

OLGA NESSIPBAYEVA**KAZAKHSTAN IN THE EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM****Abstract**

Significant qualitative changes in academic mobility development, introduction of a three-tier system of student training (Bachelor's – Master's – PhD), and also the creation of conditions for providing autonomy to Kazakhstani universities has ensued in Kazakhstan, after the nation's entry into the European zone of higher education. But, as in any large-scale programme there are achievements and difficulties of implementation of the basic principles of the European educational system. In this paper, the author's objective is to analyze the changes and challenges associated with joining the Bologna process, and to consider the perspectives of higher education development in the EHEA as a whole. Particular attention is paid to the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System): the problems of transfer credits of Kazakhstan, which is part of the process on the unification of different educational systems in introducing the Bologna process in Kazakhstan. The introduction of the credit system provides recognition of qualifications from the European educational space, and promotes the expansion and intensification of the processes of European academic mobility of students and teachers.

Key words: European educational system, academic mobility, credit transfer

Introduction

On March 11, 2010 Kazakhstan joined the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process) and became the first Central Asian state which became a full member of the European educational space. Sixty Kazakh universities have signed the “Magna Charter for universities”. This Charter was adopted in 1988 in Bologna. By signing this document, universities take responsibility to develop autonomy, democratic principles of management, academic freedom of students, freedom of scientific research, etc. In higher education, there have been significant qualitative changes in the development of academic mobility, including the introduction of a three-stage model of student training (Bachelor's – Master's – PhD), as well new conditions for granting autonomy to the country's higher education institutions (60 universities of Kazakhstan, 2011). “We must ensure the provision of qualitative educational services across the country on a level with global standards”, said President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his Message to the people of Kazakhstan (2007).

Analysis of current situation and development of higher education

In the State Programme for the Development of Education by 2020, the Government – on behalf of the Head of State – laid down mandatory, recommended parameters of the Bologna process. The Centre of Bologna process and academic mobility will be established in Kazakhstan according to the Ministry of Education and Science. In addition, as of in April 2011, new rules for the organization of the educational process provide the scale of credit technology evaluation in the Republic of Kazakhstan; organization of academic mobility within the Kazakh model of credit

transfer by ECTS type; use of the European system of accumulation and transfer credits in the educational process; and modular design of educational programmes (Official website of the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, 2011).

Thus, the legal framework for the development of academic mobility has been created, which is one of the most effective ways to improve the quality of training. First steps have already been made in promoting academic mobility. In 2011, student scholarships for education in a leading foreign university in Europe, Southeast Asia and the CIS were offered for the first time by state. Likewise, a mechanism of internal academic mobility was also developed, allowing students from regional universities to receive training in the leading universities of the republic (Ibid.).

Along with this, the restructuring of higher education continues: a three-tier model of student training (Bachelor, Master and Doctorate PhD) has been introduced. In addition, new principles of higher education financing were established which aligned to market conditions. In 38 institutions of the republic two-diplomas education is realized, in 42, Distance Learning is provided (Ibid.).

However, one unique educational project in Kazakhstan is the development of a world-class university “Nazarbayev University”. The university works in partnership with the top 30 universities in the world. The first students already started their undergraduate training in three schools – engineering, science and technology, and social sciences. New standards of conducting research, approved within “Nazarbayev University”, will later to be promulgated in all the country's universities.

In the *Programme of Education Development until 2020* it is indicated that public universities may become autonomous non-profit organizations. By 2015 the autonomy will be presented to national research universities, by 2016 – the national higher education institutions, by 2018 – the rest of the higher education institutions. The implementation of Bologna process parameters in higher education will allow Kazakhstan to provide qualitative services at international-standards level in the light of integration into the European Higher Education Area (Official website of the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, 2011).

Opportunities and challenges of the Bologna process

Expanded access to higher education, a further improvement in the quality and attractiveness of European higher education, and improved mobility of students and teachers, as well as an ensuring the employment of college graduates through career-based professional education are aspirations for Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan's accession to the Bologna process gives a new impetus to the modernization of higher education, opens up new opportunities for the participation of Kazakhstani universities in projects, funded by the European Commission, and creates opportunities for the students and teachers to participate in academic exchanges with universities in the European countries. The Kazakh treasury subsidizes international ventures through a system of free education.

According to Kazakhstani experts in the field of education, Kazakhstan's accession to the Bologna process may cause “temporary confusion within educational programmes”. It is necessary to inform employers who studied in the Soviet era that all the modern higher education degrees are complete, but some

degrees are intended for research and teaching at university, for example a master's degree and Ph.D. (European Higher Education). The specialist degree in the EU and most countries participating in the Bologna process is absent. One of the serious problems of integration of Kazakhstani education system into the Bologna process is that the officials do not have full awareness of as the current situation in Kazakhstan and its parallels in European education.

Thus, Kazakhstan's participation in the Bologna process means widening access to the European education, improving further the quality and increasing the mobility of students and academic staff through the adoption of comparable levels of higher education system, the use of a system of credits, and issuing European Diploma Supplement to graduates of Kazakhstani universities.

Kazakhstan's accession to the Bologna process will ensure the recognition of Kazakhstani educational programmes, curricula, the convertibility of national diplomas in the European region and the employability of graduates.

In the next decade up to 2020 we will need to achieve a level of quality in higher education that meets the needs of the labor market, the objectives of industrial-innovative development of the country, and the best international practices in the field of education. Kazakhstan can succeed in this effort only if it will use maximally the skills and abilities of its citizens, and increase participation in higher education. The result-oriented training and academic mobility will help students develop professional competence, adapt to the changing labour market, and enable them to become active and responsible citizens.

Conditions for the development of academic mobility

We can say that in Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan the basic principles of the Bologna Declaration have realized. The credit education technology has implemented in all universities. Higher educational institutions are actively implementing joint educational programs with foreign universities. Full transition to the three-tier model of training: Bachelor – Master – Ph.D. carried out.

The undergraduate educational programmes consist of three cycles, each of which includes a *compulsory* (i.e. state) *component* – CC and the component of choice (i.e., HEIs and *elective component*) – EC. The average ratio between CC and EC is 60(50):40(50). This allows to form the joint educational programs by institutions of higher education, students – individual educational trajectory. Students can learn courses and master credits from other universities – local and foreign within EC.

The limitations of academic freedom of higher education institutions will be widened in accordance with the State Programme of Education Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020. As a result of these trends, the ratio of CC and EC will be adjusted to 30:70.

The first experience of Ph.D. Programme showed as the positive as the negative aspects of this experiment.

The positive sides:

- Expansion of international cooperation.
- Approximation of Kazakhstani educational programmes to the world level.
- Involvement of foreign professors, expert-practitioners of major national and foreign companies to realization of the doctoral educational programmes.

- Use of innovative foreign methods of education and their adaptation to the Kazakh postgraduate standards.

Also, there are **such problems** in the preparation of the scientific-pedagogical staff, in the system of master's and doctoral studies despite the drastic changes as:

- The weak organization of the educational process, often all educational material is given for independent study.
- The majority of graduate and doctoral students do not speak foreign languages at the appropriate level, which complicates their access to advanced scientific sources and reduces their mobility at the international level.
- The quality of defended master's and doctoral theses remains low because of low level of orientation on specific scientific result.
- The universities do not comply with all requirements for the level of training of doctoral students.
- The received independence in awarding the highest academic degree is not always accompanied by proper responsibility for their empowerment.
- The requirements to the procedure of doctoral theses' defense were reduced.

The analysis also shows a lack of institutional ensuring compliance with interscientific-teaching staff: specialist, candidate of science and doctor of science and masters degree and Dr. of Ph.D. engenders confusion in the qualification requirements. The scientific organizations have been on the sidelines, their enormous scientific potential (human, resource, laboratory, research) was not involved in this form of research training.

In general, the implementation of the basic postulates of the Bologna Declaration in the educational activities of universities is not up to standard:

- The academic mobility of students and academic staff is not developed.
- The opportunities of students in the choice of courses, programmes and teaching staff are limited.
- The use of traditional methods of planning and the educational process organization continues to be the case.
- The comparability of educational programmes is missed.

As world practice shows, one of the tools for improving the quality of education is academic mobility. Berlin Communiqué (2003) calls "the mobility of students, academic and administrative staff as the basis for the creation of the European Higher Education Area".

In addition, the Leuven Communiqué (2009) mobility characterizes as the hallmark of the European Higher Education Area. "The mobility of students, early stage researchers and staff of HEIs enhances the quality of programmes and scientific research. It strengthens the academic and cultural internationalization of European higher education. The mobility is important for personal development and employability, generates respect for diversity and the ability to understand other cultures. It motivates the linguistic pluralism, thus paving the way for multi-lingual tradition of European Higher Education Area, and enhances cooperation and competition between higher education institutions" (Official Site of KazNPU).

ECTS: the problem of transfer Kazakhstani credits

The satisfaction of basic formal requirements of the Bologna process is impossible without the introduction of a credit system, which makes the system of training transparent and comparable. The introduction of the credit system provides recognition of qualifications at European educational space, promotes the expansion and intensification of the processes of European academic mobility of students and academic staff.

As mentioned above, the credit transfer on ECTS type of Kazakh universities' students in foreign universities and vice versa is required in relation to academic mobility within the Kazakh model. It is necessary to make the transfer of Kazakhstani credits to European credits since higher professional education of leading countries of the world based on the use of credit systems of development assessment of educational programmes in terms of complexity. This is the ensuring of undergraduate and postgraduate graduates by supplement to common European model diploma.

Different content of Kazakh credits by volume of hours in undergraduate, master's and doctoral education determines the total amount of educational programmes of Kazakhstan in the credits, which differs significantly from the European and American programmes.

KZCS 1 – 45 hours (undergraduate);

KZCS 2 – 60 hours (profile MSc);

KZCS 3 – 75 hours (research-teaching master);

KZCS 4 – 105 hours (doctorate).

The issue of recognition of Kazakhstan documents about education is solved by introducing a conversion KZCS credits to European ECTS or American USCS credits.

For example, for scientific-pedagogical magistracy

$K = \frac{120 - 2.25}{47 + 6}$

47+6

where: 120 – total number of credits generated in the European Union at the biennial educational master's program with practice; 47 – total number of credits of the master's program in Kazakhstan without credits allocated to the practice; 6 – the number of credits in the master's program of Kazakhstan allocated for practice.

By itself, the complexity of conversion from one system to another – it is a simple technical problem. And she would not deserve so much attention if it is not be a part of the process of the unification of different educational systems in the framework of the Bologna process in Kazakhstan. And it is possible to decide if in different institutions will not be only similar programmes and curricula, but also training schemes.

The proposed package of measures for a mutual transfer of educational credits must be solved at the state level:

1. The ensuring legal framework for the free transfer of credits both the American and European systems;
2. In the state standards of education focus on learning outcomes – competence of graduates – regardless of the time spent by students in the audience.

In clarifying competencies of graduates focus on employers requests, forming a “flexible” curricula and programmes at the expense of freedom of choice of elective courses.

In what way is proposed to transfer Kazakh credits to ECTS for the difference in educational systems at the university level? In planning and organizing academic mobility in Kazakh universities use the following regulations:

1. Information package;
2. Statement of students going on mobility programmes;
3. Learning Agreement for mobility programmes;
4. Transcript of learning (ECTS: problems of transfer of Kazakhstan credits).

What are the challenges of Kazakhstan credits’ transfer to ECTS?

1. The unification of curricula of similar specialties at the partner universities with accurate fixation of compulsory and elective courses and their complexity in the credits is necessary. It is important the recognition of content of curriculum and programmes of Kazakh partner and student learning outcomes by the European university. The proposed algorithm by MES RK for forming modular educational programmes will contribute to this to some extent;
2. An accurate translation of the title and content of the modules into English is necessary to provide;
3. Quite a long and complicated approval procedure with the coordinators of the Kazakh University and the host university is necessary to pass.

Recommendations

1. Kazakh university must be prepared the full information package in English with modules of educational programmes to activate the academic mobility of students; it is desirable to count the complexity in ECTS credits in the preparation of the module to transfer completely to the European accounting in the future.
2. A coordinator of academic mobility of Kazakh university should form a database of European partner universities ready to enter into agreements on academic mobility.
3. Prepare a simple step by step algorithm preparing documents on academic mobility.
4. The site of Kazakh University’s complete information package on academic mobility programmes is required to put.
5. The application with the rules of transfer of Kazakhstani ratings to the European system of ratings of assessment is required to include.
6. The application with the structure of profiles for students on the calculation of time spent on the learning of the module is required to include.

Conclusions

- The introduction of ECTS will give the opportunity to make transparent the educational systems of different countries for each other.

- ECTS guarantees academic recognition studying abroad to students, with the assistance of it a student gets full access to training courses and academic life at another university.
- The accession to the Bologna Declaration and the development of Kazakhstan's system of credits transfer (credit transfer received in foreign universities) provide recognition Kazakhstan diplomas at the international labor market, which in turn will ensure the mobility of students, master's students, doctoral students by building their individual path of selection of educational programmes.

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