countries to do researches and invent something, and it could bring quite positive result for the foreign country in terms of innovations. However it might be negative for the original country of those scientists so as it might lose successful professionals within a country. Moreover, brain power makes the country technologically and scientifically developed and powerful; whereas brain drain makes it weaker and lagging behind.

Another important point to mention out is that internationalization always intersects with academic entrepreneurship. And it is very important and crucial to regulate it – to make a stress on the educational development instead of increasing revenue production (Qiang, 2003)

Knight and the Wit's rationales

According to Knight and the Wit, there are 4 main rationales in internationalization policy, as following:

- Political rationale – national security and stability
- Economic rationale – direct correlation of crossing borders and market profit? Direct output. Based on market competition for attraction more fore students; increasing salary to teachers?
- Educational/academic rationale – reaching international standards of quality education, teaching and research. Competition and market oriented approach – in order to get long – term benefit.
- Cultural/social rational – homogenization and mutual respect of cultures, traditions, language. Emphasis on understanding of foreign culture, traditions, social values, and respecting diversity (2004) .

As Knight describes, internationalization is an integration process of both international and intercultural dimensions carried through teaching, research, and institutional service functions (Knight, 1994).

The term internationalization is not constant – as the worlds develops, globalization level increases, internationalization strengthens – the definition changes, too. *Thus, Knight*

claimed that internationalization needs constant revision due to change of rationales, providers, stakeholders, and internationalization activities. (Knight, 2004)

Globalization

Jane Knight states claims that globalization has dynamic relationship with internationalization of education and these two terms only complement each other (2005). So, *globalization* is a stream of ideas, knowledge, education, technology, economy, beliefs, values, and people in a large amount across the borders. Globalization, as a flow of new ideas, values and people might bring different effects on a country and its nation based on its own history, traditions, culture and beliefs. Globalization could be used to address multifaceted phenomenon and unavoidable factor of the XXI century that has various impacts on education and other sectors of the process. Globalization might create new opportunities, but at the same time it might cause new challenges and risks for the particular community. Anyway, globalization and internationalization are complementary attributes that cannot exist separately. To conclude up, internationalization changes and influences the world of education, whereas globalization affects the world of internationalization (Knight, 2005).

Considering globalization in educational context, it is an interchange of social, cultural, traditional beliefs and values, economic advantages and political views, which might contribute to the raise of academic standards, experience and development. The similarity of globalization and internationalization is that both operate similarly when related to the education.

Globalization is used to address borderlessness – free movement and stretching process, which might be connecting various social contexts and regions, creating a network across the whole world geographically. Globalization could also be related to the large capitalist economic integration as a result of a global interconnectivity. It creates cultural mix, arises awareness of other traditions, religions and cultural hybridity as a result of global interconnectedness (Roudometof, 2009). Globalization also has some disadvantages for the countries, especially if they are less competitive in this globalized era. Global competition in politics, economy, and education might be successful and beneficial for one country, but destructive for the other ones. Terrorist attacks, such as 9/11 considered as another disappointment of globalists. Unilateral invasions and occupations of some territories are

could also be states as flaws of globalization, which erases the borders and limits to cross the territory. Thus, global social integration might be advantageous from the one hand, but harmful from the other (Roudometof, 2009).

Globalization theory brings an idea of limitless society, where social norms are blurred due to the mix of social values. Globalization grows mobility across borders, contributing to the exchange flow of goods, information, knowledge, people and communication services. Generally, the globalized “flow” might be favorable, unless it includes extremely large amount of illegal migration and insecurity. After the 9/11 and other related events and fuel crisis, the globalization theory was frozen for a moment and “immobility regime” was established in some regions in order to immobilize undesirable migrants (Bude and Durrschmidt, 2011). Relatedly, today’s pandemics caused by COVID – 19 froze the world’s geographical mobility. As a result, major part of the world cannot travel, employers switched to remote work regime, and most educational institutions switched to online regime. As infinite flow of people, commodities and service stopped countries began facing economic and socio – political crisis. Similarly, flow of students studying by exchange programs and those, who were going to study abroad stopped for a while. Some HE institutions reject the applications and postponing to the next year. This looks paradoxical in the midst of the age of globalization and borderless world. Correspondingly, the idea of deterritorialization nowadays is reaching hotspot and the new level of the globalization theory.

Historical Institutionalism/ Path dependency

Historical institutionalism is used to address historically established number of institutional constraints and rules shaped by particular political agents, actors and interest groups' actions and decisions during policy – making process (Beland, 2005). Historical institutionalism refers to an unequal, non – symmetrical type of power and relations that have significant influence and consequences as a result of long – term institutional legacies concerning both political and economic interests (Beland, 2005). As Beland states, the political life of many states were shaped by a historically framed set of “rules and values”. Mostly autonomus political actors (governments and political parties) had their own socio – economic and political interests and strategies; and their own way of reaching their goal. According to Pierson and Skocpol, path dependency theory is used to explain why it is almost never

impossible or extremely difficult to go backwards the path once political actors set it forth and followed it (2002).

Path dependency approach explains critical points in particular time period in the past and its consequences as well as developmental pathways of the institutional formation in socio – political development. This particular approach consists of two similar but analytically different claims. The first claim is used to address key founding moments and elements that contributed to the institutional formation of a country; and it explains why one particular country followed one developmental path and another country followed a different path. Meanwhile, the second approach implies that institutions keep developing in dependence on the constrained past trajectories, consequent socio – economic conditions and majorly on political maneuvers performed by the political actors of a more powerful institutions (Thelen, 1999).

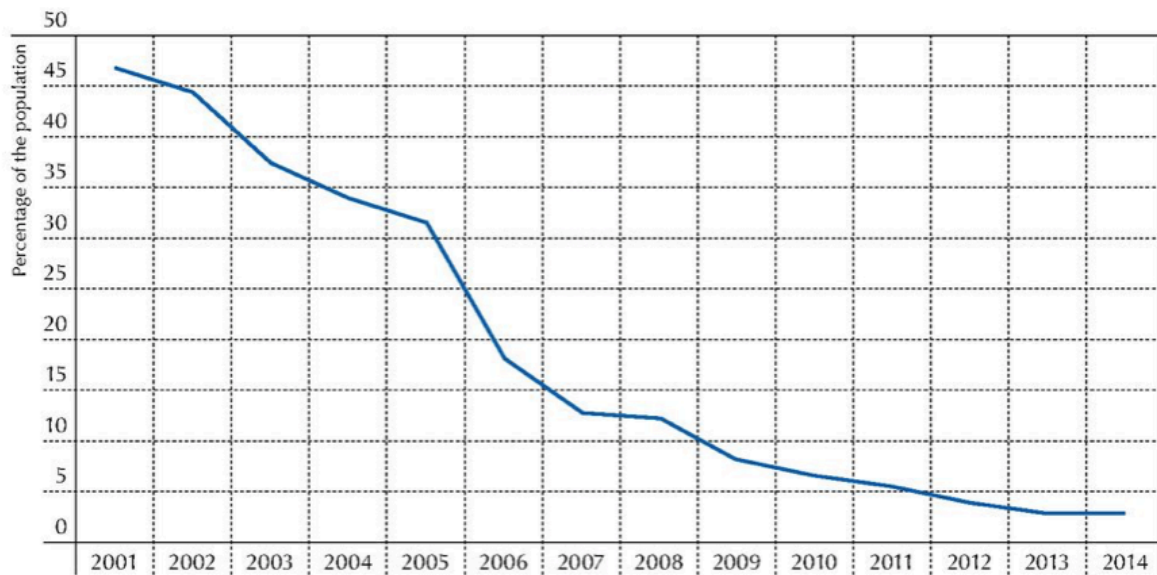
Discussion

This particular section will discuss major explicit and implicit factors impacting the international outbound mobility of Kazakh HE students. Moreover, this part of the thesis will try to answer below – mentioned research questions based on the national reports, secondary literature review, empirical data analysis and results received from the interview and survey respondents.

- Why does majority of students studying abroad choose neighbouring countries?
- To what extent is the level of English language command low in Kazakhstani schools?
- What are the main factors of relatively low level of outbound mobility of Kazakhstani students in the current era of globalization?
- What are the additional/hidden factors of relatively low level of outbound mobility of Kazakhstani students in the current era of globalization?

Educational inequality in Kazakhstan

Figure 2. Percentage of the population below national minimum living standard (2001-2014)



Source: Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Committee on Statistics (MNERK,2014)

According to the MNERK statistics demonstrated by the chart above, Kazakhstan improved the internal economic situation and the percentage of the population below national minimum living standard decreased. The economic situation is believed to be improved and people have better socio – economic lives in general. However, the overall trend for internationalization of HE students from Kazakhstan is still insignificant and according to interviews, flack of funding is recognized as one of the major issues for Kazakstan’s internationalization process of education.

However, the results of interview and surveys show that lack of financial opportunity and funding is one of the major factors ceasing the internationalization process of students from Kazakhstan. Only financially and socially privileged students can afford international education, especially abroad. Families with weaker financial background and weaker school knowledge are more likely to be automatically disintegrated from the international academic community. That is the a vast social problem in Kazakhstan - talented children are clearly exposed to lose opportunity of academic development and have less chance to become unique specialists if they have weaker economic background. Schoolchildren with lower quality of English language and teaching staff are automatically marginalized and socially excluded from a privileged group of children, who have more opportunities to study abroad.

Public spending on education

Kazakhstan spends relatively lower amount of money on higher education in comparison with comparator countries. If to have a look on the Table 2., it can be seen that Kazakhstan did not increase the funding even if a development of education, especially internationalization process was one of the main goals and objectives set by the government. In the beginning of 2010s, Kazakhstan was actively internationalizing the educational process, but the government did not rise the funding amount based on the OECD statistics. As it is indicated in the table below, the public spending in 2013 was the same as it was in 2011, whereas namely this period of time was active in terms of internationalization policies and reforms, such as Nazarbayev University project, the Bologna program, and Erasmus. The public spending on education is lower than OECD country’s average amount with the ratio 3.8: 5.6 % of GDP. If to compare Kazakhstan’s money allocation on education with Mexico, which is another OECD comparator country indicated on the table below, Kazakhstan spends 1.4% of GDP less. If to compare Kazakhstan’s public spending on

education with Brazil, which is non – OECD comparator country, Kazakhstan spends 2.3 % of GDP less than Brazil.

Table 2. Public spending on education in Kazakhstan, the OECD, and comparator countries

	% of GDP		% of total public expenditure		Per student as % of GDP per capita	
	Total education	Primary and secondary ¹	Total education	Primary and secondary ¹	Total education	Primary and secondary ^{1,2}
Kazakhstan (2013)	3.8	2.1	20.5	10.4	16	11
Kazakhstan (2011)	3.8	2.1	18.4	10.7	14	11
OECD average (2011)	5.6	3.6	12.9	8.4	27	25
OECD comparators (2011)						
Mexico	5.2	3.5	20.5	13.6	19	16
Poland	4.9	3.3	11.4	7.5	31	28
Turkey	4.1	2.4	10.9	6.3	18	14
Non-OECD comparators (2011)						
Brazil	6.1	4.5	19.2	14.3	26	24
Russian Federation	3.9	2.0	10.9	5.5	24	20

Notes: (1) Includes technical and vocational education. Data on comparator countries include post-secondary non-tertiary education (with negligible amounts) while data on Kazakhstan do not; and (2) For comparator countries, data are calculated as an average of primary and secondary education and refer to both private and public expenditure.

Sources: OECD 2017, Reviews of National Policies for Education: Higher Education in Kazakhstan 2017, OECD Publishing, Paris

Insufficient state budgeting is another barrier of the development of HE system. Contemporary HE education system privileges only those students, who have already had sufficient material background for allowing extra – curriculum courses. For example, students that study at English – speaking private schools, or those who have financial opportunities to attend English language or other extra – curriculum courses are more prepared for the outbound mobility. Hence, low public funding is another main barrier for Kazakh students’ involvement into the international educational studies. According to UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), Kazakhstan spent only 2.5-3% of total GDP on education in the last 10 years, which is twice less in comparison with neighbor country Kyrgyzstan, and some Western countries, such as the US, UK, Germany, and Australia.

Corruption/Clientelism in HE institutions

Corruption is used to address an abuse of an authority in exchange for a personal and material benefit (Feoktistova, 2013). According to scholars, corrupted educational system

took place in Kazakhstan back in socialist times under the USSR. It was widely spread among political parties, public services and in the educational sphere as well. It is recognized as a chronic disease that has roots back in communism and which took over most post – Soviet countries up today, including Kazakhstan (Tampayeva, 2015).

It exists in many state and private universities of the country. However, South Kazakhstan region is recognized as the most corrupted region in the country (Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, 2018). State universities are highly interested in own upstanding reputation with remarkable results for attracting as much as paid – basis students as possible, which significantly increases the budget of the university. Thus, students might bribe the faculty and get excellent grades in most state universities. Similarly, most of students, who are failing their studies, might solve the issue informally using clientelism or corruption techniques and continue studying with good grades. Likewise, many private universities are affected by the profit earning so as they are commercial ones. Correspondingly, most private universities close their eyes on the poor performance of a student, his/her course failure, 0 – 10 % attendance and plagiarism as long the student is capable to pay the tuition fee. Moreover, some university staff accept money to let the student pass the course, when the student had already failed the course (Feoktistova, 2013).

Meantime, clientelism is a use of personal connections and certain networks to get issues solved or goals achieved. In this way, those, who have certain network connections, might use them instead of paying a bribe (McMann, 2014). For example, if a student had not attended classes at all and consequently failed both the exam and course, he might use his personal connections to pass the course and get “an easy grade”. In this case personal connection could be anyone, who has high authority and social status that will more likely to impact the choice of the teacher.

Corruption and clientelism are found to be one of the immense issues in the HE system of Kazakhstan. According to scholars, corruption in HE institutions of Kazakhstan crucially ceases the country’s education system development both locally and internationally. In addition, many universities in the country can neither get international accreditation nor international contracts and cooperation due to the corrupted system (Feoktistova, 2013). For example, students might bribe teachers for getting better grades and passing exams, meanwhile a faculty might charge students for good exam grades in many HE institutions of the country. Furthermore, a university administration might charge applicants for getting

accepted to the studies, whereas applicants might also use informal techniques, such as bribery and personal connections to get accepted to the university. According to World Bank survey, 69% of students – respondents admitted that they bribed the admission to get enrolled to the studies; while 10% admitted that they paid a bribe to receive higher grades. 88 % of faculty respondents out of 250 people and 74% of respondents out of 1000 students indicated that corruption is a common thing in HE system. 78% of students and 62% of the staff declared that corruption is predominantly practiced during the exams period (Rumyantseva, 2005). Also, the total sum of 14 billion KZT for more than 100 violations was recorded in the universities currently, leaving more unreported data in a shadow. Some university authorities might gain a funding for fictional activities and unauthorized investments, whereas others might corrupt the process of state grants release and their reallocation (Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, 2018). One of them, the former deputy director of the state – owned “National Testing Center”, who was sentenced for 7 years for bribery and clientelism crimes a year ago. He accepted a new Toyota Camry car that cost around \$25 000 from a director of one service company to lobby that company’s interest during UNT arrangements across the country (The Analytical Center for Central Asia, 2019).

Lastly, corruption and clientelism generate and maintain distorted moral values among the general public, inducing a massive mistrust among the society (Rumyantseva, 2005). These informal methods of solving problems are more likely to breed a whole new culture of cheating and bribing that could be used in life – long perspective.

Liberalization

According to the interview and survey results, many respondents indicated an immense necessity of liberalization in the society. They noted that international development of the HE system could succeed, if the mentality and cultural values were slightly democratized and liberalized. Accordingly, liberalization is defined as a reduction of economic, socio – political, and cultural constraints and limits on the state level (Simmons, et al., 2007).

Both globalization and internationalization lead to the liberalization of the market economy, spread of socio – political views and concepts, cultural values and beliefs. So as globalization brings in some national and cultural mixture to the homogenous local society, liberalization might ensure public’s tolerance understanding of various cultural values, traditions and religious beliefs of different nations and ethnicities (Stallings, 2001). Culture

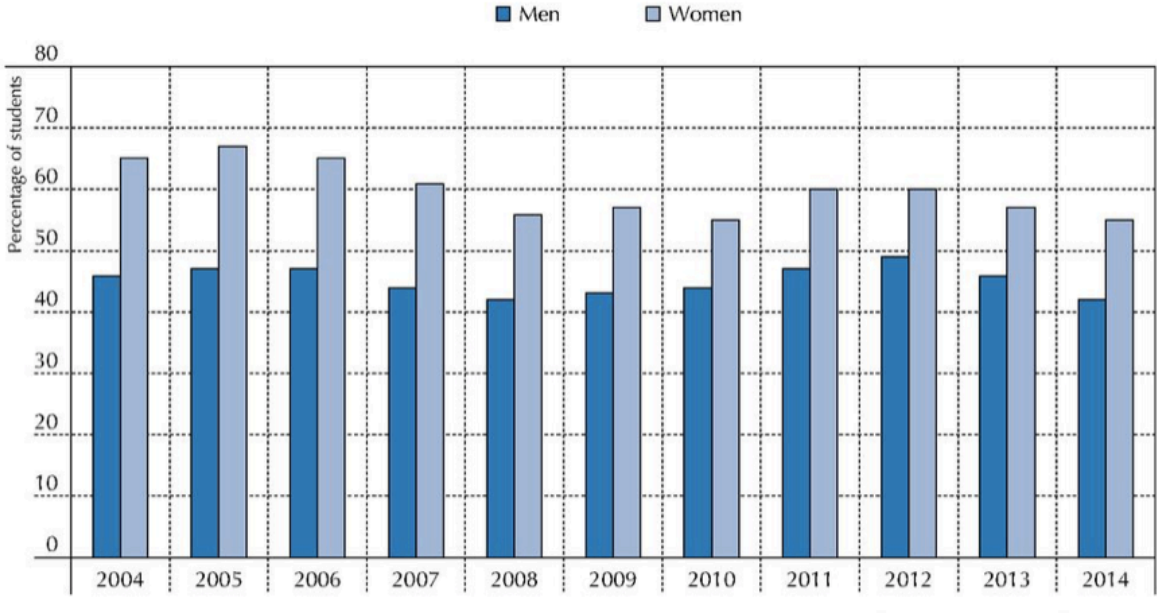
mixing in the same area frames a new paradigm of polyculturalism and multiculturalism (Hao, et al., 2016).

Adapting to the today’s extremely globalized world, international organizations and transnational actors tend to actively implement liberal policies across the world spreading and maintaining ideas of liberalization. Subsequently, countries are less likely to come up with independent decisions made in isolation today; and more likely to come up with interdependent policies based on the situation in other countries and their counterparts (Simmons, et al., 2007).

Participation in higher education: gender

Males' participation in HE is lower than females' participation in HE in Kazakhstan. As Figure 2 shows, the indicators are quite stable over the years, from 2004 to 2014. The average percentage difference in men's and women's participation in HE is approximately 15% in a decade. Moreover, the overall decline pattern in enrollment into the HE institution over the years can be seen.

Figure 3. Participation in higher education: gender



Sources: OECD 2017, Reviews of National Policies for Education: Higher Education in Kazakhstan 2017, OECD Publishing, Paris

Two assumptions could be provided analyzing Figure 3: first one might be related to the cultural pattern, such as girls are less expected to work in comparison with men, and some

females might need HE diploma so that then they can get married. If to analyze this pattern, females with HE are valued more by the groom's family and might ask for the better life conditions and higher qalym before getting married. Men are supposed to work, earn money and provide the family materially, thus some men go work after getting secondary education, and it might be a reason why they get enrolled to the HE institutions less than females.

The second assumption might be a decrease of a value of education in general. Many people can get jobs without HE diploma but by knowing "right" people and using networks and connections. Nepotism, clientalism and corruption as the leftovers of the communist regime still exist in Kazakhstan. Thus, young people seem to lose aspiration and motivation to enroll into the HE so as it does not give them assurance that they can get a job then.

High expectation from family, social pressure, UNT and high rate of youth suicide

According to the research carried by OECD team with an assistance of JSC Information Analytic Center, the media, faculty members and students, Unified National Test was recognized as an assessment of student's memorizing ability rather than testing for a real knowledge, skills or competencies (OECD, 2017).

According to the World Population Review statistics for 2020, Kazakhstan is ranked as the #7 suicide rate country in the world. Total suicide rate of Kazakhstan is said to be 22.5 per every 100 000 people in the state (2020).

Suicide rate is quite high among the Kazakhstani youth and it is recognized as one of the major social problems in the country. According to WHO, 4048 people died of suicide in 2016, 3339 of them were males and 709 were females (2019). Actually, this is only official reported data, but there could be so many other unreported cases, especially some traditional families might not report the case. If we compare Kazakhstan's suicide rate to neighbor comparator countries, such as Kyrgyzstan (494 suicide cases for the same year) and Uzbekistan (2316 suicide cases for the same year) Kazakhstan has a quite high indicator. Turkmenistan's suicide number for 2016 is 380, whereas for Tajikistan is 218. Uzbekistan also has a high suicide rate, however if we compare the total population of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan has about twice more population (32.96 million) than Kazakhstan

(18.28 million), but twice less suicide rate than Kazakhstan, which points on Kazakhstan's extremely high suicide rate (the World Bank, 2018).

Kazakhstan has a very high suicide rate, so as there are 27.47 suicides per 100 000 people, whereas the world average is 9.56 suicides per 100 000 inhabitants (Country Economy, 2015).

The youth have a high rate suicide due to the high pressure from family, relatives, and society that they have to succeed academically. Moreover, young people are put extremely high expectation regarding education, marriage and career. For example, every year hundreds of young people commit suicides because they could not pass UNT, win a scholarship or get enrolled to the university expected by a family. Many students think that they might dishonor their families and are not meeting their expectations. The level of pressure on the youth is overly high. Some of my research respondents confirmed the existence of this particular "high expectation society" and "family pressure" in Kazakh society.

The Deputy of Majilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan stated that since the implementation of the UNT in the educational system, the number of suicides among the youth increased three times. In 2011, Kazakhstan was in the top 3 countries with terribly high youth suicide rate out of all countries in the world (Tengrinews, 2012). Actually, it is the same period of time, when UNT was introduced and internationalization programs were implemented into the Kazakhstani educational system and limited amount of scholarships were provided for studying abroad. For example, during investigation processes of suicide incidents of young people, death notes were found related to the unmet expectations of parents and society, inability to win a scholarship and failed exams. One of these notes was written by a girl Zhansaya, who won a scholarship to one university from her application, but was rejected by another university, where she initially wanted to get enrolled. Thus, she committed suicide leaving a note being a sorry for not meeting the expectations of the school, teachers and parents (Youth Informational Agency of Kazakhstan, 2015). Moreover, the South Kazakhstan region has the highest youth suicide rate across the country (Aq Zhaiyq, 2015). It can be explained by the lower level of quality teachers, lower level of education and higher religious and traditional culture, which set stronger pressure and higher

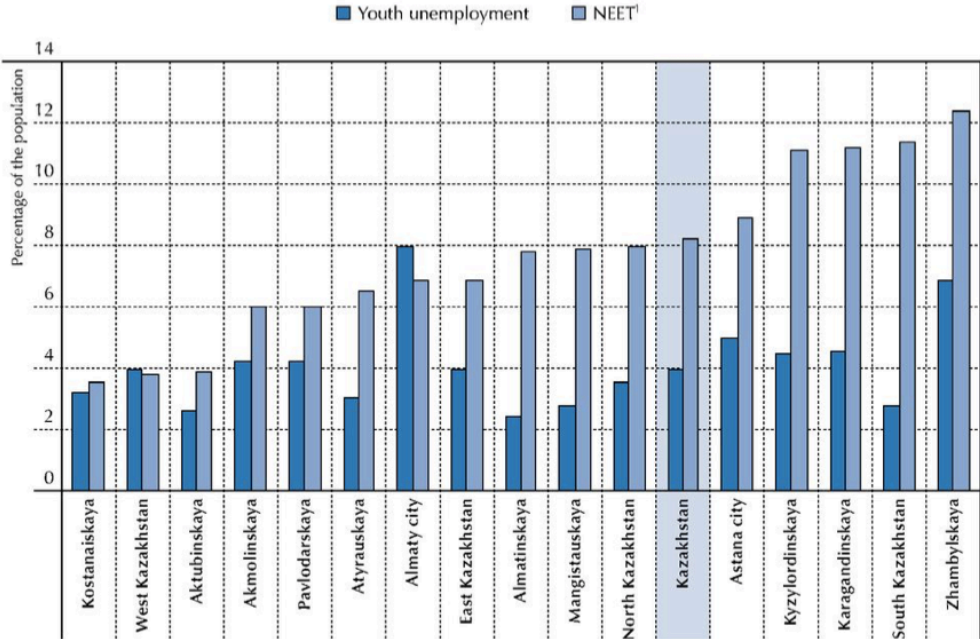
expectations for young people in terms of education, career and marriage. The Kazakhstani youth undergo a huge stress and fear of possible failure.

South and West Kazakhstan regions are more traditional and conservative, whereas the North and East Kazakhstan are less traditional and less conservative. The higher number of Russians and consequent mixed culture in the North and East could explain this pattern. Meanwhile, Kazakhs originally inhabited Southern and Western Kazakhstan, thus they could preserve their tradition, cultural values and conservative outlook on life,

Pavlodar, North Kazakhstan, West Kazakhstan, East Kazakhstan, Qostanai city show above – average GPA and UNT results across the country. Two big megapolises, such as Almaty and Astana have higher than average results as well. In contrast, South Kazakhstan, Zhambyl, Kyzylorda, and some Western cities, such as Aqtobe, Mangystau, and Atyrau have below the average GPA and UNT results (Smagulov, et. al., 2016). So, these features could be explained by the path dependency theory, which still has leftovers of the Soviet Union and its Russification reforms.

Correlation of lower quality education and regional disparities in youth labor market performance

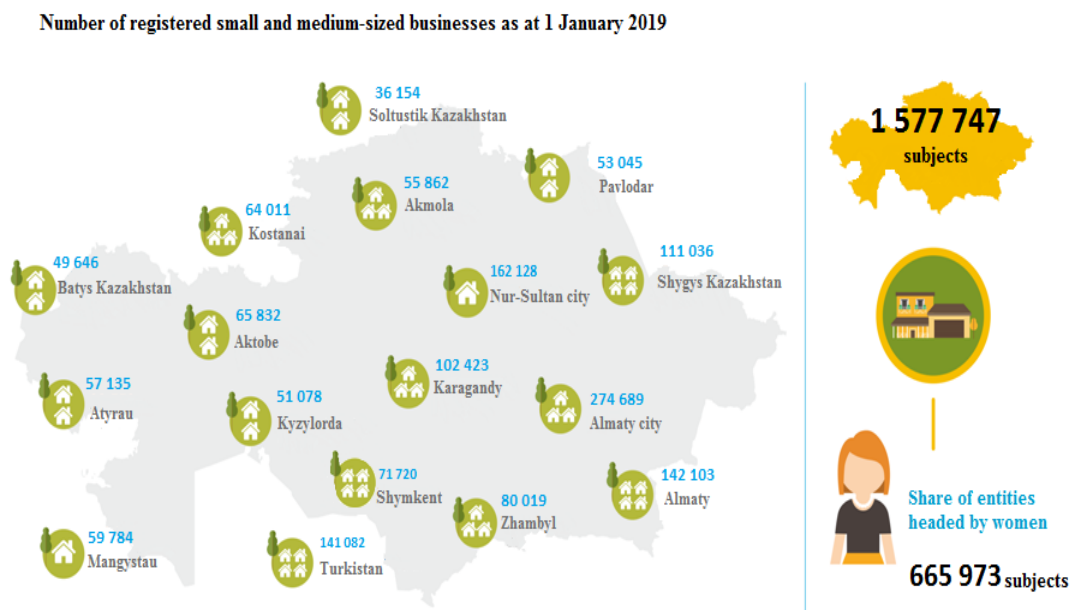
Figure 4. Regional disparities in youth labor market performance



1. NEET= Neither employed nor in education and training
 Sources: Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Committee on Statistics (MNERK, 2014), www.stat.gov.kz.

Lower quality education and lower allocation of quality instructors in the Southern region of Kazakhstan might be related to the above – demonstrated Figure 4 with regional disparities in youth labor market performance. As it was stated before and mentioned in the interviews, the South Kazakhstan is much more traditional and has stronger traditional, religious and cultural beliefs than in the North Kazakhstan, for example. In traditional communities the role of family is much likely to be higher than the role of education. According to the traditional beliefs, men are expected to earn money and provide for the family, and women are mostly sitting – at – home – mothers. If we look at the figure above, we can see that mostly people from Kyzylorda, Karagandy, South Kazakhstan, and Zhambyl are neither employed nor in education and training. This can be explained by the low value of education in the region, less amount of prestigious jobs (so as they mostly located in the Southern part of Kazakhstan, closer to Russia – historical institutionalism), and consequent high number of small and medium businesses. So, people in the south have the highest number of small and medium businesses across the country, because they work on themselves since the early ages and run family businesses there. Correspondingly, the Southern part of Kazakhstan is considered as the society, who mostly keeps the traditional values and beliefs, where work and earning money are superior to the education. That is how, low quality of education and less amount of job opportunities led to the highest number of small and medium businesses in the country as it can be seen from the map below:

Map 2. Number of registered small and medium – sized businesses as at 1 January, 2019



Source: Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan Statistics committee

As we can see on the map provided by the MNERK, the Southern part of Kazakhstan has the highest number of small and medium sized businesses. For example, Kyzylorda (51078), Karagandy (102 423), Almaty city (274 689), Shymkent (71720), Turkistan (141082), Zhambyl (80 019), and Almaty (142 103) have on average twice or triple times higher amount of businesses in comparison with the Northern Kazakhstan (36 154), for instance. Thus, it can be concluded that due to the lower level of quality education and consequent relevant jobs in the South Kazakhstan, education is less prioritized than business. Also, traditional beliefs are most likely to contribute to this pattern.

Religious and cultural values

Religion was recognized as one of the constituents of cultural value and identity in Kazakh society. Some parents do not want their children to leave for a foreign country to study, especially if the country is non – Muslim state. Both nomadic past and moderate Islam of Kazakh culture is defined as inseparable unit of the cultural and traditional beliefs (Tampayeva, 2016).

Some parents do not permit their sons to go study abroad because they are afraid they could meet a bad company there, do drugs, smoke, and drink alcohol; and most parents would be too far away to control them. Similarly, many parents are scared to allow their daughters to go study abroad so as they have a fear that girls might lose the cultural norms based in Kazakhstan, such as smoking, drinking alcohol, and having sex before marriage.

Marriage vs Education

According to the Committee on Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, an average marriage year for men in Kazakhstan is between 23 – 27 years, whereas for women is 20 – 24 years (2016).

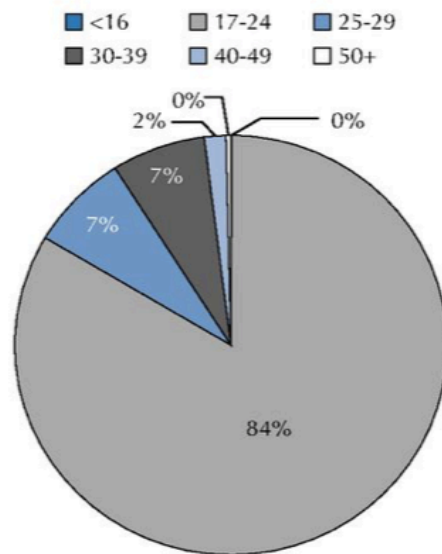
In compliance with the marriage ranking provided by the World in Figures for the year 2017 and latest, Kazakhstan is situated on the 11th place in the list of top 11 countries with highest marriage rate (2020). There are ~ 8 marriages per every 1 000 people in Kazakhstan annually (World in Figures, 2020). If to compare Kazakhstan's marriage rate with any other post USSR country (1), European country (2) or another randomly chosen state (3), it can be seen that Kazakhstan has noticeable difference in statistics. For example:

1. Kazakhstan has ~ 8 marriages per 1 000 population, whereas Ukraine has 5.4 marriages per 1 000 population;
2. Kazakhstan has ~ 8 marriages per 1 000 population, whereas Sweden or Hungary has 5.2 marriages per 1 000 population;
3. Kazakhstan has ~ 8 marriages per 1 000 population, whereas the Dominican Republic has 5.3 marriages per 1 000 population (World in Figures, 2020).

Thus, it can be stated that Kazakhstan has a widely spread and quite strong cultural value, such as marriage. Marriage is considered as one of the most important things and aim of the life by major part of the population. Average marriage rate and graduation years are the same – 24-25 years. The majority of people study at higher education institutions under the age 25.

So, mostly people get married after they graduate from a university in Kazakhstan.

Figure 5. Age distribution of higher education enrollment (2014)



It is clearly seen by the pie chart above that 84 % of Kazakstani society study at HE institutions under the age 25. Only 7% of population study until they turn 30, and another 7% of people study before their 40s. Only 2 % of the overall population study at HE between 40 and 49 years in Kazakhstan. 0% of people get enrolled in HE institutions after their 50s. This pattern might be related to the cultural values, low value of education and lack of life long learning idea. In compliance with the survey results, many young people confirmed that they study because it is considered as a norm expected from the society, not because it was conscious decision and will.

25 is the average marriage age for Kazakhstani youth. So, this pattern might be related to the marriage age, after which there is no capacity, time and motivation to study at HE institution. People are more likely to work and provide for their families. Moreover, there is a stereotype exists in Kazakhstan that you have to study when you are young and then you are expected to work, get married, and build a family. That can be described as both high expectation and strong social pressure within a culture. Possibly, that is why, 84% of population study under the age of 25, and 0% after 50 years old.

Moreover, there is a tradition and cultural element known as “qalym” or “qalyn’ ” mal in Kazakstan, which can be interpreted as a bride price, and which also could be related to the importance of getting diploma from the HE institution by default (UNHCR, 2013). “Qalyn’ ” means thick/large amount, and “mal” originally means domestic cattle (that originally was a main way of payment), but in a contemporary times it might be translated as money. So basically, it is a cultural element, where groom’s side pays for a bride and only after that procedure he can marry her and his family might take her to their family. This tradition is still most likely to exist in the Southern and Western parts of Kazakhstan, but it is less likely to be practiced in big megapolises, such as Astana and Almaty, as well as in the Northern and Eastern regions of Kazakhstan. The idea of qalyn mal/qalym is to thank and pay off family of a bride materially for raising her in a culturally appropriate way, which considered being a basic constituent. Additionally, groom’s side is expected to pay more money for bride’s secondary achievements, including educational ones. For example, if a bride has only a secondary education, her family is presumed to receive less amount of money than if she has a higher education. Thus, some families encourage their daughters to study at HE institutions to get a higher social status, and to get paid more. Moreover, qalyn’ mal price might vary in dependence on a diploma a bride gets and HE institution type she graduates from. For example, if she graduates from top/high ranking university with honor and distinction her family will be paid a higher price for cum laude achievement. On the contrar, if a bride graduates from a regular low ranking university without distinction, then her family is presumed to be paid less than in the first case. That is how education might be a different/specific type of motivation for some families in Kazakhstan. Some families support education path of their daughter in order to get higher social status and get her marry extremely successfully.

Recommendations

Suggestions of all respondents regarding improvement of internationalization process of students from Kazakhstan were collected and demonstrated below:

What could be done better or differently in HE Kazakh internationalization to make it more successful?

- Aspirations should be raised and the government should actively support the youth to study and get HE within and outside of the country.
- To improve /increase the value of education. Education is considered just as a must do thing for getting diploma and being done. It is more likely just to be a tick rather than a real process of getting knowledge and applying it in life, work.
- The quality of English classes in schools should be improved, so that every student has an equal chance to pass language exam (IELTS, TOEFL) not attending any extra English course classes.
- To make an information about studying abroad available for everyone. To increase public's awareness about possibilities of studying abroad.
- To increase the level of public funding on HE, especially abroad. To create more programs and projects, international research collaborations and cooperations with other foreign universities. More money allocation on internationalization of HE students. Subsidies from the government – financial support from the government.
- The education system and strategy should be changed on the governmental level.
- More opportunities and programs should be implemented for females. To literate more women and agitate women to study and work abroad, get financial independence, to allow work at the same level as men do. Make sure they have perspective jobs. Social education – promotion of value of education and women's role in society (science, businesses, academy)
- Corruption should be eliminated or at least decreased in the country. Because mostly people get their jobs by clientalism and nepotism. If they have acquaintances they are more likely to get a job. Because of clientalism and

connections scheme, education lost its importance and it doesn't matter even if you have many degrees and diplomas, you are less likely to get a job without "right" person. Those, who study abroad and get quality education and saw more equal and fair rights, do not want to come back and struggle with job offer. Thus, implementing nepotism/clientalism eliminating policies, and quality education valuing policies could change the situation. Governmental incentives.

- Governmental program – should make propaganda and show successful cases of students studied abroad, share the knowledge – to change the traditional views. Some experience sharing platform of students studying abroad might be useful. People could reach the web site and see many positive things and great opportunities in foreign quality education. It could increase the awareness of people about foreign education and try to present more democratic views to traditional families, demonstrate a healthy, real and positive image of the Western world.

Conclusion

So as Kazakhstan a young country, which is only 30 years it is quite difficult to sum its educational policies up so far. After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Kazakhstan implemented new policies and reforms from the scratch. Moreover, the reforms had been constantly updated in the last two decades, and a little research has been conveyed on HE internationalization. Accordingly, this particular research paper investigated the contemporary higher education internationalization process in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, both explicit and implicit factors ceasing the international outbound mobility of Kazakh HE students were explored on the basis of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Main barriers to internationalization found to be financial incapability and burden, lack of funding from the government, strong conservative, socio – cultural, religious and traditional beliefs, fear of parents for the safety of their children abroad, high expectations and educational standards set by parents for students, imbedding some inconfidence into children, and consequent fear to apply, overvalued role of marriage and undervalued role of education, clientalism and corruption, lack of diploma value, insufficient English classes quality at school, and lack of information about international scholarships. Certain recommendations, such as an increase of public budgeting on education, increasing youth interest and motivation in high quality education, liberalization, raising public's awareness about international education opportunities, and eliminating corruption were suggested in order to tackle current challenges successfully and increase Kazakhstani students' activity on international arena.

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