

**INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN
KAZAKHSTAN: STATE POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES**

**ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ ЖОҒАРЫ БІЛІМ БЕРУДІ
ИНТЕРНАЦИОНАЛДАНДЫРУ: МЕМЛЕКЕТТІК САЯСАТ ЖӘНЕ
ИНСТИТУЦИОНАЛДЫҚ ТӘЖІРИБЕ**

**ИНТЕРНАЦИОНАЛИЗАЦИЯ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В
КАЗАХСТАНЕ: ГОСУДАРСТВЕННАЯ ПОЛИТИКА И
ИНСТИТУЦИОНАЛЬНАЯ ПРАКТИКА**

by

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INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

IN KAZAKHSTAN:

STATE POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

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Master Thesis

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Summary

This thesis deals with the interpretation and implementation of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan at national and institutional levels. The goal of the study is to find out how internationalization of higher education is defined in the national policy documentation and in universities' development strategies on education, and how that interpretation is similar/different to those appearing in academic literature, and how it is reflected in the universities' practices of internationalization. For the purposes of the research, the exploratory mixed methods design was implemented, including conduction of (1) a framework analysis of the national policy documentation, (2) a framework analysis of some Kazakhstani national and state universities' development strategies, (3) a series of in-depth interviews with representatives of national and state higher education institutions, and (4) an anonymous online-survey among all national and state universities of Kazakhstan. As the research results illustrate, national and state higher education institutions in Kazakhstan are dependent on state policies in terms of internationalization, though some freedom is given to universities in academic mobility and international cooperation, and limited by governmental funding in internationalization activities. Further, with consideration of available resources and finances, Kazakhstani universities plan and implement only doable elements of internationalization, thus minimizing the risk of failure.

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Internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan: state policies and institutional practices

Chapter 1. Introduction

This thesis deals with the interpretation and implementation of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan at national and institutional levels as presented in state policies, universities' strategic documents and by the interview and survey respondents participating in the study. In the system of higher education in Kazakhstan, at the national level the agency is predominantly the Ministry of Education and Science, including all of its departments and branches. In the current research project, the agency at the institutional level involves all national (9) and all state (31) universities of Kazakhstan, which are granted with such statuses by the government. The status "national" is generally higher than the status "state" in regard to universities in Kazakhstan, but the key is that both of the two types are fully dependent on the government of Kazakhstan in terms of policy directions and funding. Other types of universities of Kazakhstan (including, for instance, autonomous educational organizations, private universities, and international universities' branches) are not covered by the current study because the main purpose of the research is to find out the dominant direction in interpretation and implementation of internationalization of higher education in post-Soviet Kazakhstan as supported at the national and institutional levels.

Background information

Located in the region of Central Asia, Kazakhstan is a young post-Soviet state with recognized political sovereignty and independent economy. With the ninth biggest territory in the world and a comparatively low density of the population, the republic has been struggling to find and hold its position in the world economy for more than a quarter of a century of being

independent. For many scholars, Kazakhstan presents a unique case as the country had no statehood in its pre-Soviet history. Thus, as an independent nation-state, Kazakhstan has to reform and build a nation-wide system of education.

The majority of studies on the system of higher education in Kazakhstan have been focused either on the stages of higher education development since Kazakhstan gained independence (Abdiraimova, et.al. 2013; Nessipbayeva & Dalayeva 2013) and the government regulation of that development (Tassimova 2013), or narrowly on the Bologna Process implementation in Kazakhstan (Zhakypova 2014; Skiadas 2014; Akanov 2014; Omyrbayev 2014; Beisekina 2014; Usanova 2014). According to those studies, there have been several important events in Kazakhstani higher education development, among which was the introduction of the Bolashak International Scholarship in 1993 under the initiative of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev (Bolashak Official Web-page, n.d.). According to the information posted on the official web page of the program, “[t]hroughout the whole period of its realization Bolashak Scholarship has been granted to 11 126 Kazakhstani citizens for study in 200 best universities of 33 countries” (Ibid.). However, the situation of higher education in Kazakhstan changed notably with entering the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) through joining the Bologna Process. Besides, a significant impact to the studies related to IHE in Kazakhstan are projects on the Bologna Process implementation in the country (Tampayeva 2015, Zhakypova 2014; Skiadas 2014; Akanov 2014; Omyrbayev 2014; Beisekina 2014; Usanova 2014). According to those studies, applying to join the Bologna Process was a governmental initiative, but in general terms the process can be considered as “regionalization,” rather than “internationalization.” Officially, this reform opened many previously inaccessible opportunities for Kazakhstani universities including accreditation

and recognition for academic degrees, implementation of programs and courses at the European higher education standards, the three-level model of Bachelor-Masters-PhD steps, credit transfer and academic mobility, and convertibility for Kazakhstani diplomas. However, as it is argued by scholars in the field, it still did not bring better resources and academic freedom to Kazakhstani universities: thus, it changed the shape visibly, but it did not change the content significantly.

Another step in the developing of higher education in Kazakhstan was the establishment of Nazarbayev University in 2010, a Western-type institution based in Astana, which was named after the Head of the state and seeks to incorporate learning, innovation, and science. Today Nazarbayev University provides a range of undergraduate and graduate programs. Further, it was also very significant for the development of Kazakhstani higher education system that Kazakhstani universities have been participating in the European Union exchange programmes TEMPUS and Erasmus Mundus. As a result of effective cooperation, a vast number of university staff and students received an access to European education, European university management and European culture. Besides that, Kazakhstan has been building collaboration with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the field of education. Along with the establishment of University of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the project covers academic mobility, networking of existing universities in SCO member and observer states, and cultural, scientific, educational and economic cooperation among the member countries.

Some international organizations including the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), the World Bank, and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have also conducted a number of studies on the development of higher education in Kazakhstan since independence. For instance, in 2007 the World Bank in collaboration with OECD issued a report on the system of higher education in Kazakhstan.

Identifying the necessity in developing the system of higher education as that driven by the national goal to enter the world's top rankings of developed countries, the reviewers argued that there had been much development and improvement introduced in the system of higher education in the country since 1991, involving those in higher education institutions' student numbers, teaching staff qualifications, programs offered to applicants, quality assurance and employability of university graduates on the labour market, as well as fees, funding, scholarships, admission conditions (OECD & World Bank, 2007).

Several years later, in 2012, the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) conducted a study of the system of higher education in Kazakhstan, including the major characteristics of higher education, types of higher education institutions, management and international cooperation of higher education institutions, academic staff, financing and admissions issues, quality assurance and accreditation procedures, as well as academic year and curricula descriptions (EACEA 2012).

Although most of the reforms mentioned in literature are in a way connected to the process of internationalization of higher education, the study of the processes of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan have been further studied by the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education. The work of the school dedicated to the issues of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan is mainly focused on the challenges, limitations and delimitations of the process of internationalisation of Kazakhstani higher education at the national and institutional levels. The research team has already identified the key factors shaping the process of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan to be academic mobility and developing skills for cross-cultural communication in the 1990s, and internationalisation of research and applicability at the job market in the 2000s (Sagintayeva &

Ashirbekov 2014).

While there is a growing body on studies on the development of higher education in Kazakhstan since independence, the issues related to internationalization remain a comparatively less investigated area of research (here I mean IHE in general terms, rather than narrower topics like the Bologna process in Kazakhstan, which has been studied recently (Tampayeva 2015)). However, there has been scarce research on how internationalization is understood and implemented at the institutional level in Kazakhstan, as well as an examination of the relationship between national policies and institutional level implementation.

The research problem and rationale for research

Since 1991, Kazakhstan has been integrating in the global political and economic system. Kazakhstan's strategic goal is to become an economically competitive and a prosperous country. Higher education, in its turn, plays a significant role in the process of development of a newly independent state by contributing to the development of workforce. Being integrated in an increasingly globalized world, the system of higher education in Kazakhstan cannot be developing independently from the international trends. This is why a robust process of internationalization of higher education (hereinafter – IHE) has been an integral element of the government strategy to reach its ambitious development goals.

“The overall goal of educational reforms in Kazakhstan is the adaption of the educational system to the new socio-economic environment” (Nessipbayeva & Dalayeva 2013: 392). Coupled with the national strategic goal set up by the President Nursultan Nazarbayev to become one of the top 30 developed countries in the world, this goal, as I argue in this paper, was decided by the government of Kazakhstan to be partially achieved via internationalizing of state higher education; and this assumption is based on a set of facts. First, “higher education and

training” (Global Competitiveness Index 2015) constitute one of the “pillars” (Ibid.) for assessment of a country’s competitiveness index, when being considered in both quantitative (secondary and tertiary education enrolment rates), and qualitative (quality of the system of education in general, and of math and science education in particular, as well as quality of management schools and internet access at schools) aspects, but also in respect to professional development trainings availability and extent. In 2015, Kazakhstan was ranked the 60th developed country in the world in terms of higher education and training by the Global Competitiveness Ranking (Ibid.), whereas the target for Kazakhstan was entering the list of first 30 developed states, and this means that improving the system of higher education may contribute to getting higher positions in Global Competitiveness Ranking for Kazakhstan. Secondly, since the majority of Kazakhstani population is constituted of children and young people of the age from 18 to 35, it may stand of high importance to invest into the sphere of education, including higher education, in order to get it to a higher level of development and make it meet the international quality assurance standards. And finally, implemented in a form of internationalisation at home and internationalisation abroad (cross-border education), the process of internationalisation of higher education can arguably lead to the international quality assurance standards, higher education innovation projects, universalisation and generalization of knowledge, international cooperation and collaboration of higher education institutions, as well as academic and student mobility (Knight 2007: pp.8-10).

However, as the literature analysis showed, not enough research has been done on the issues of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan, and particularly whether or not there is any dominant understanding of the process at national and institutional levels. At the same time, the international academic literature on internationalization of higher education in

general terms indicates that internationalization is a complex process including a number of independent elements.

The objective of the study

While being predominantly focused on the stages and reforms in higher education development, not much research, has been done on identifying a dominant interpretation of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan as presented by the government and implemented by the majority of the Kazakhstani higher education institutions, as well as institutional practices. Consequently, the *aim* of the current research is to specify the dominant state policies and institutional practices of IHE in Kazakhstan.

Hopefully, the research will improve our understanding of how IHE is interpreted and implemented at national and institutional levels in Kazakhstan and inform policy planning and designing at the national and institutional levels.

Research questions

the research questions put forward for investigation constitute two main blocks: one related to the dominant interpretation and policymaking as reflected in the main strategic national and institutional documentation, and the second one related to the actual implementation of IHE as presented in institutional practices at national and state higher education institutions of Kazakhstan.

Particularly, two of the first questions pushing for investigation are “What is a dominant understanding and planned implementation of IHE in Kazakhstan?” and “How does national interpretation of IHE correlate with international frameworks adopted by Kazakhstan?” In other words, this study examines how the government of Kazakhstan defines internationalization of higher education in state legislative and normative documents, and also how the process is

understood by Kazakhstani universities, whereas an answer to the latter one will hypothetically uncover how Kazakhstani interpretation of IHE is different from that mentioned and utilized in international academic literature and institutional practices. Further, due to the assumption that interpretations of IHE by the government and universities of Kazakhstan are different, it is questioned in this study, how different those interpretations might be from each other. In other words, the third research question related to Kazakhstani interpretation of IHE is “How different are interpretations of IHE at national and institutional levels in Kazakhstan?” The answer to this question can potentially clarify whether there is any single dominant understanding of IHE in Kazakhstan disregarding to the type of organization (i.e., with no respect to whether IHE is interpreted at the national or institutional level), or IHE is interpreted differently by the state government and higher education institutions.

The other block of concerns relating to practical side of IHE includes such research questions as: (1) what are the institutional practices of IHE in Kazakhstan, (2) how are institutional IHE plans different from institutional actual practices, and (3) how are national IHE plans are different from institutional practices?

My assumptions

The focus of the research is on the case of Kazakhstan universities, which have been transforming over the past 25 years but still are shaped by the Soviet legacies of governance of universities, in which the state plays a major role in setting up the policies in higher education, including internationalization. The answers for this set of questions can be searched for through documents analysis of national and institutional development strategies in terms of higher education (for questions 1 and 3), and comparing data collected from the strategic documents with information gained from in-depth interviews and online survey data (for questions 2 and 3).

Answers to the mentioned questions on practical implementation of IHE in Kazakhstan are supposed to lead to conclusions about the issues and peculiarities of IHE implementation in Kazakhstan.

Hence, the interest put forward for the current study is in studying the roles and relationships between universities and the central government in the process of IHE, which is a very noticeable feature of the IHE in the post-Soviet context.

Further, the focus of the current research is on wider processes of internationalization that are not limited to some specific processes of higher education development in Kazakhstan, which can also be identified with internationalization (like the Bologna Process).

Target audience

The considered potential audience of the research includes leaders of state higher education institutions in Kazakhstan, and international affairs departments and centres at those universities, as well as scholars and researchers on Central Asian and Kazakhstani systems of higher education, and higher education internationalization processes in the region.

Personal motivation

From my personal and professional experience, I learned that the system of education in Kazakhstan, and secondary and higher education primarily, is currently at the turning point where some of the main goals are improvement and inclusion to the international practices. However, at first sight it might seem that the process of internationalization of Kazakhstani education is arguably slow, and one of the possible reasons behind the trouble is seen as a missing connection between governmental and higher education institutions, as well as misinterpretation of internationalization of education in general. Focusing on higher education particularly, I aimed to find out how internationalization is interpreted and implemented in

Kazakhstan. For the purposes of enriching my professional knowledge and personal experience, I conducted the current research on the state policies and institutional practices of IHE in Kazakhstan as presented in state and institutional documents, and in interview and survey responses.

Research method in brief

In order to examine the main state policies and institutional practices of IHE in Kazakhstan, I employed the mixed-method exploratory approach through an in-depth analysis of governmental policies as reflected in the state legislative and normative documentation, and institutional strategies on internationalization, followed with a series of in-depth interviews with representatives of international offices of one national and two state universities of Kazakhstan located in different regions of the state. Further, the research results data collection was compound with the quantitative data from the online survey offered to all state higher education institutions (9 national and 31 state universities in total) of Kazakhstan.

Structure of thesis

The thesis includes five main chapters, including an introduction, literature review, research methodology, research findings, and conclusions and discussions. The introductory part of the report includes information on the necessity of the study, and the main goals and research questions put forward for the project, whereas the methodology chapter describes the research design developed for achieving the research goals and for answering the research questions. The data analysis chapter includes synthesis and analysis of the data collected through various sources, including national legislative and normative documents, universities' strategic documentation, in-depth interviews, and online survey. The research report ends with the conclusions and discussion on the research project results.

Chapter 2. Literature review and theoretical framework

The literature review chapter reviews literature on the internationalization of higher education (IHE) and theoretical frameworks, including the definition of IHE, the elements of IHE, approaches to IHE, levels and stages of IHE, and the conditions impacting the IHE process. The synthesis and analysis of literature has assisted in building a theoretical framework for the current study.

Definition and Levels of Internationalization of Higher Education

There is a substantial body of literature on IHE. I will provide a brief overview of this literature focusing on the definition of IHE and identifying the levels, stages and elements of the process of IHE.

The literature on IHE can be divided into two representative schools: one following the approach that IHE is a process, while the other one defining IHE as a set of activities. The definition considering IHE as activities suggests that once the higher education institutions implement a series of IHE activities (like academic mobility, international cooperation projects, etc.), IHE is “done.” To the contrary, according to the definition of IHE as a process, in the changing world universities also need to keep changing and developing in order to be in correspondence with the global trends.

In terms of the “activities” definition, an important definition of IHE was suggested by Knight (2006) who defined it at the global, regional, national and institutional levels as the process of integration of international and intercultural aspects into the main university’s activities – teaching, research and management. At the global level, IHE is described by Huang (2007) as “a transition from technical assistance to the third world by [...] countries prior to the 1980s to a growing global competition and from personal mobility and transplantation of

national higher education models or systems within some designated countries or areas to programs, degrees, diplomas, campuses, and quality assurance” (p. 423). “In this process, [the author continues] aspects of the internationalization of higher education have gone beyond simple mobility of international students and members of faculty” (Ibid.).

IHE both depends on and influences the level of its realization, creating a sort of reciprocity. Thus, the interlinkage between the global, regional, national and institutional levels impacts on the process of internationalization because the processes and activities of internationalization themselves create that interlinkage and interdependency at different levels. At the regional level, according to Huang, IHE may be represented in such activities as the “establishment of international organizations, and consortia of universities” (ibid.), which can be arranged at the global level as well. When predetermined by the international trends, the “driving forces, policies, and practices concerning internationalization of higher education in individual nations” (ibid.) are “influenced by calls and pressures from international, regional, or global organizations” (ibid.). The “policies and strategies” (ibid.) at a higher education institution would depend, consequently, on those at the global, regional and national levels. So, the higher the level is, the broader its impact would be for the processes and activities of IHE.

In her general definition of IHE, Knight (2007) also states that the process may lead to the introduction of international quality assurance standards and bring innovation and mobility. To this definition Hudson (2004) also adds the universalisation of knowledge and/or “student knowledge of international issues” as one of the possible aims and results of the process. Therefore, according to Lee and You (2011), IHE has become one of the most important components of most countries’ education policies. However, despite such a positive interpretation of the process of internationalization, some scholars link IHE to commercialisation

of education with commodification of curricula, increasing number of foreign fake diplomas and low-quality providers of educational services, as well as a loss of cultural or national identity, or homogenization of higher education throughout the globe (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014).

To the contrary, in terms of the “process” definition of IHE, an influential work was presented by de Wit (2011) about the main misconceptions regarding IHE, in which the scholar suggests that IHE should be considered not as a set of IHE activities, but rather as a process. Further, the scholar argues that the “activities” definition of IHE incorrectly considers the IHE activities for the goals of the process. In other words, since the “activities” definition suggests that once the IHE activities take place at a university, IHE is completed, those activities become the actual goals of IHE itself, whereas de Wit (2011) suggests that IHE needs to be considered as a longer and more complex process of non-stop development of universities in order to fit the international trends in higher education. So, according to de Wit (2011), IHE should not be limited to activities as goals. The author presents his nine misconceptions on IHE (that it is not necessarily IHE if education is provided in the English language, there are many international students at a university and some of them in each the class, or there are many international agreements; also, IHE is not studying abroad, nor it is an international subject, as well as higher education cannot necessarily be international by nature), and questions the understanding of IHE as a program or a strategy.

One of the purposes of the current research is to find out which of the interpretations are shared in Kazakhstan at national and institutional levels.

IHE as Policy-Borrowing

Another perspective on IHE views it as policy-borrowing. Within the field of comparative education research, policy-borrowing is often considered as policy transfer. Sever

(2006: 483) views the concept only as a part of policy transfer and notes that there are at least five types of policy transfer as a “wider concept” including: imposed policy transfer, required or negotiated under constraint, borrowed deliberately, or voluntarily presented through general influence.

Policy-borrowing presents the fourth type of policy transfer – policy borrowed purposefully, and for this reason Phillips (2005: 24) calls policy-borrowing as a ‘conscious’ initiative which includes the investigation of impulses, making a decision, implementation, and internalization (Ibid.: 30). According to Phillips (2005: 23), having emerged in the 19th century, the practice of borrowing a policy grew from a “desire to ‘borrow’ ideas that might be successfully imported into ... home system”. Similarly, Steiner-Khamsi (2012: 3) argues that ‘travelling’ educational reforms move “from one cultural context to another”. Sever (2006: 483) also adds “globalization and ICT, free movement of people and massive migration, ... a rapidly growing exposure to foreign policies, ... relationships between global trends and local contexts” to the list of reasons behind policy-borrowing. Steiner-Khamsi (2012: 5) also argues that there are political and economic dimensions behind policy borrowing. According to the author, in political perspective policy-borrowing can be a tool for connecting opposite sides for the purpose of implementing an idea borrowed from the third side, while from economic perspective policy-borrowing can be one of the means for receiving aid in poor countries, and grants and loans in developing countries .

To understand the process of policy borrowing and lending, some scholars argue that it is important to focus on the context in the borrower country. Raffe (2011) compares policy borrowing to the concept of policy-learning. The author states that when borrowing a successful educational policy from abroad, policy-makers should take into consideration the ‘country’s own

history' (Raffe 2011). The argument is supported by Sever (2006: 486), who states that when 'adopting foreign guidelines' in education policy, the country's policy-makers need to decontextualize or recontextualize them for the purposes of adoption. Similarly, Phillips (2005) argues that the 'context of the target country' should be considered for excluding problematic implementation of a newly presented policy (Phillips 2005: 33).

Considering policy-borrowing as a process of 'legitimizing other related policies', Halpin and Troyna (1995) present active policy-borrowing as "involving the appropriation of identifiable aspects of another country's policy solutions, including ways of implementing and administering them" (p. 303). They also point out that the conditions for active policy-borrowing should include "some synchrony between the characteristics of the different education systems involved and the dominant political ideologies promoting reform within them" (Ibid.).

Another typology of policy borrowing is offered by Wermke and Höstfält (2014) who differentiate silent and explicit policy-borrowing. The silent policy-borrowing refers to a process when the policy is borrowed but there is no reference to the 'source' organization or country, so that it cannot be identified that the policy is, in fact, borrowed. In contrast, when there is no omission of the reference the policy-borrowing is explicit (Wermke & Höstfält 2014: 447). The directionality of policy borrowing is important to consider, too. The policy-borrowing can be viewed from the perspective of Orientalism. Thus, Steiner-Khamsi (2012) considers "travelling reforms" as reforms "transferred from the global North/West to the global South/East").

Elements of Internationalization of Higher Education

Although there are different definitions and understandings of IHE in academic literature, followers of the "activities" definition in the field agree that the process of internationalization is complex and includes a number of elements— or actual activities (Scott 1992; Francis 1993;

Knight 1994). For the purposes of the research, it is important to define which “activities” can be found in national and institutional perspectives in the framework study of state policies and universities’ strategies documents.

A useful classification of the IHE elements, found in the work of Qiang (2003), defines two types of activities: organizational and academic. According to the author, the “*organizational elements of internationalization*” include: (1) “*governance*” (for example, “expressed commitment by senior leaders,” “active involvement of faculty and staff,” “articulated rationale and goals for internationalization,” “recognition of international dimension in mission statements and other policy documents;” (2) “*operations*” like “integrated into institution wide and departmental planning, budgeting and quality review systems,” “appropriate organizational structures,” “communication systems (formal & informal) for liaison and coordination,” “balance between centralized and decentralized promotion and management of internationalization,” or “adequate financial support and resource allocation systems;” and (3) “*support services*” such as “support from institution-wide services units [involving] [...] student housing, registrariat, counselling, fundraising” and others (p. 258). The “*academic elements of internationalization*”, to the contrary, are more oriented to the content, rather than shape and management of internationalization. According to Qiang (2003), those include: (1) “*academic program*” (for instance, “student exchange programs,” “foreign language study,” “internationalized curricula,” “area of thematic studies,” “work/study abroad,” “international students,” “teaching/learning process,” “joint and double degree programs,” “cross-cultural training,” “faculty/staff mobility program,” “visiting lecturers and scholars,” “link between academic programs and research, training and development assistance;” (2) “*research and scholarly collaboration*,” activities covering establishment of “area and theme centres,”

development of “joint research projects,” “international research agreements,” “international research partners[hips] in academic and other sectors” or “links between research, curriculum and teaching,” participation in and organization of “international conferences and seminars,” “researcher and graduate student exchange programs;” (3) the “*extra-curricular activities*” like “students clubs and associations,” “international and intercultural campus events,” “liaison with community-based cultural groups,” “peer groups and programs,” “alumni development programs,” and “social, cultural and academic support system;” and, finally, (4) the “*external relations and services (domestic & offshore)*” involving such activities as development of “community-based partnerships and projects with non-government groups or private sector companies,” “international development assistance projects,” “customized/contract training programs offshore,” “community service and intercultural project work,” “offshore teaching sites and distance education,” “participation in international networks,” “offshore alumni chapters,” or arranging a “link between development projects and training activities with teaching and research” (pp. 258-259). All of the mentioned elements altogether or separately, constitute the actual processes or activities undertaken by a higher education institution.

Approaches to Internationalization of Higher Education

There are different approaches to defining IHE. Thus, Knight (1994) in her earlier works presents four most popular approaches to defining internationalization: process approach, activity approach, competency approach and organizational approach. The basis for the approach choice lies in the main focus of internationalization at an institution. For instance, when the main focus is to integrate internationalization into the university activity, internationalization is primarily understood as a process, and a process approach is undertaken. Next, if the university administration visions internationalization as a way to build such a

“culture in the university or college that values and supports intercultural and international perspectives and initiatives” (ibid., p.4), the approach would be organizational. Next, the activity approach is the one with a focus on comprising a set of activities, such as students or faculty/staff mobility, or internationalization of curriculum and academic programs. Finally, the competency approach to IHE is aimed at “developing new skills, attitudes, knowledge in students, faculty and staff” (ibid., p.4).

Rationales for Internationalization of Higher Education

Scholars of IHE agree that there are four main rationales for the process, such as political, economic, academic and socio-cultural (De Wit, 1999, Qiang, 2003). The political rationale is often found at the national level, when a state seeks to spread its political influence through internationalizing its education in the region and globally. This rationale, according to de Wit (1999), was more common in the post-World War II era. After the Cold War ended, the economic rationale for internationalization became more often at the national level (de Wit 1999). At both national and institutional levels, the economic rationale may also be possible in case the university is implementing internationalization for attracting more fee paying students. From the academic perspective, the process of internationalization may benefit university professors and graduate students, as well as undergraduate students, when allowing for international research collaboration and cooperation, or participating in international conferences and seminars. The socio-political rationale may represent a strategy of the government to get closer to the international community through internationalizing its education. Whether or not these rationales are applicable to the Kazakhstani process of IHE, poses one of the questions of the current research.

Stages of Internationalization of Higher Education

The theoretical framework for this study also includes the stages of IHE because it will help to identify the degree of the IHE at the national level and in place at higher education institutions.

The British Council offers their prescription of how a university could be internationalised as a step-by-step procedure (British Council official web page, 2016). According to the British Council, in order to achieve internationalisation, a university has to hold a clear understanding of what the notion means in broader terms, find the resources (i.e., money), get all the teaching and administrative staff at all levels involved into preparation and realisation of the goals, and prepare a plan of implementation. While implementing their plans, the university administration is to measure how far they reached on their path to the goals, and involve a number of academic, research and industry partners to the process. While the step-by-step strategy presented by the British Council serves as a prescription for universities on how to start the process of internationalisation, interrelated an analytical conceptualization of the process of IHE developed by Knight and de Wit (1995) includes the following steps (p. 26):

Awareness of the need in internationalisation and the benefits it can bring to students, administrative and faculty staff: the purpose at this stage is to get all students, faculty and administrative staff interested in the idea (and later involved in the process) of internationalisation, so that not only a small group of people is motivated to start realizing the initiative;

The *commitment* from senior administration leading the process: in order to create a plan for the IHE implementation, the administration (later leading the process) should express their agreement and suggest some support for the idea realization;

An in-depth planning of the IHE process: a unique to each university and based on the goals put forward for internationalisation, a plan developed at several levels of a university, includes all activities and services divided by priorities and time frames;

Realization of the developed plan by all university students and staff, which depends on the priorities, needs, resources and objectives at an institution of higher education;

Review of the quality and impact of the internationalisation process: this involves the monitoring of the realization of activities, and assessment of the entire process in terms of budgeting, timing, benefits and risks;

Reinforcement including recognition and rewards of faculty, staff and students participation: this includes building and maintaining a sense of achievement and success in the work on internationalisation, which refreshes the awareness and commitment stages.

While the six stages are described as separate activities, in practice they are all interrelated and interdependent, so the process of internationalisation is not linear. For instance, if at the implementation stage any of the points in a plan do not work well, actors can go back to the plan to revise. Similarly, if at the review stage the results achieved do not meet the aims set at the beginning of the project, both the plan and the implementation stages have to be passed for another one time. Also, after the sixth stage of reinforcement is reached, the achievements from the IHE project might motivate project participants to continue the process, and this brings the participants to the first stage, and then the cycle gets another roll.

To sum up, IHE can be viewed as a complex process that can be undertaken at different levels: global (e.g., by UNESCO); regional (e.g., in Eastern Europe or Central Asia); national (by individual states); and institutional (by universities). The IHE process can be driven by various actors, such as international educational organisations, NGOs, national governments, higher

education institutions faculty and administrative staff, and university students.). Driven by various national and institutional goals and interests, IHE includes a range of activities, such as university students and staff mobility and internationalised curricula and programmes and distance/online study. The IHE is viewed as a non-linear process that involves various steps with a detailed planning, and a constant review of progress and outcomes.

Furthermore, research of IHE also looks to identify the factors that influence the pace of the IHE process. Knight and Altbach (2007) identified the following factors: “political realities and national security, [...] government policies and the cost of study, [...] expanded domestic capacity, [...] English as a medium of research and instruction, [...] internationalization of the curriculum, [...] E-learning, [...] private sector, [...] quality assurance and control, [...] and European policies” (p.303).

Studying the discussions of IHE in academic literature was an important step in searching for answers for the set-up research questions. Thus, identifying the definitions, stages, rationales and elements of IHE might be used in defining how Kazakhstani interpretation of IHE at national and institutional levels differs from that presented in academic literature, and formulate the dominant interpretation of IHE in Kazakhstan. The difference between two definitions of IHE in academic literature sets up another goal for the research as to define which of the approaches are shared by the government and higher education institutions in Kazakhstan. The discussion of approaches to IHE is important for this study because it allows me to define what approach has been undertaken by the Kazakhstani higher education actors at the national and institutional levels in order to implement IHE, and whether or not those approaches match or correspond with each other. In terms of factors influencing the pace of IHE, the practical part of the research will supposedly show whether or not any of the factors mentioned in academic literature on IHE are

on the ground in Kazakhstani system of higher education, and how they influence the pace of IHE in Kazakhstan.

Chapter 3. Methodology

The focus of the current study was to examine the internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan, the issues and peculiarities of the process. As the literature review provided, there is extensive literature devoted to the IHE in different places of the world, but very limited research on the IHE in Kazakhstan. Although some studies on the issues related to internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan have been recently piloted (Sagintayeva & Ashirbekov, 2014; Tampayeva, 2015), there is a lack of studies on the interpretation and implementation of IHE in Kazakhstan. In particular, the purpose of this research was to understand how internationalization of higher education was interpreted in Kazakhstan at the national and institutional levels, how the governmental and institutional understandings of the process are different or similar from each other, and how and why institutional practices of IHE are different from national policies and institutional strategies. The study also sought to uncover the institutional practices of IHE: Are the university IHE strategies based on the state programs approved by Kazakhstan's government, or on individual experiences of each higher education institution? What are the regulations managing and monitoring the process of IHE, and how those regulations work in theory and practice? Finally, but not less importantly, a goal was to investigate whether state universities of Kazakhstan actually bring their internationalization strategies into reality, and how they manage to do that.

Considering the complexity of the research questions identified for the study, and the scarcity of research on IHE in Kazakhstan, I chose an exploratory mixed method research design, which “involves the procedure of first gathering data to explore a phenomenon, and then collecting quantitative data to explain the relationships found in the qualitative data” (Creswell 2012: 543). The study included four sources of qualitative and quantitative data: (1) analysis of

state legislative and normative documents; (2) analysis of state universities' strategic documents on IHE; (3) a series of in-depth interviews at national and state universities; and (4) an online survey distributed to all state and national higher education institutions of Kazakhstan.

While IHE in Kazakhstan could be studied in many different aspects, like the influence of universities with international connections, international accreditation, or the Bologna Process, the presented above methodology is chosen because the purpose of the current research is to find out the dominant general definition of IHE both at national and institutional levels, and the relationship between those. Thus, the focused study of the national and institutional policy documents and collection of data from interview and survey respondents is assumed to fulfill the purposes of the study.

National policy documents

The very first step of the research was analysis of state legislative and normative documents for the purposes of understanding the national policy on IHE in Kazakhstan. The following policy documents have been analyzed:

(1) The Law "On Education" in the Republic of Kazakhstan (hereinafter – the Law) is the most important document on educational policy. While the first version of the Law issued in 1999 was amended, I analyzed the latest version of the Law dated 2012.

(2) The State program for education development in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2011-2020 (2010) (hereinafter – the Program) provides information regarding education at all levels prior to 2011 when the Program was approved, and the main goals for the period from 2011 to 2020. The Program includes a separate chapter on the development of higher education in Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 and provides more details on the governmental perspectives on the strategic goals of the development of higher education in Kazakhstan.

Both the Law and the Program are legislative and normative documents that are free and easy accessible on the official web-site of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Strategic documents of higher education institutions (universities)

To analyze IHE policies at the institutional level, I analyzed internal strategic documents of two higher educational institutions of Kazakhstan: one of the two was a national university and the other one was a state university by status (as assigned by the state government), both located in different regions of Kazakhstan. The purpose of doing so was that such differentiation was anticipated to give a broader picture of how internationalization activities were planned at different institutions with different budgeting and opportunities for projects realization (considering that national universities in Kazakhstan were normally given better financial and physical resources, as well as higher requirements in comparison with state universities). The strategies on IHE are internal documents of universities and were not accessible. However, the main strategies of universities' development included enough information and data related to international activities of universities, and actually illustrated the picture of internationalization of internationalization at institutional level quite broadly for the scope of analysis.

In-depth interviews

Drawing upon the preliminary analysis of the national and institutional policy documents, I developed the in-depth interviews and the online survey questions. The purpose of conducting in-depth interviews for the research project was to gather more detailed data on international activities at universities from the perspectives of university staff involved in the international activities. The universities' strategies showed ambitious institutional plans and initiatives in

respect to internationalization, so I sought to understand the practice of the implementation of those policies. I conducted a series of interviews at one national and two state universities in both cities and towns of Kazakhstan in the summer – fall 2016.

Participants

As mentioned earlier, the research project included only national and state universities of Kazakhstan due to the reason that the purpose of the study was to identify the strategies and implementation of IHE supported both by the government and higher education institutions. For the in-depth interviews, the participants were chosen according to their responsibilities and expertise in the field of internationalization. Those included heads and managers of the departments for international affairs and international cooperation at universities, heads and managers of any possible centers for international cooperation in the sphere of higher education responsible for the issues of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan. The inclusion criteria for the participants involved (1) a full-time position at a university; (2) a full-time or part-time responsibility to coordinate or oversee international affairs or international relations at higher education institutions at the time of conducting the study (Summer – Fall 2016), and (3) at least 6 months experience of managing international activities at universities.

Recruitment of study participants

For collecting some more qualitative data, I visited three higher education institutions (one national and two state institutions). The universities were chosen for the reasons of accessibility of participants. Before coming to a university, each potential interviewee was asked for interviews either by phone or in person, and sometimes for permission from the universities' administration. The phone numbers of potential participants were either in the investigator's contact list or officially published on the universities' websites. When inviting to participate in

the study and right before taking an interview, all participants were provided with all necessary information related to the purpose of the research, the suspected coverage and outcomes of the study.

Overall, I conducted eight in-depth interviews lasting from 26 minutes to 1 hour 15 minutes after visiting three higher education institutions including one national and two state universities in two different regions of Kazakhstan.

Data collection via an online survey

In December 2016, after all stages of qualitative part of research were completed (involving documents analysis and in-depth interviews conduction and analysis), the project turned into its final phase of quantitative study. To collect quantitative data, an online quantitative survey was conducted targeting 40 universities, including all national (9) and all state (31) universities across Kazakhstan. In total, 21 respondents participated in the survey out of 40 potential participants, which represented a 52.5% response rate. The achieved response rate was considered comparatively high for the data collected from the online-survey to be considered valid and representative enough to draw conclusions for the population of national and state universities.

Survey questionnaire

The survey was conducted online via Internet software titled Qualtrics. Access to Qualtrics was provided by the Nazarbayev University.

The survey questionnaire was designed on the basis of the 4th Global Survey conducted annually by the International Association of Universities (Egroun-Polak & Hudson, 2014). The IAU surveys have a very similar focus as the current study does. However, although the IAU organization aims to identify the main trends in IHE around the world, the scope of their research

was very broad and focused only on the institutional implementation. Therefore, the survey questionnaire for the current study was adapted to meet the purposes of the current study and involved twelve survey questions. Also, the IAU survey was adapted to fit to the case of higher education system in Kazakhstan – the system where the ruling agency is the Ministry of Education and Science (i.e., the government), and the national and state higher education institutions are followers of the governmental policies.

The questions for the online survey were initially decided to follow the purpose of bringing out more detailed and precise information which hypothetically could not be found in either the state normative documents, or universities' strategies, or even during the in-depth interviews with national and state universities' representatives responsible for the developing and implementing internationalization. So, it was supposed that the information should be additional with the function of enriching the study with supportive data on international activities at the institutional level. The survey included 12 questions supposedly measuring internationalization activities at universities as responded by the universities' representatives. Among 21 responses, there were 2 incomplete and 1 closed at the very first question, and 2 more closed in the middle of the survey – thus I had 16 fully completed responses at the end.

Survey participants

Similarly to the in-depth interviews, the survey participants were those members of university administration officially responsible for international cooperation, academic mobility, and other processes classified by the current research as internationalization from 9 national and 31 state higher education institutions of Kazakhstan.

Subject recruitment

For the quantitative data collection (an online survey), the investigator first called each

potential participating university for checking the email addresses of potential study participants taken from universities' websites, and asked for more attention to the coming letter inviting to participate in the project. Later, all agreed universities were sent a letter with an offer to participate in the survey on IHE in Kazakhstan, also providing with a web link to the survey itself.

Further, each invitation letter to each university was supplied with a supporting letter from the Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences Dr. Daniel Pugh. Also, each email was accompanied by an informed consent form for survey participants. From those supportive documents each survey participant could learn about the aim of the project, main focus and more information about their participation (estimated time spent on the survey, risks and benefits from participating in the survey, and confidentiality assurance. If the potential participant agreed to take part in the research project, s/he was offered a web link, following which would bring the participant to the online survey.

Ethical issues

The study has received a research ethics approval according to the Nazarbayev University policies and procedures.

National policy documents and strategic documents of higher education institutions

(universities)

The Law "On Education" (2012) and the State program for education development (2010) are the officially published national policy documents, which both can be borrowed from the official web site of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. As for the universities' strategic documents, since both strategies could be easily taken from the official web-sites of the two universities, and no other internal institutional documentation was

borrowed for analysis, there was no risk for the secrecy and safety for universities. Moreover, the names of universities, which strategies were taken for analysis, were never mentioned but coded as University A and University B in the report. Also, in order to minimize the risk of identification of the taken strategic documents with particular universities as officially published on their web-sites, it was decided to use no direct quotations from the strategies and no citation.

In-depth interviews and online survey

Potential for coercion in subject recruitment

Participation in both in-depth interviews and online survey was completely voluntary. For an in-depth interview, potential participants were asked for an oral consent, which outlined the purpose of the study, the risks and benefits of participating in the research project. For the online survey, potential participants were sent an invitation to the study with a link to the survey, and it was absolutely up to their personal and professional decision whether or not to take part in the survey. Moreover, none of the participants were asked to sign any form or put their names or names of their organizations in the survey, because that would be found potentially risky for their anonymity. It was also announced to all participants that the research project was not affiliated with the Ministry of Education and Science or any other government agencies. Also, it was important to mention that no material or financial benefits would be associated with participating in the survey. The participants were all informed that they could withdraw from the study before, during or after their participation, or skip any question they would not like to answer.

Subjects risks and benefits

Both the interview and online survey participants were not expected to take any physical, social or legal risks related to their participation in the study in any possible form. However, during their direct involvement in the study (i.e. during the interviews or while fulfilling the

online survey), research participants might feel distress, emotional discomfort or anxiety, or any other kind of discomfort related to their possible unwillingness to associate the professional information shared with the investigator with their own personalities, and being afraid of sharing the confidential information. To mitigate those risks, both the interview and the survey were designed to focus primarily on the professional experience of participants, with no attempt to uncover the top secret issues that the university would not like to share. As guaranteed by the investigator, the names of participants, their institutions and towns would never appear anywhere in the research reports and other documentation, and all participants were informed about that prior to their participation, so that they could feel less distressed during their participation.

Safety Monitoring Plan

In case of in-depth interviews, in order to have all the received information recorded and avoid missing any important pieces of it, it was necessary to ask the interviewees for permission to audiotape the in-depth interviews, though it was optional. For the safety of anonymity of interviewees, it was decided to create a master list with interviewees' names supported with contact information, and ID names (pseudonyms) or codes, and the audio files with interviews were treated as confidential information and stored on the investigator's personal computer not available to anybody else but for the investigator herself.

For the quantitative survey, the anonymity of human subjects participating in the study was protected through the following measures: (1) none of the participants were asked to mention their names or for the names of their institutions, and (2) the investigator was not able to identify research participants or the names of their institutions.

Data analysis procedure

- (1) Analysis of state legislative and normative documents

The data analysis started with the analysis of the state legislative and normative documents. When the documents were selected, the qualitative data analysis of the chosen documents was conducted. A framework analysis was applied to identify the themes in the national policy documents (Charmaz, 2006; Cresswell, 2007; Gale et al. 2013). Procedurally, both the Law and the Program were, first of all, skimmed for the information related to internationalization and international activities at higher education institutions in Kazakhstan. Since the law provided with very poor information on any sort of international activities as it was supposed to be prescribed by the government, and the program was, to the contrary, very informative in terms of governmental initiatives for the higher education development, it was decided to report on both quantitative and qualitative sides of analysis in order to show the difference between the two documents in relation to internationalization. Also, the analysis of state documentation was productive for sorting out particular codes that would be a focus for analyzing institutional strategic documents, in-depth interviews and survey results. Some of the selected themes included in the analysis were predetermined and drawn from the literature on IHE, then applied to the analysis of texts of policy documents, texts of university strategies, and interview data. The content analysis included detailed reading of the entire documents, and scanning for any information related to internationalization. Scanning for necessary information was supplemented with open-ended coding of the sections of national documents concerning IHE, and later developing a list of identified themes. Additionally, in order to find out how important were those themes in national policies, I counted how often those statements of internationalization related activities and requirements were mentioned in the state documents.

(2) The analysis of university strategic documents

On the next step of the research project, I conducted a textual analysis of the universities'

strategic documents by applying coding procedures. This means, that some codes were pre-defined during the previous stage of analysis (at the stage of the national policies analysis) but also other codes were identified and collected from the universities' strategies. The codes were categorized. A table was created with themes that characterize the most common trends of internationalization and activities separately found in strategies of two different universities. The categories of codes identified in the national policies and later in the universities' strategic documents were later utilized for the analysis of data collected via in-depth interviews.

(3) The analysis of in-depth interview data

When the interviews stage of the study was finished, all interviews were transcribed. The transcripts were analyzed applying qualitative data analysis procedures, similarly to the previous phases of data analysis. The codes and themes developed during the analysis of national and university policies documents were applied to the analysis of interview data. There were also new themes important for the research but not found at the previous stages of the study.

(4) The quantitative data analysis

Data collected via an online survey were analyzed using the Qualtrics software. The descriptive statistics was obtained for each survey question (variable), including frequencies and percentage. Statistical data were presented in graphs and tables.

Chapter 4. Research results

The following chapter of thesis presents the results of four parts of research: national policies analysis, universities' strategies analysis, in-depth interviews and online survey data synthesis and analysis.

National policies analysis

The purpose of this part of study was to present the findings of an analysis of national legislative and normative documents, which represent Kazakhstani government's understanding, vision and management of the issues related to the IHE. The textual analysis of state policy documents was conducted using two approaches: the quantitative content analysis of the frequency of mentioning of certain concepts and the qualitative thematic analysis.

Quantitative content analysis

One of the main strategic documents for the system of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan, *the Law "On education"*, is a comparatively long document consisting of 12 chapters including: (1) general terms, (2) management in education, (3) system of education, (4) content of education, (5) organization of educational activities, (6) subjects of educational activities, (7) teaching staff status, (8) state management in education, (9) financial support of the system of education, (10) international activities in the sphere of education, (11) responsibility for the rule of law violation in the sphere of education in Kazakhstan, (12) concluding statements. Among twelve presented chapters, seven subdivisions in some way reflect – or have a mentioning of topics related to – the issues of internationalization or international activities in the area of education (chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 10 of the law on education). Among more than twenty seven thousand words of the document, there were found approximately fifty five cases for the word “international” (“*mezhdunarodnii*”) (though almost in all cases the word

“international” was followed by the words either “cooperation” (“*sotrudnichestvo*”) or “agreement” (“*soglasheniye*”), five repeats of the word combination “international cooperation” (“*mezhdunarodnoye sotrudnichestvo*”), two instances of using the word combination “academic mobility” (“*academicheskaya mobil’nost*”), and no appearance of the word “internationalization” (“*internatsionalizatsiya*”) in the entire document. Even though, there was a special chapter found in the law devoted to international activity in the sphere of education that included two articles with general statements about international activities at educational organizations.

The first article presents definitions for the main terms utilized in the document and includes sixty one most frequently used terms. Among all basic definitions, there are only two terms closely related to internationalization in its general and precise terms, including the definitions for “academic mobility” (“*academicheskaya mobil’nost*”) (term 2-1), and “credit system of education” (“*kreditnaya tekhnologiya obucheniya*”) (term 36), though there were nine more terms found as to a certain different extent related to internationalization trends covering the definitions for “bachelor” (“*bakalavr*”) (term 4), “masters” (“*magistr*”) (term 41), “master student” (“*magistrant*”) (term 41-1), “master program” (“*magistratura*”) (term 41-2), “doctoral program” (“*doktorantura*”) (term 18-4), “PhD candidate” (“*doktorant*”) (term 18-3), “doctor of philosophy (PhD)” (“*doctor filosofii*”) (term 57), “international Bolashak scholarship” (“*mezhdunarodnaya stipendiya Bolashak*”) (term 7), “document nostrification” (“*nostrifikatsiya dokumentov ob obrazovanii*”) (term 15) “distance learning” (“*distantionniye obrazovatel’niye tekhnologii*”) (term 38).

In comparison, the other national policy document analyzed in this study, *the State Program for the Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan*, had more statements

and word combinations closely related to internationalization. Thus, such phrases like “integration into the world educational area” (“*integratsiya v mirovoye obrazovatel'noye prostranstvo*”) and “the world/international best practices in education” (“*lutshiye mirovii praktiki v oblasti obrazovaniya*”) were repeated four times each throughout the document, whereas the word “European” was used in ten different sentences about Kazakhstan higher education oriented to the European Higher Education Area, or European level, or European Credit Transfer System, or European agencies for quality assurance, or simply higher education in European region. The word combination “rating of the world top universities” (“*reiting luchshikh mirovikh universitetov*”) was met six times in different places in the document of the program, while the duet “international standard (–s)” (“*mezhdunarodniie standarti*”) found reflection in ten statements on achieving those as a goal and way of education development in Kazakhstan. There are also different numbers for repeatedness of such phrases like “international experience” (“*mezhdunarodnii opyt*”), “international agreements” (“*mezhdunarodniie soglasheniia*”), “credit transfer system” (“*sistema perevoda kreditov*”), “international students” (“*inostranniye studenti*”), “recruiting international teaching and research staff” (“*privlecheniie zarubezhnikh uchionikh i prepodavatelei*”) and others. Generally, the state program for the development of education in Kazakhstan, being by its purpose and structure more specific and concrete than the law, provided the current research with a more significant number of phrases and statements as reflecting to the issues of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan.

Qualitative textual analysis

The text of the Law on education was analysed focusing on how internationalization or international cooperation in the sphere of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan can be

understood, what elements it includes, and what the roles of national and university actors have in this process, and how IHE is managed.

As it was specified in the quantitative analysis of the law, the document provides with key terminology used in the Law as related to the current system of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. As typical for most state normative documents, some of the terms identified with internationalization or international activities were found as providing with general definitions giving some freedom in actions for higher education institutions of all types (for instance, both for public or private, military or pedagogical, national or state higher education institutions) but requiring particular procedures disresponsible to the type of institution. Thus, “academic mobility” was defined as a travel by students or research instructors for the purposes of studying or doing a research during a particular academic period – a semester or an academic year – to another higher education institution (either inside or outside the country) with required transfer of credits for the studied programs at the own higher education institution or at another higher education institution for continuing the study (The Law “On Education”, 2012, ch. 1, art.1). This obviously general definition both does not restrict a Kazakhstani university of any type in searching opportunities for their students and staff to go and study or work abroad for some time, so giving them some sort of freedom in arranging academic mobility for students and staff, but also regulates that process by setting a requirement that all credits earned while studying abroad should be unconditionally transferred into their transcripts when getting back to a home university. Later in the document there was only one mentioning of academic mobility as such in the statement that it should be an authorized body in the sphere of education that develops, approves and sets up the order of sending to study abroad, including such through academic mobility programs (*ibid.*, ch. 5); this basically provides Kazakhstani universities with more

limitations in the process of academic mobility in respect to management of the procedure itself.

Likewise, distance learning was defined as learning with the help of IT and telecommunication tools through mediate or partially mediate interaction between students and teachers (ibid., ch. 1, art.1). Again, the definition was broad enough to include a number of different programs, courses, and activities to be translated through IT technologies from a university to its distance students either inside the country or outside of it. This, arguably, does not limit Kazakhstani higher education institutions in providing programs and courses to students living abroad, and this fact also positively affects the conditions for developing internationalization.

However, some other terminology in the Law on education provided more specific definitions of terms related to IHE, like “international ‘Bolashak’ scholarship,” “document nostrification,” “credit system of education,” “bachelor,” “masters,” “master student,” “master program,” “doctoral program,” and “doctor of philosophy (PhD).” The international “Bolashak” scholarship was identified as a national program of granting talented citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan with full scholarships for completing various master or PhD programs in the top universities of the world, or taking internship programs in there; the certificates on finishing such programs should be approved through the document nostrification process, as well as other types of certificates on studying abroad via other than “Bolashak” scholarships. The other mentioned terms all related to the credit system of education, and had very fixed definitions recognized in the international educational community.

Besides the definitions of the terms provided in the very first article of the Law on education, there is a chapter on international activities in the sphere of education as norms approved for all educational institutions in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The chapter includes

two articles with one devoted to international cooperation and economic activity in the area of education, and the second one concentrated on satisfaction of educational demands of the Kazakh diaspora staying abroad.

The first article included five articles with general rules for arranging international cooperation by Kazakhstani educational organizations and institutions; for instance, the opening statement of the article states that international cooperation should be organized according to the rule of law in Kazakhstan and in accordance with the state's international agreements (*ibid.*, ch. 10, art. 65). Another statement provided more specific description of what international activity the organizations of education could accommodate in terms of international activity. Depending on the type of organization, such agencies have a right to establish direct communication and arrange interconnections with international organization of education, science and culture, as well as to sign two-side or multi-side cooperation agreements, participate in international exchange programs for students and staff, and to join international non-governmental organizations in the sphere of education. Moreover, military educational institutions – with no specification whether it should be necessarily secondary or higher education – were allowed to train international students as dictated by their international agreements.

Moreover, educational organizations in Kazakhstan are allowed to have international economic activity in accordance with the law set up in Kazakhstan and the educational organization's internal regulations. The statement was surprising because during my interviews some of respondents told that their state universities were never allowed to have any type of economic activities with international (and even home) organizations and institutions either in the area of education or other related spheres. This disparity between the information officially published in the state law "On Education" and research data collected from the in-depth

interviews, though, may come from the discrepancy between the Law on education and other legislative and normative documentation that regulate the activities of educational organizations in Kazakhstan.

In addition to the national law in Kazakhstan and a university's internal documentation, it was the authorized state agency in the area of education that regulates international activity implementation by the educational organizations in Kazakhstan (*ibid.*, ch. 2, art. 5).

Furthermore, the authorized state agency in the sphere of education arranges negotiations with international partners and signs international agreements in the sphere of education and science, but also sets up the rules for arranging international cooperation by higher education institutions and monitors that process (*ibid.*, ch.2, art. 5).

The other fundamental state document in the area of education, the State Program for the Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan, was adopted at the end of 2010. The main aim for the program was to increase competitiveness of Kazakhstani higher education and development of human capacity through providing access to quality education for the purposes of stable economic growth in the country, while the program goals, among others, include integration into the global educational community and achieving premium level of higher education quality comparable with the best world practices in education (State program for education development, 2010, p.3). In order to achieve such a goal, the state authorized agencies and institutional organizations in the sphere of education had already joined some core international agreements in educational area in general, and in higher education in particular (*ibid.*, p.8), and the structure of education in Kazakhstan had been transformed in order to meet the international standards (*ibid.*). Consequently, the 2011-2020 state program for education development in Kazakhstan was designed for the purposes of development and improvement of

the system of education to support the state strategic development goals (Kazakhstan seeks to enter the list of 50 most developed states in the world) (ibid., pp.6-7).

Furthermore, one of the program objectives was to ensure the country's integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which already started with Kazakhstan joining the Bologna process in March 2010. As a consequence, the three-level higher education system has been introduced (involving bachelor, masters and PhD levels), which are described in the Law on education (ibid., pp. 9-10). One of the program goals is that by 2015 all Kazakhstani universities fully implement the credit transfer system (which is similar to its European analogue, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)) (ibid., p. 24). According to the program the integration of Kazakhstani higher education into EHEA requires the reforming the structure and content of higher education in Kazakhstan to be in concordance with the parameters of the Bologna process (ibid., p.50). These reforms include increasing the academic freedom through raising the number of electives for bachelor, master and PhD students up to 70%, 80% and 90-95% respectively (ibid.), and further developing of academic mobility programs (as one of the key Bologna Declaration principles) for Kazakhstani students to let them study abroad during at least one academic year for a program (ibid.). Furthermore, a special Centre for Bologna process and academic mobility had been functioning in Kazakhstan for the purposes of monitoring the processes set up in the program (ibid., p. 51).

As a concept, IHE also includes opportunities for international students to study in a country at its universities and academies. As mentioned earlier, according to the Law on education, military academies in Kazakhstan may provide education to international students in accordance with the academies' cooperation agreements and contracts with their international partners. International students also had a right to get higher education at Kazakhstani higher

education institutions – other than military as well – on a competitive basis on equal terms with Kazakhstani applicants in accordance with the public contracts (The Law “On Education,” 2012, ch.2, art.8). This aspect of internationalization – international students at home universities – was also presented as one of the key factors for the development of education in the state program. Particularly, the program specifies that some improvements had been initiated towards creating conditions for boosting attractiveness of higher education for foreign applicants and students (State program for education development, 2010, p. 10). As it is contended in the document, prior to 2011, when the program was launched, there had been more than ten thousand international students studying in Kazakhstan already. Anyway, the program goals includes increasing the number of international students at Kazakhstani universities up to 2.5 % by the year of 2015, and its gradual growth to the certain point of 3% by the year of 2020 (ibid., p. 25). Additionally, it is mentioned in its document that recruiting international teaching and research staff to Kazakhstani leading higher education institutions should be considered as one of the crucial resources (ibid., p. 60).

The Law on education also covered regulations on opening international and foreign educational organizations in the Republic of Kazakhstan and branches of such, which should be based onto international agreements and orders of the republican government. However, this area of IHE is outside the scope of this study.

Apart from international negotiations and agreements, IHE includes activities targeting educational programs and curricula. The Law on education stated that the integrated educational programs could be international, though not clarifying enough what that could mean for the programs implemented at Kazakhstani universities (The Law “On Education,” 2012, ch.4, art.14). In any order, according to the Law on education, the international integrated educational

programs should inevitably be agreed with the authorized state agencies in the sphere of education in Kazakhstan. In addition, the Program's goal was for 70% of Kazakhstani educational programs and curricula to meet the international requirements in the area.

According to the state program for development of education in Kazakhstan for 2011-2020, the number of Kazakhstani universities in the world top ratings also represent higher level of graduate and post-graduate education in Kazakhstan, so that increasing the quantity of Kazakhstani higher education institutions represented in the world top ratings were set up at a benchmark of 2 universities for measuring the program implementation achievements and results (State program for education development, p. 49).

Summary and Discussion

This section of the thesis presented the analysis of the Law "On Education" (2012) and of the State program for the development of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2010) focusing on the sections that discuss IHE aspects. While the law provided particular definitions and statements in respect to some issues related to internationalization involving academic mobility, credit transfer system, three basic stages of higher education, etc., the state program for the development of the sphere of education provided information about the purposes of the government strategy of IHE, its understanding of what that IHE should include and what the results should be. Thus, the main desired achievement of the state program intended for the years of 2011-2020 was a system of education producing high quality of knowledge and high level of human capacity, which could be qualified according to the internationally recognized indicators (ibid., p. 58).

However, as it is stated in both the Law and the Program, many intermediate goals should be met in order to fit international requirements or be in accordance with international practices –

this related to educational statistics, independent national institutional accreditation and independent national specialized accreditation (ibid., p. 49), etc. Moreover, the national qualifications system should be developed to be recognized at both national and international markets (ibid., p. 51). But should all the improvements be oriented only to international markets and international practices in education, and what is “international” for Kazakhstan? By this I mean that, first of all, both of the studied national policy documents state that the system of higher education in Kazakhstan, and higher education institutions in particular, have to meet the international standards, but none of them actually specify what standards should be taken into consideration. The challenge is that there are many different types of higher education systems and institutions in the entire world, and it stands unclear which ones should the Kazakhstani system of higher education tend to follow. Second, bearing in mind the diversity of higher education systems and institutions on the globe, one might ask why the Kazakhstani system of higher education needs to follow any particular model implemented in a particular part of the world, while ignoring the experiences of other regions and countries, because standards of higher education also differ in different parts of the world. If so, why the national policy documents on higher education development in Kazakhstan recommend following international standards instead of developing Kazakhstan’s own standards in higher education with consideration of international practices?

Furthermore, there is a strong accent put onto the Bologna Declaration in both documents analyzed, and a particular focus on the European Higher Education Area specified in the state development program. Thus, the government opened a special Centre for the Bologna process and academic mobility, which should monitor that more and more universities of Kazakhstan reform the content and structure of higher education at their institutions to be in accordance with

the Bologna process requirements. However, although it is a true fact that the Bologna Declaration is broadly recognized in the world, and in the international educational community, wouldn't it be risky in a way to be fully oriented to the European model only? Putting all the eggs into one basket could be dangerous in a way that the European higher education could hypothetically become less popular and credible in some decades or the other, depending on the global political and economic situations in future, the Kazakhstani system of higher education would also lose its positions in the global market.

Another significant finding of my analysis of the two main state documents in the area of education in Kazakhstan is that those legislative and normative documents did not cover all the aspects of IHE which could be found in academic literature on the elements of internationalization. In other words, not all elements of internationalization globally recognized as such are even mentioned either in the law on education or the state development program in education for 2011-2020; for instance, there is not a word of having double diploma programs, or provision of distance programs for international students, etc. This might also mean though that the government of Kazakhstan sets up its own priorities for IHE, not just simply following the international guidelines. If so, there is a discrepancy in two aspects that can be learned from the national policy documents analysis: on the one hand, both the law on education and the education development program highlight the necessity to meet international standards in higher education; whereas on the other hand, supposedly the government develops its own priorities in IHE for Kazakhstan.

However, since the studied national policy documents prioritize setting up particular mentioned activities of IHE at Kazakhstani universities, it can be argued that it is the "activities" definition that takes place in the governmental perspective on IHE in Kazakhstan.

Universities' Strategic Documents

This section of the findings provides a detailed review of how the national policies were reflected in internal institutional documentation of two universities of Kazakhstan.

Main priorities of internationalization at institutional level

The two university strategies present almost the same priorities and policies as related to internationalization (*see Table 1. Common and specific themes related to IHE at institutional level*). Thus, both strategies cover such priorities in universities' activities as *integration into the world educational community, meeting international standards and following international tendencies in education, entering the lists of top universities in global ratings of higher education institutions, gaining international recognition, international cooperation, academic mobility, recruiting of international teaching staff and students, international accreditation of educational programs, double diploma projects, joint research and development projects, and credit system of three-level education (bachelor – masters – PhD)*.

First of all, the two universities were giving some special significance to achieving the goal of *integration into the global educational area*. However, in doing so, University A strived for a pre-set as a policy of the Ministry of Education and Science globally recognized level of education and entering the world scientific and educational areas, while University B being oriented to the international standards in higher education aimed to gain the leading positions in the sphere of education in the context of near abroad. So, both trying to meet international standards in higher education, the two named universities of Kazakhstan follow different strategic goals – one chooses a robust engagement with the global educational community of top higher education providers of the world and becoming the leading university in its field in Kazakhstan, whereas another one categorizes leadership in the educational

community of the former Soviet states as a higher priority in their work, which is broader in terms of territorial coverage (in comparison to Kazakhstan in case of University A) but more specific as a particular goal for leadership. Nevertheless, both universities mentioned it in their main strategic policies that each of them joined the Magna Charta Universitatum and the Bologna process, and ratification of the Lisbon Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European region was a starting point for those processes, and each had membership in a diversity of international organizations in higher education.

Table 1. Common and specific themes related to IHE at institutional level

University-specific themes (University A)	Common themes related to IHE in strategies of University A and University B	University-specific themes (University B)
<p>Recruitment of University A's teaching staff at universities abroad;</p> <p>Enrichment of academic literature database in English;</p> <p>Linguistic centers for university teachers and students;</p> <p>Summer international schools on the basis of University A for local and international students</p>	<p>Integration into the global educational area;</p> <p>International standards and main global trends in higher education;</p> <p>Global rankings of higher education institutions;</p> <p>International recognition;</p> <p>International cooperation;</p> <p>Academic mobility;</p> <p>Recruitment of international teaching staff;</p> <p>Recruitment of international students;</p> <p>International accreditation of educational programs;</p> <p>Credit system and three-level</p>	<p>Leadership on the regional level in the post-Soviet space;</p> <p>Building e-library</p>

	education; Double diploma projects; Joint research and development projects	
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Second, both of the studied Kazakhstani universities identify *international standards and main global trends in higher education* as a priority in their planning and implementation of IHE work. Thus, the strategy of University B was developed with consideration of trends in the international higher education practices, and internationalization, according to the strategy of University B, should be implemented in accordance with the global trends in higher education and related developments and innovation. In comparison, University A identified meeting international standards in higher education as one of the main steps to entering the world educational area and obtaining the highest possible positions in global university ratings. Developed with respect to international standards in higher education, the strategy of University A planned to broaden the integration of education and science at the level of international requirements to higher education institutions, which could let the university assume that their graduates would be competitive in the global job market. Upon the whole, meeting international standards in higher education and following the main trends in the sphere could potentially help both of the universities, according to their strategic documents, to gain the world educational area and take the leading positions in it.

As for the *global university rankings*, entering those was another main goal for the studied universities of Kazakhstan in their development strategies in order to become the leading institutions either in the related sector of economy, or in a particular region. In particular, University B stated they aimed to take the leading positions in ratings on the republican level,

dominant – on Eurasian, and honorable – on the global level, and entering the list of top 340-350 universities of the world by the year of 2020 in the global university rankings prepared by “Quacquarelly Symonds Limited” international organization (hereinafter – QS). At the same time, University A mentioned it in their main strategic institutional document that in order for the university to enter the world educational community it was worth to get into the list of 300 top universities in the world, so every year the university sent an application to the QS organization in order to participate in the world universities’ ranking. The plans of the two universities seem to be similar in terms of understanding the importance of being in the top lists in global universities’ rankings and, with consideration of challenges and opportunities, setting up a realistic plan in that respect.

When having entered the world educational area via provision of high quality and international-standards-oriented education, and when being classified as some of the top higher education institutions in the world, the public universities in Kazakhstan would hypothetically or consequently gain the *international recognition*, according to their strategies. However, these two Kazakhstani universities showed a visible diversity in understanding what the recognition should be like. Thus, in the University B strategy under the rubric of “International recognition” the university mentioned titles of different international awards and nominations which the university had ever received. Further, University A did only specify that gaining international recognition could be one of the final results of the strategy implementation, when the university would be recognized as one of the leading universities in the field on the globe. So, there was a disparity in understanding of what international recognition is like, which could eventually mean no clear and clarified perspective on how the international recognition should be achieved and what results it should lead to. That difference could supposedly be explained by the lack of a

single definition of international recognition at the national level in the state policies documentation, and the freedom that the government gives to the higher education institutions in Kazakhstan in terms of interpreting IHE.

So, having a very clear target in entering the global universities' rankings, but a misty idea of how to prove their being a part of the international higher education area, and of what international recognition means, these two universities share a common broad and detailed understanding of what *international cooperation* and *academic mobility* projects should be like, and a clear agreement on the necessity of recruiting international students and teaching staff for the purposes of internationalization. In terms of international cooperation, generally, both University A and University B showed in their strategies they tended to fully participate in different international projects and agreements, which the universities already had signed at two sides - Kazakhstani and abroad. Besides, University A mentioned it in the strategy that there was a number of international cooperation projects with a number of partners abroad being in the process of agreeing and finalizing to be signed, while the work on the already agreed and signed projects was in the process of realization. Particularly, as mentioned further in the document, the number of agreements with international universities and research centers used to be 50 in the year of the strategy publication (i.e., in 2011), while the university planned to have that number increased to 55 by 2013, and 60 and 80 of international agreements by 2015 and 2010 respectively. However, the university distinguished some other target numbers among those mentioned for the agreements with the QS top-800 universities from the globe – to be 14 by 2013, 20 by 2015, and 40 by the year of 2020, whereas the number was 14 at the time of the university strategy being published in 2011. In comparison, University B mentioned it in its strategic document that the number of international agreements that the university held to 2011

(when the strategy was presented to the public), was 116 including all treaties with international universities, research and development organizations, and other scientific organizations from European Union, the U.S., Asia, Africa, CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States), international research and development funds, embassies and other organizations alike. Furthermore, both University A and University B claimed in the strategies to be participants of such international programs as TEMPUS, Erasmus Mundus, DAAD, Bolashak, and also to be a part of Shanghai Cooperation Organization University – all programs and organizations providing students and teaching staff exchange opportunities to their participants.

However, the main focus in such agreements, as international cooperation work was described in the University B development strategy, was participation of the institution's teaching staff and students in a diversity of professional development and study programs and projects – which means academic mobility of students and staff, – and this was most prominent aspects of IHE throughout the document. This element of IHE was also found in the institutional development strategy at University A, which provided with the information about international agreements on students and teaching staff exchange projects between the university and leading higher education institutions from the U.S. and Europe, and on teaching staff internships projects between the university and institutions in the European Union, USA, Asia, Australia and CIS. To the contrary, according to the international best practices as reflected in academic literature presented earlier, international cooperation in higher education should not necessarily mean academic mobility projects – first of all, because academic mobility is normally a separate strand in internationalization – but often different agreements on collaborative work in education and science, research and development projects but not only exchange programs for students and teaching staff. This issue illustrates the main disparity between conceptualization and

presentation of international cooperation in academic literature, and understanding of that at institutional level in Kazakhstan. At the same time, such understanding of international cooperation does not correspond with that presented in national policy documents on higher education in Kazakhstan, though the state policies do not restrict higher education institutions in interpreting international cooperation. This means, presumably, that it is not the disparity that exists between interpretations of international cooperation at Kazakhstani universities, but a freedom that the government gives to higher education institutions in interpreting IHE by elements.

So, academic mobility was viewed as a high priority for both universities of Kazakhstan. However, there were only a few similarities between two universities in respect to their academic mobility policies as reflected in institution development strategies. Both University A and University B mentioned their participation in global consortiums in particular fields of science and education, and, as already recorded earlier, in a diversity of international exchange programs like DAAD, Erasmus Mundus, TEMPUS, Bolashak, etc. In contrary, both understanding of academic mobility and plans for realization it – and even presentation of those plans in the main strategic document of the university – significantly differ between the two studied institutional cases. Thus, as presented in the documentation, University A reported on 0.3% of 3-4 year bachelor students participating in different academic mobility programs that the university offered in 2011, and the plan of the university was to gradually increase the number. Another plan for the university development in terms of academic mobility was to enhance the percentage of undergraduate students participating in exchange programs with QS top-800 universities of the world. As normally, the target levels were different for MA students and PhD candidates studying at University A due to the globally accepted requirements to such categories of students

of compulsory internships and fieldworks at universities abroad, so that the number were to gradually increase . Nevertheless, although University A holds its centers for academic mobility and a linguistic center – which should be classified as a supporting element for the reported efficient student exchange process, and that should theoretically also upgrade the capabilities of teaching staff for participating in academic mobility programs – there was a huge constraining factor limiting the university’s opportunities as reflected in the document in respect to academic mobility to be low linguistic skills of its teaching staff.

Contrary to a distinct and common vision of academic mobility at University A, University B showed a different perspective on the process. Thus, the university claimed to employ a multifaceted approach to arranging academic mobility of students and staff, covering double diploma programs, international exchange programs, (Erasmus, DAAD and others), recruitment of international consultants into PhD programs implementation, scholarly internships, participation in CIS University and Shanghai Cooperation Organization University. It could be argued in the international higher education community of scholars and practitioners, though, that double diploma programs implementation and recruitment of international teaching staff and consultants are the two elements of internationalization separate from one another and from other pieces of internationalization including academic mobility. So, as it was normally reflected in academic literature, academic mobility, double diploma programs and recruitment of international staff are all different types of activities in the process of internationalization of a higher education institution, but not necessarily flowing one into another, or being parts of each other. Furthermore, as it was stated in the strategic document of University B, the main goal for arranging academic mobility projects was meeting the requirements of the Bologna process. Additionally, as University B reported in its documentation, the academic mobility programs

were not being in full-scope realization, which might be explained by the approach limited to the Bologna process.

When being compared in terms of academic mobility planning and implementation, University A shows a strategy which is more in line with the global interpretation of IHE, whereas University B seemed to conceptualize that element of internationalization in its own way. On the one hand, this shows a diversity in interpretation of academic mobility as a part of IHE at institutional level in Kazakhstan, while on the other hand this might be in line with the governmental approach of giving more space for universities in interpreting IHE.

Another significant part of the internationalization process in the strategies of Kazakhstani higher education institutions was *recruitment of international teaching and administrative staff* to universities. Thus, as clarified in their strategic documents, both University A and University B recruit and invite professors and scholars from abroad to give lectures, workshops, seminars, trainings to their universities' students and local academic teaching staff. For instance, University A reported that nearly 55 international professors from western and post-Soviet countries found research opportunities and vacant positions at their institution, and money given from the republican budget onto recruiting international scholars were meeting the pre-set purpose and sponsoring visits by almost 50 international consultants in 2011. At the same time, that strand of international activity was the most fruitful in 2008 at University B, when more than 700 international academic and teaching staff visited the institution, which should be the result of the university's long-term agreements with international universities (including those entering the QS top-400 lists of global higher education institutions) and PR policy of the university at internal and external markets. Moreover, the latter point theoretically supported provision of better conditions to attracting international students to the

university as well (as reported in the strategic document of University B), though the university reported on a low number of those classifying the issue as a weakness in university's activity. In that respect, University A also mentioned it that there were still comparatively low number of international students at their university, but the institution planned to increase the portion of international students by improving living conditions for them and providing with linguistic courses to non-resident students, when necessary. So, in general, Kazakhstani universities agreed on the point that attracting international students, academic and teaching staff should be of high priority for a higher education institution in modern Kazakhstan, and universities illustrated it in their strategic documentation that a series of efforts should be organized for those purposes.

Further, the initiatives were found to be international *accreditation of educational programs* and *credit system* of three-level education. Although the former one was mentioned in the documents on the national level (the Law on education and The State education development program), it was still an individual institutional initiative driving a university to arrange some actions for gaining accreditation to some or the other educational programs that the university provided. At the same time, credit system was a compulsory element of higher education development covering all Kazakhstan, so that state higher education institutions just needed to develop to meet all relevant requirements to having a well-structured and efficient credit system of education.

Finally, both University A and University B mentioned it in their strategic documents about their plans and work in terms of joint research and development projects and a diversity of academic programs with international universities and other scientific institutions, which eventually could lead to having *double diploma* provision to their students. Such projects could

give Kazakhstani students some more opportunities to have their diploma recognized in the global job market and increase their competitiveness in there. For this to happen, University A, for instance, claimed to provide its students and staff with academic literature published in the English language – the language of academic literature of the world – and further increasing the quantity and quality of that strand of development, and even to offer some programs in English as well.

Summary and Discussions

This section of the findings chapter presents an analysis of how the governmental policies related to internationalization – as reflected in the state law “On Education” and the State Program for Education Development – were interpreted in the internal universities’ documentation – namely, in the main strategic documents at two higher education institutions of Kazakhstan with the national and state statuses.

The analysis shows that the vision of internationalization aspects and elements at the institutional level is much broader and deeper than it was found at the national level. So, at least the two studied universities of Kazakhstan through their strategic documents illustrated a deeper and detailed understanding of the particular processes arched by internationalization. That notice, however, could be explained with the purposes of those documents at the national and those at the institutional level: the purpose of a national policy is to show a general direction, and the initiative of each single institution is to find its own way in that direction. I argue there is a divergence between national policies and institutional strategies on IHE based on the fact that universities’ understanding of internationalization appears to be closer to the global interpretation of IHE, and included such strands as international cooperation with universities and scientific centres of the world, participation in the global nets of universities and educational

and scientific programs, academic mobility of students and staff, obtaining higher positions in the global universities' rankings, double diploma programs, application of internationally recognized standards of higher education, etc.

However, as the analysis of two state universities' strategies shows, universities might have different or unclear perspectives on particular elements of the process. Thus, although international cooperation was found at high priority at both national universities studied, the two institutions presented very different visions on how that should be arranged and maintained. Additionally, I found that according to the Law on education international partners for universities should be defined by the local administration in the regions of Kazakhstan, whereas there was not a word about that found in higher education institutional strategies. Moreover, as seen in the universities' strategies, it was universities themselves searching for strategic partners and planning international cooperation for their own development purposes. This presents a disparity between national policy for IHE and practical realization of IHE at institutional level.

The other example of different perspective on some elements of internationalization could be an uncommon understanding of academic mobility at institutional level. So, one of the studied strategies illustrated that the university's perspective on academic mobility was very different to the one typically applied in academic literature or in the world universities' practices – it covered double diploma programs and recruitment of international staff, both of which are normally classified as independent internationalization activities. Academic mobility was also classified as a part of international cooperation of international cooperation itself – the argument that would go in absolute counter to the one living in academic literature.

Upon the whole, it became quite clear from the analysis of both state documents and universities' strategies that the disparity between understanding and planning of

internationalization at national and institutional levels in Kazakhstan is significant, but not to the extent that we could talk about absolutely contrary approaches. This means, some elements of internationalization were taken in different ways by the government and universities of Kazakhstan (for instance, international cooperation or entering the global higher education area), and, moreover, some processes were not even taken clearly at institutional level but required at the national level (for example, gaining international recognition). This could be explained, though, by the argument that state legislative and normative documentation did not provide with concrete and more specific requirements in respect to internationalization and all processes it covered deliberately, so that more space in their activities allowed universities to find their own ways of understanding and implementing internationalization.

Another significant finding is that Kazakhstani universities are very much dependent on – but not limited to – state policies in their activities, including internationalization. Put other way, one of the features of higher education in Kazakhstan as a post-Soviet state, is that higher education institutions development strategies, external and internal activities are directed by the governmental policies, but at the same time there is some evidence that in terms of internationalization national and state universities of Kazakhstan (as the most dependent onto the Ministry of Education and Science) have broader perspective to IHE. However, the definition of IHE, as found out in the universities' strategic documents is still predominantly focused on activities.

In-depth interviews

This section presents findings gathered from in-depth interviews in terms of interpretation and implementation of IHE at institutional level in Kazakhstan.

Understanding of internationalization

The very first question asked from the interview respondents was of a more general sense, and aimed at directing my respondents to turn thinking on internationalization at their universities, leaving up all other issues. In fact, the question asked about respondents understanding of what might be internationalization for their institutions – or which interpretation of internationalization the universities chose and implied among all different perspectives to be found in academic literature, or at different international educational conferences and forums – and the responses forced interview participants to think and present their vision. In fact, it was noticed in all eight interviews that the question was a bit challenging for respondents because, as it was suspected, universities did not have any clear definitions of internationalization as a particular policy direction, but internationalization was very often rather a part of the entire universities/ activities. Moreover, all respondents replied to the question from the perspective of their own responsibilities at international departments. Thus, if a person was particularly responsible for academic mobility programs, s/he interpreted internationalization through the lenses of academic mobility and exchange programs; likewise, if a respondent's primary duties were related to international cooperation projects, his/her response was based on the experience of managing international agreements.

Particularly, I talked to two heads of international departments from two different universities, and their perspectives were more or less general and overarching in comparison to those given by subject-specific managers at their departments. For instance, one of the two respondents reported that internationalization should cover different aspects of the university's international activity, including different aspects of work. The other one head of department would also add that “any activity that involved participation of a foreign university partner or

any representative of the so-called foreign community could be classified as internationalization.”

In comparison, the international departments’ managers with special duties had even more unclear definitions for internationalization. Thus, a manager responsible for multilingualism policy realization interpreted internationalization as “a process when all participants of an educational system should have such language competences that they could participate in any international projects and exchange programs.” However, this might be also considered as a condition to internationalization rather than internationalization itself. Similarly, an international office manager responsible for international agreements mentioned only her part of work in her response. On the whole, the question seemed to be challenging for almost all interview respondents, except heads of international departments – supposedly because the heads of departments already had ready to give answers which they could give to anybody asking at any time – and it always took some time for the respondents to think first, and then reply. The responses, except those by the heads of departments, were often arguable and one-sided. These altogether might lead to a conclusion that there was no clear and particular definition and understanding of internationalization at the institutional level, which arguably was a result of none of such at the national level.

So, every respondent was focused onto a particular aspect of internationalization but not at the entire notion, but the heads of international departments looking at the process more globally identified the main goal for internationalization of their universities. For instance, they defined IHE as an integration into the global educational area. That perspective was consistent with – or possibly even borrowed from – the national policies, which clarify that the final goal for Kazakhstani system of higher education in terms of internationalization (where the term was

mentioned as such) and international activities should be entering the world educational area or community and get some leading positions in the sphere on international educational arena. However, such aims were clearly mentioned only by the heads of departments, which could mean that only universities' administration was aware of what were the governmental requirements in relation to internationalization, or they were just taught to learn the main strategic goal for internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan in general, and for their institutions in particular.

Main focus in internationalization strands

The main focus that interview respondents mentioned in their responses was always dependent on the specialty of their work. In general, the part of internationalization that all three universities mentioned first (and this hypothetically could mean that it was of the highest priority for them) was academic mobility. As it was reported by six of the eight interview respondents, academic mobility was being realized at their universities through such international exchange programs as Erasmus +, DAAD, Tempus; one respondent also mentioned that her institution had an agreement with the French Ministry of Education and several French universities for exchanging students each year. Funding for academic mobility was defined as complex for each single case – some budget was given by the international program, some – by the state government, the other part was university's costs, and sometimes it happened that a student had to cover some part of expenses by herself.

Although all eight respondents reported on existing academic mobility, very often the talk was mainly about outgoing mobility of students. Rarely, some university teaching and research staff could get an opportunity to study abroad for a semester or a year. However, the numbers of incoming mobility of either students or staff were much less than those of outgoing mobility, as

it turned out at all three universities. One of the respondents mentioned it in her response that international students hardly get used to the geographical conditions in Kazakhstan, though all necessary facilities were fully provided to international guests. Three representatives of a national university also mentioned climate as the first obstacle that potential international students could consider before coming to Kazakhstan, but also stated that her institution was still ill-equipped to provide, for instance, European students with all conditions they have in their homeland, including access to top universities' libraries, and to some international e-databases, as well as a dormitory meeting basic requirements (according to respondents' responses, Kazakhstani dormitories, for the most part, though have a free Wi-Fi, but do not have any study rooms, or sometimes even normal living conditions). Also, it is a challenging practice that dormitories of Kazakhstani universities often get closed starting from 11 pm, whereas in international practice it is normal that students can stay at a university library throughout the night, according to the national university representative. So, different interview respondents, among eight of them, agreed on the point that Kazakhstan is an exporter of international students, rather than importer, and that's why there is an unequal situation of both outgoing and incoming mobility.

The other one, but not less important part of internationalization, according to interview respondents was international cooperation and signing international agreements. However, all respondents mentioned it only after a targeted question that among huge numbers of international agreements (at some Kazakhstani universities there were found more than 300 of such) not all were working contracts, and other non-working agreements carried out a more official character. Basically, most of such agreements were in a form of memorandum on inter-cooperation between two or more higher education institutions (from Kazakhstan and from abroad), rather

than actual work contracts. This fact was also not mentioned by any of the interview respondents before targeted questioning about that. So, there were not real duties put forward by international agreements at Kazakhstani universities, which they could regulate and monitor. Nevertheless, in a few cases when the international agreements were “real” but not just official, the collaborative work was reported to be very significant and productive for the university’s development, according to interviewees.

Additionally, interviewees showed that all three institutions were strongly oriented to the international higher education community and the international standards in higher education. The overall impression from all eight interviews was that the respondents only work for higher positions in international universities’ rankings, or for meeting the determined (by universities themselves) international higher education standards, which were the European higher education practices, for the most part, as five among eight interview respondents used European education as a good example for this or that practices. Since this was the direction outlined in the national policies, the universities, most likely, just followed the governmental vision.

In general, the main focus of internationalization at the three universities participating in in-depth interviews was aiming at directly or indirectly learning international practices and adopting them in the given conditions in Kazakhstan. Thus, academic mobility was often explained as another opportunity for Kazakhstani students and staffs to see and try the more developed systems of education, whereas signing agreements with universities abroad and meeting international higher education standards were also oriented to bringing new elements to the system of higher education in Kazakhstan, particularly from the West.

Management of internationalization

For the purpose of finding out how internationalization was being managed at the

institutional level in Kazakhstan, and the peculiarities of the practical side of the process, all eight interview respondents were asked about the implementation of internationalization at their institutions in general, and the difficulties of it in particular. As interview respondents N-1 and S-1 mentioned it in their talks, when developing and approving the university strategies, including internationalization as an aspect of their work, they had some ideas of what was potentially applicable in their conditions and what was not, so that they tried to include only doable elements of work. That was why all internationalization activities mentioned in their strategies were being realized, and there were none of such they were not able to implement.

In general, internationalization was being managed at both national and state participating universities by the departments or centers for international affairs, i.e., by international offices. The internal control over the process, though, was a role of the upper universities' administration – university president at one of the state universities participating, and vice-presidents at the national university and another state institution. However, all eight participants were asked about the governmental role in monitoring their international and other related activities, and all eight responded that there is a ministerial monitoring of their activities, which were paper-based for the most part. In other words, as the interviewees reported, all Kazakhstani national and state universities were required to submit their monthly, quarterly and yearly reports on national and institutional development strategies realization in general, and on separate aspects of development in particular. Thus, as respondent N-2 reported, her department prepared their reports to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the number of students and staff sent to outgoing mobility from their university, as well as on the number of guest lecturers and international staff with a cyclic periodicity.

So, internationalization of higher education institutions was not only planned and

implemented, but also monitored both at the national and institutional levels, so comprising a sort of a system where the actor on the institutional departmental level (international offices) reported to the actor on the institutional administrative level (university administration), which in its turn reported to the actor on the national level (the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan), after which the data could be used by any requiring state or non-state organizations.

Geography of internationalization

The geography of internationalization that the interview respondents mentioned in interviews was quite broad. Although the main orientation in terms of standards of higher education and development were towards Europe, as mentioned in interview respondents, the geographical scope in terms of different aspects of internationalization varied noticeably. Thus, in terms of international cooperation, N-3 respondent reported that his university had active agreements with research centers and universities from some European countries such as Belgium, Czech Republic, Holland, as well as with universities in the U.S. However, the great portion of all agreements was with those states from Russia and Central Asia, since it was less expensive and more convenient to arrange flights, living conditions, etc. when the partner university/research center was in the near abroad, and also it was less problematic on terms of language because most of the work could be done either in Russian or in Kazakh, or any of the Central Asian languages.

The geography of international cooperation had expanded to Asia as well, according to another member of the international department at the same university N-1, including Korea and China, due to the growing number of research projects with Korean and Chinese research and development centers. As for academic mobility, the growing number of Korean and Chinese, as well as Indian (respondent N-3) students was coming to the participating national university to

study for a semester or an academic year. Besides, respondent N-3 added that a huge load of work was being done through the University of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Network University of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Additionally, respondent S-4 reported her university only have any collaborative research projects and student and staff exchange programs with French research centers and universities. According to the respondents, there were some memorandums with institutions in other countries as well, though, but the agreements were just on the level of paper signing, but not any real work. Similarly, respondent S-2 from the other state university admitted that the number of signed non-active agreements and memorandums at her university was several times higher than that of the really working contracts with no financial obligations ever signed by the university, whereas most of the active agreements were with institutions located in Russia and some Eastern European states (again because it was cheaper).

Generally, the geography of internationalization at Kazakhstani higher education institutions was found quite diverse, though smaller in the state universities as compared to the national university. This finding might be explained by the fact that a higher education institution with the status of “national” was always better funded by the government and monitored with higher requirements.

Impact of internationalization

The question about the impact of internationalization for a higher education institution in Kazakhstan was offered to all interview participants, and all of respondents viewed the process as a factor that has positively influence on the development of the system of higher education in Kazakhstan. As respondent N-3 stated, if his university wanted to be more competitive on national, regional and international arenas, they needed to imply the international standards of

higher education. That perspective was quite predictable basing on the results of the universities' strategic documents analysis. By this I mean that since in the development strategies of their institutions Kazakhstani universities mentioned it that the main focus was entering the international higher education community, share its standards, and to be in the lists of top higher education providers. That is why internationalization was in general considered by interview respondents as bringing positive developments and new international of higher education and the processes of providing it.

Risks in internationalization

Despite the privileges that internationalization might bring to a higher education organization in Kazakhstan, all interview respondents were asked to think about any possible risks hiding behind the process. Unexpectedly, interviewees responded to the question all in different ways. Thus, the two interviewed head of international departments responded that the main risk was funding – for instance, respondent S-1 told that since the university was state, they were fully dependent on ministerial financing, so that if it stopped they would not be able to realize any plans including those in terms of internationalization. This already happened once, when the government stopped financing a governmental program for recruiting international staff to Kazakhstani universities, as respondent N-1 (also the head of department) could explain. Additionally, as respondent N-1 further explained, since their national university was fully funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, if the financing was cut, they would need to “run after each applicant” recruiting her/him to enter the university in order to get finances for his study, like all private universities do in Kazakhstan. Moreover, respondent N-1 was afraid that her institutions might also have lack of experience of self-financing, which would be another serious problem related to funding.

However, the managers at universities' departments for international affairs were more oriented to the social issues internationalization might bring to Kazakhstan. Thus, respondent N-2 mentioned it in her response that there could be a lack of understanding among Kazakhstani society, especially among older group of population of Kazakhstan who still had Soviet ideologies in their minds. That statement could also be supported by a claim made by respondent S-3 that the main problem in terms of international activities at his state university was that the older part of their teaching staff, those who studied under the Soviet rule, were more reluctant to international communication both in terms of research and mobility.

The other one possible risk in internationalization was brain drain from Kazakhstan, as mentioned both by respondent S-2 and respondent N-2. In other words, the members of both national and state institutions – those working on international projects and directly managing internationalization at their institutions – identified a possibility that since internationalization opened borders, some portion of brainpower might leave Kazakhstan for better opportunities in terms of research and development to other countries as more developed in the sphere of their research interest, rather than improve that sphere of science/research in their own country.

Drivers of internationalization

In order to find out some more information on management of internationalization at participating national and state universities, both heads and managers of international offices were asked about the governmental support or support from private external organizations in their process of internationalization. However, as it turned out, no support in terms of human capacity building or developing and implementing internationalization strategies was provided by either governmental organizations (except financing, which is a general budget of a university given by the Ministry of Education and Science for different purposes, not only for

internationalization) or business. Moreover, as respondent S-1 mentioned, none of state universities of Kazakhstan were allowed to have any deals with business, and especially receive any financial support from business organizations. The same was reported at the national university participating in the research project, and according to the response of N-4, his university was not allowed to have any financial deals with business.

At the same time, respondents at both national and state higher education institutions complained about having insufficient budget for realization of internationalization, especially after closing the funding program for recruiting international staff. For instance, as N-1 respondent reported, after the mentioned program was closed several years ago, the amount of international staff lessened significantly. Respondent S-4 from a state university also claimed that their financial support from the government was not really enough to realize all the goals set up by the government itself in their national development strategies and policies.

Summary and discussions

At the end of each interview respondents were asked about their imagined ideal process of internationalization. Of course, their responses differed depending on the main focus of work of each respondent. Thus, a manager working at the state university responsible for international research projects realization (respondent S-2) was dreaming of such international reputation and recognition of her university that higher education from the near and far abroad would all apply to be partners of her institution. Her colleague, respondent S-3, would like to have all teaching staff and students at his university freely speaking English or other foreign languages, so that they could participate in interesting high-stakes international research projects for their own and university's development. Respondents S-4 and N-2 also dreamed about the latest. Other respondents also told their ideal internationalization would be implemented at a university with

full equipment and all necessary facilities, so that those two factors would not be obstacles on their way to internationalization (respondent N-3).

In general, it was clear after all interviews were conducted that although national policies were not very clear about what was internationalization, and how particularly should the process be implemented, universities' implementation of internationalization was quite broad process covering many elements of internationalization mentioned in academic literature of academic and research collaboration elements, but still not for external services.

Online survey

This section presents the results of the online survey distributed to all national and state higher education institutions of Kazakhstan, with the response rate to be 52.5%.

Participant universities

For the purposes of safety and confidentiality of survey participants, it was decided that the titles of universities should not be asked for in the survey. Rather, in order to gain at least some information about the institutions, it was decided to include a question about the programs a higher education institution offered at the time of responding to the survey questionnaire; this type of information was important for the study of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan because as the qualitative study proved, most of the international activities held by universities were done by graduate and post-graduate students due to the requirements by the Ministry of Education and Science in Kazakhstan for all Master students and PhD candidates to participate in international conferences and other different sorts of international practices. As the results showed, the total number of responding institutions offered bachelor and master programs, whereas PhD programs were offered by only 95% of responding universities (*see Table 2. Programs offered at Kazakhstani national and state universities*).

Table 2. Programs offered at Kazakhstani national and state universities (N=21)

#	Programs offered at Kazakhstani universities	Number/%
1	Bachelor	21/100.00%
2	Masters	21/100.00%
3	PhD	20/95.00%

Documental support for internationalization at Kazakhstani universities

The next questions were all closely related to internationalization of higher education institutions responding to the survey, among which the very first question was aimed to uncover general information about internationalization at universities, including questions about internationalization strategies and plans. At most universities internationalization was a part of the general university strategy (18 responses, or almost 95%), and most of the universities also developed separate internationalization plans of implementation (more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total number of respondents, 15 responses). This confirmed the information gathered from the interviewees, who also claimed that their internationalization policies were included into the main strategies of universities (*see Table 3. Internationalization management at Kazakhstani universities*).

Table 3. Internationalization management at Kazakhstani universities (N=21)

#	Survey questions	Participants' responses(N=19)		
		Yes, N/%	No, N/%	Not Sure, N/%
1	Is internationalization a part of the university development strategy?	18/95%	-	1/5%

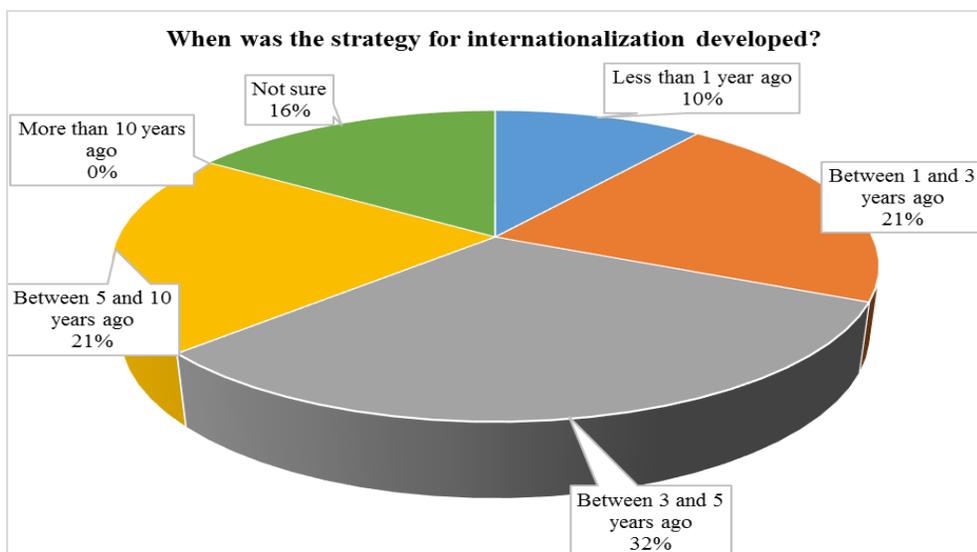
2	Is there a developed internationalization plan at your university?	15/79%	2/11%	2/10%
3	Is there an office to manage internationalization at your university?	16/84%	2/11%	1/5%
4	Is there a budgetary provision for implementing internationalization?	14/74%	4/21%	1/5%
5	Is there a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the progress of internationalization?	11/58%	2/10%	6/32%
6	Do you have any explicit targets and benchmarks included in the strategy?	14/74%	1/ 5%	4/21%

Surprisingly, approximately 11% (2 respondents) of respondents reported that there was not office or department at their institutions to manage the process – that piece of information was unexpected because as the universities’ strategies analysis and in-depth interviews data proved, normally higher education institutions of Kazakhstan have special offices responsible for overseeing the internationalization offices, and sometimes those offices were even compound of two or three smaller departments. As the quantitative data showed, however, there were some institutions where international activities were not put as a special responsibility for a separate department, but, most likely, was either an additional work load for different administrative offices, or not managed at all (which was less likely due to the requirement of the government to have international activities at higher educational institutions of Kazakhstan). Even more than that was the proportion of respondents claiming of no targets and benchmarks in their strategies related to internationalization. Also, it was unexpected to see that more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of all survey respondents reported on no budgetary provision at their institutions for the purposes of internationalization – this fact also went in contradiction with the information gathered at previous stages of research where both the state and institutional documents and interview respondents claimed that each university was given a special budget for international activities

including academic mobility, international research cooperation, etc. Consequently, only 58% (11 responses) of all respondents reported on having some sort of evaluation procedure for measuring their progress in internationalization, whereas almost 1/3 or respondents were frustrated by the question having no idea about any internationalization evaluating criteria.

The disparity, however, could be partially explained by the supposition that not all survey participants were highly experienced in management of international activities at their higher education institutions. The assumption was made basing on the replies to the following question, and especially on the diversity of responses. Supposedly, the universities' strategies at most institutions were developed at almost the same time when the government required higher education institutions to do so, and so the diversity of responses about the dates of university strategy development could illustrate that some of the survey participants came to international departments not far before their participation in the research (*see Figure 1. Universities' strategies development dates*).

Figure 1. Universities' strategies development dates (N=19)



Goals for internationalization

In order to find out universities' intentions in respect to internationalization and their

possible goals, the survey involved a question about reasons for Kazakhstani higher education institutions to implement internationalization except the governmental requirement. Each participant was offered a choice of seven possible goals for internationalization which should be ranked by the scale from “not significant” to “very significant.” However, such possible goals as “international research collaboration,” “outgoing mobility opportunities for students (including exchange programs),” “recruiting international students,” and “recruiting international scholars and professors” were all classified as of high level of significance for their institutions, whereas the other two options (“increasing the university’s ranking for the purposes of marketing and recruiting fee paying students” and “delivery of distance education courses and programs to students living outside Kazakhstan”) were taken comparatively more challenging to decide on and less significant (*see Table 4. Levels of priority given to different IHE goals in universities’ strategies*).

Table 4. Levels of priority given to different IHE goals in universities’ strategies, N=19

<i>Possible goals</i>	<i>Participants’ responses</i>				
	<i>Not sure, N/%</i>	<i>Not significant, N/%</i>	<i>Less significant, N/%</i>	<i>Significant, N/%</i>	<i>Very significant, N/%</i>
International research collaboration	-	-	2/11%	9/47%	8/42%
Outgoing mobility opportunities for students (including exchange programs)	-	-	-	8/42%	11/58%
Outgoing mobility opportunities for faculty/staff	-	-	-	11/58%	8/42%
Recruiting international students	-	-	-	10/53%	9/47%
Recruiting international scholars and professors	-	-	-	7/37%	12/63%

Increasing the university's ranking for the purposes of marketing and recruiting fee paying students	1/5%	-	4/21%	7/37%	7/37%
Delivery of distance education courses and programs to students living outside Kazakhstan	3/16%	1/5%	7/37%	6/32%	2/10%

Additionally, all participants were offered to include their own goals for internationalization and give them any level of priority. Classifying their own options as of medium and high levels of significance, participants also identify internationalization as a way of bringing new opportunities to their universities in terms of partnership like “an opportunity to realize partnership programs,” “collaborative educational programs,” “development of double diploma programs with universities abroad,” “exchange partnership,” “increasing the geographical scope of partnership,” as well as in terms of improving their positions in international rankings and programs like in the Bologna process, and “recognition and quality assurance by international accreditation and rating agencies.” Also, some universities’ representatives claimed to see internationalization as another chance to “increase the number of courses taught in English” and “increase the level of foreign language proficiency.” Generally, it could be argued that universities of Kazakhstan take internationalization as an important part of their development and an opportunity bringing process.

Rationales for internationalization

In respect to the main rationales universities might follow in their internationalization activities, survey participants were offered three options and a blank field to type their own versions of rationales. As the closed options illustrated, more than a half of all participants found the improvement of “student preparedness for a globalized/internationalized world” as significant, whereas more than 60% (12 responses) of participants responded that “increasing

and improving research capacities of students and faculty/staff” and “improving academic quality” were very significant for their institutions (*see Table 5. Rationales for internationalization at Kazakhstani universities*). At the same time, survey respondents also offered such variants for rationales for internationalization at their institutions as “development of scientific and research activity of universities,” “development of critical thinking,” “modernization of educational process,” “improving the attractiveness of educational programs,” “improving universities’ ratings at national and international levels” (mentioned by four institutions), “increasing the competitiveness of universities’ graduates,” “improving quality of multilanguage groups of students,” as well as “integration of a university into the international educational area and diversification of educational services.”

Table 5. Rationales for internationalization at Kazakhstani universities (N=19)

<i>Rationales</i>	<i>Participants’ responses</i>				
	<i>Not sure, N/%</i>	<i>Not significant, N/%</i>	<i>Less significant, N/%</i>	<i>Significant, N/%</i>	<i>Very significant, N/%</i>
Improve student preparedness for a globalized/internationalized world	-	-	3/16%	10/54%	6/32%
Increase and improve research capacities of students and faculty/staff	-	-	-	7/37%	12/63%
Improve academic quality	-	-	-	6/32%	13/68%

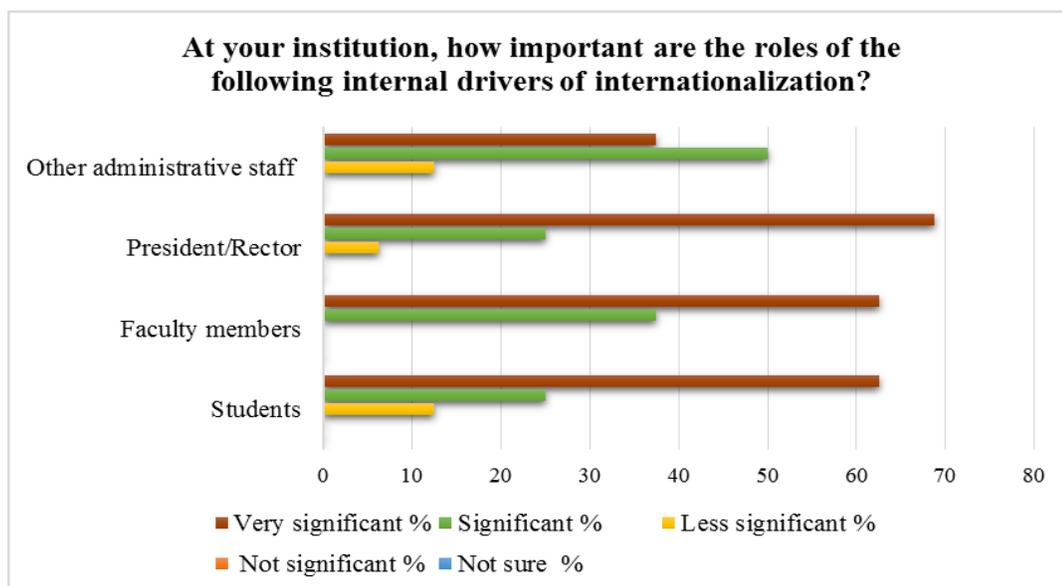
The rationales mentioned by universities themselves were found all oriented to meeting international standards in higher education or universities’ positions in international rankings agencies, though with a little focus to development in science and research. This understanding of the purposes of internationalization for a higher education institution in Kazakhstan was already pre-set in the state legislative and normative documentation which tend to force all universities of Kazakhstan to enter international educational community and get the highest possible positions in international ranking agencies like QS or alike. This focus was also found

in universities' strategic documents created on the basis of state documentation, and even in responses of interview participants. Nevertheless, such an approach could arguably be proved as one of the leading ones in Kazakhstani universities' understanding of the purposes of internationalization.

Internal and external drivers of internationalization

It was important to understand what drivers of internationalization are from the perspective of Kazakhstani universities, including internal institutional and external agencies. Thus, all survey participants were offered a list of possible internal drivers of the process involving students, faculty members, upper administration and other administrative staff of universities. According to survey responses, all mentioned internal drivers of internationalization should be classified as significant in higher or lower extent (*see Figure 2. Internal drivers of internationalization at Kazakhstani universities*).

Figure 2. Internal drivers of internationalization at Kazakhstani universities, N=19



As for the external drivers, participants reported that the most significant driving force for the universities to implement internationalization was the state requirement. Though the state

normative and legislative documents did not clearly describe what that IHE is, 75% of all survey respondents mark state policy demand as the main driver in their internationalization, rather than universities' own interest (see Table 6. *External drivers for internationalization at Kazakhstani universities*).

Table 6. *External drivers for internationalization at Kazakhstani universities (N=16)*

<i>Possible external drivers</i>	<i>Participants' responses</i>				
	<i>Not sure, N/%</i>	<i>Not significant, N/%</i>	<i>Less significant, N/%</i>	<i>Significant, N/%</i>	<i>Very significant, N/%</i>
The demand of the state policy: law on education, higher education development program, annual addresses of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan	1/6%	-	-	3/19%	12/75%
The demand of the local executive board (oblast/town/regional mayor administration)	2/12%	1/6%	7/44%	4/25%	2/13%
Regional business and industry demand	2/12%	2/13%	2/13%	10/62%	-

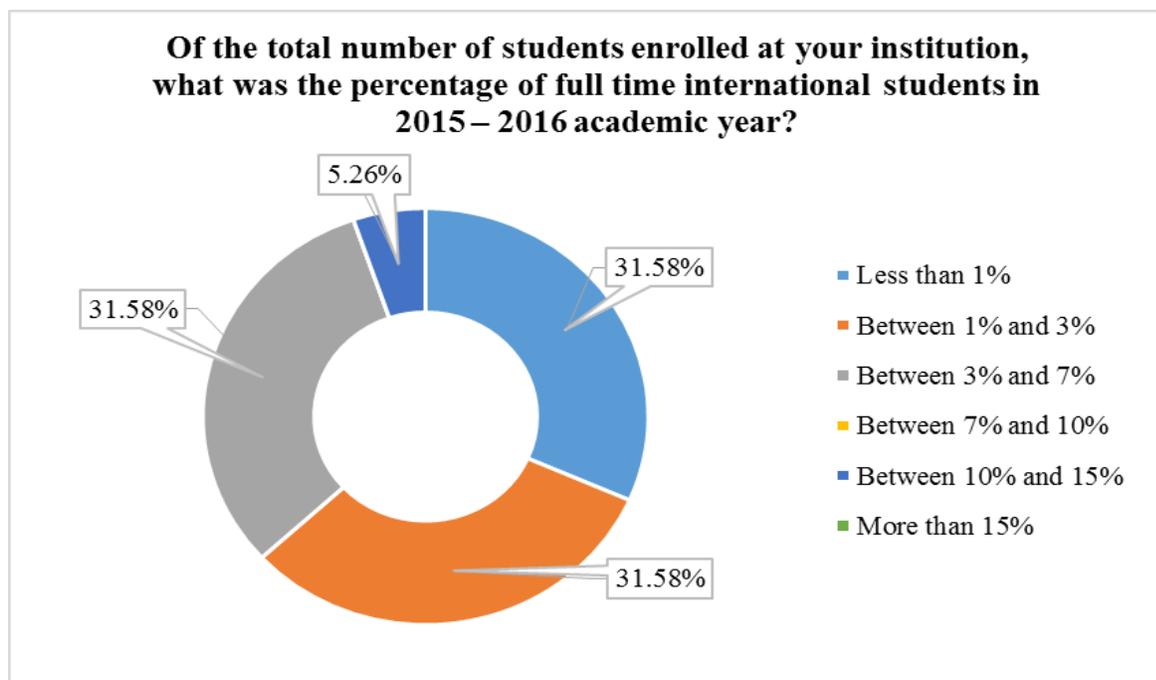
The requirement set up by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as “state policy” and “modernization of Kazakhstani system of higher education” was also mentioned as respondents' own answers to the question about drivers of IHE. In addition, the external drivers of internationalization as were international organizations that the university was a part of and nongovernmental organizations' support.

International students

As the international literature on internationalization suggests, one of its elements should be recruitment of international students (see Figure 3. *Number of international students at Kazakhstani universities*). Of course, this means that a university should be able to provide such

students with all necessary conditions, including educational programs and courses in a foreign language or in English as an agreed language of academic literature throughout the globe, as well as study and living facilities and conditions (dormitory, library, laboratory equipment, access to closed international libraries and databases, Internet access on campus, etc.). As it was learned from the qualitative data of the current research project, not many universities of Kazakhstan could be proud of having all modern conditions and equipment to recruit international students, especially from development countries. These facts could arguably explain that the portions of international students, as reported by the survey participants, were comparatively low (not more than 3% for the most part).

Figure 3. Number of international students at Kazakhstani universities (N=16)

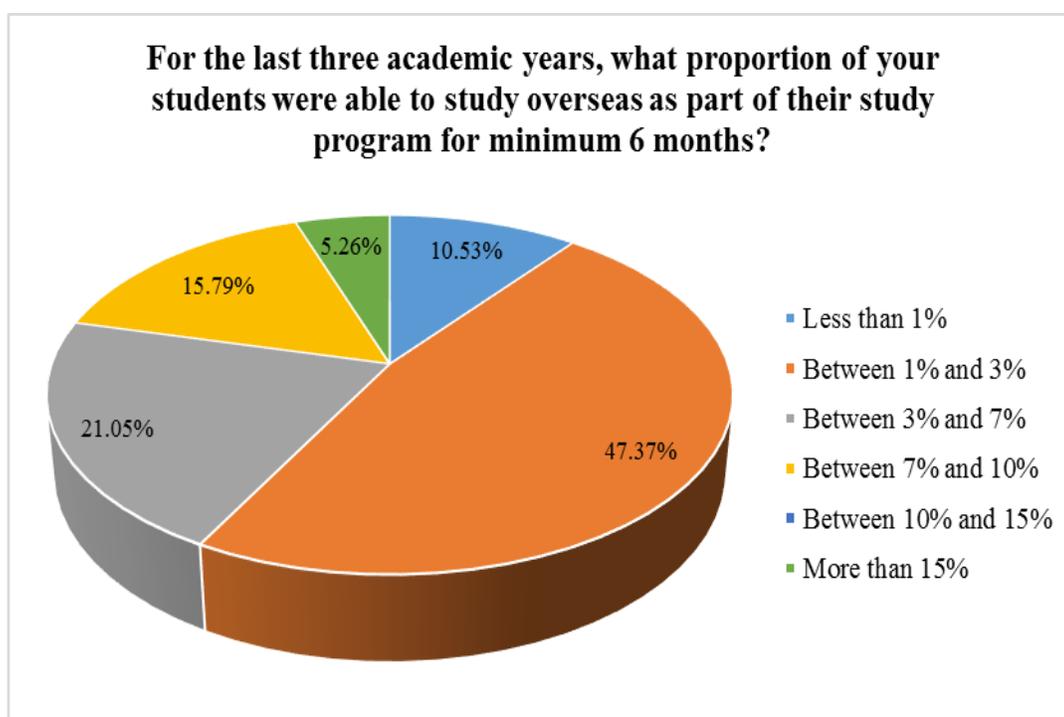


Study abroad

To the contrary, during the period of three past years more Kazakhstani higher education institutions have been able to send their students for at least one semester to study at an international partner university. As the quantitative data illustrated, almost half of all survey

respondent institutions had been able to send from 1% to 3% of all university students by the exchange programs or for internships, whereas more than 5% of survey participants had sent more than 15% of their students to study abroad for at least 6 months (*see Figure 4. Out-going academic mobility in Kazakhstan*). These data proved the conclusion drawn up from the in-depth interviews that the out-going student mobility in Kazakhstan is a more developed sector in the system of higher education than the incoming mobility.

Figure 4. Out-going academic mobility in Kazakhstan (N=16)



Risks of IHE

Among the possible risks that might be brought in by internationalization to a Kazakhstani university, the following ones were offered to the survey participants:

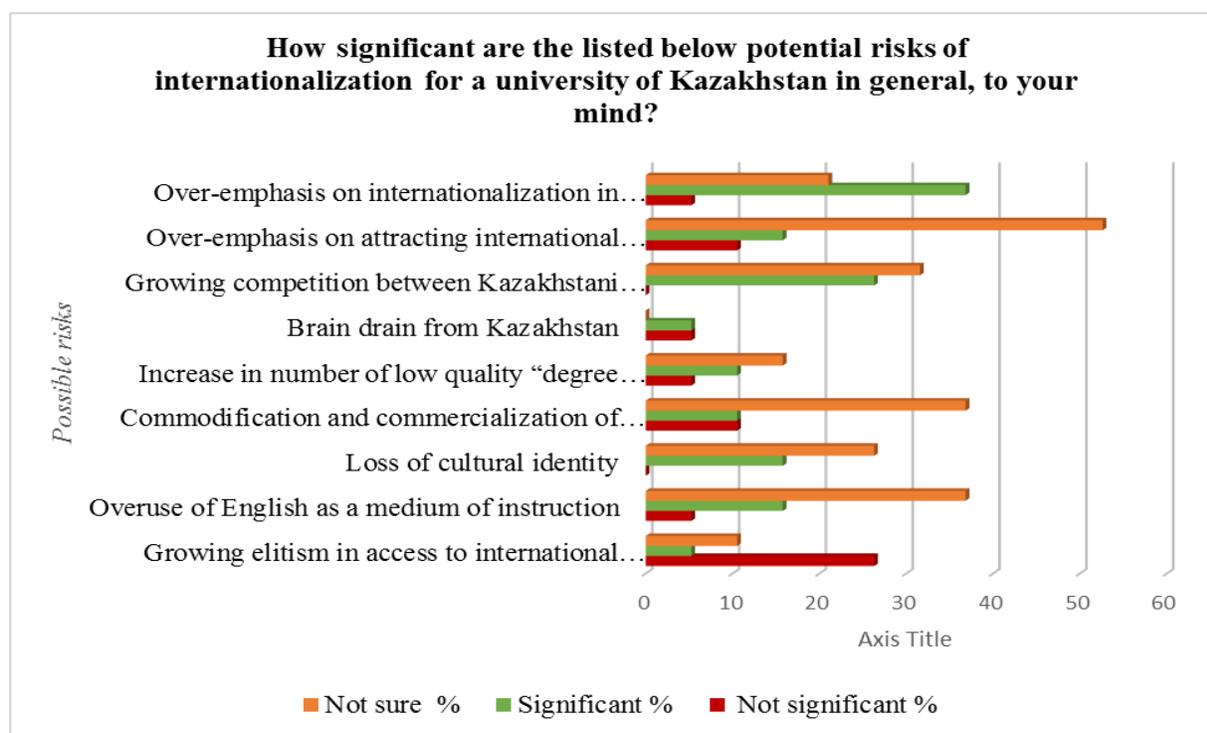
- Growing elitism in access to international education opportunities;
- Overuse of English as a medium of instruction;
- Loss of cultural identity;

- Commodification and commercialization of education programs;
- Increase in number of low quality “degree mills;”
- Brain drain from Kazakhstan;
- Growing competition between Kazakhstani universities for better positions in international university rankings;
- Over-emphasis on attracting international students with limiting the number of positions for local candidates;
- Over-emphasis on internationalization in general at the expense of other priorities.

The most serious risk considered by the universities’ representatives were overemphasizing the role of internationalization at the expense of other university’s activities, as well as growing competition between Kazakhstani universities. At the same time, elitism in access to international education opportunities was not considered as a potential risk by most of the universities – that might be explained by the interview respondents by the fact that at the current stage of higher education development in Kazakhstan there is rather a lack of students and research/teaching staff with high foreign language competencies, than a competition between potential candidates for international scholarship programs. This means that elitism in access to international programs could be in case there was the vast majority of potential programs participants meeting all requirements, and particularly high levels of foreign (primarily English) language competency; in Kazakhstan, to the contrary, the number of freely English speaking students, for instance, still remains very low, according to the qualitative data of the current study.

Figure 5. Potential risks from internationalization from Kazakhstani universities' perspective

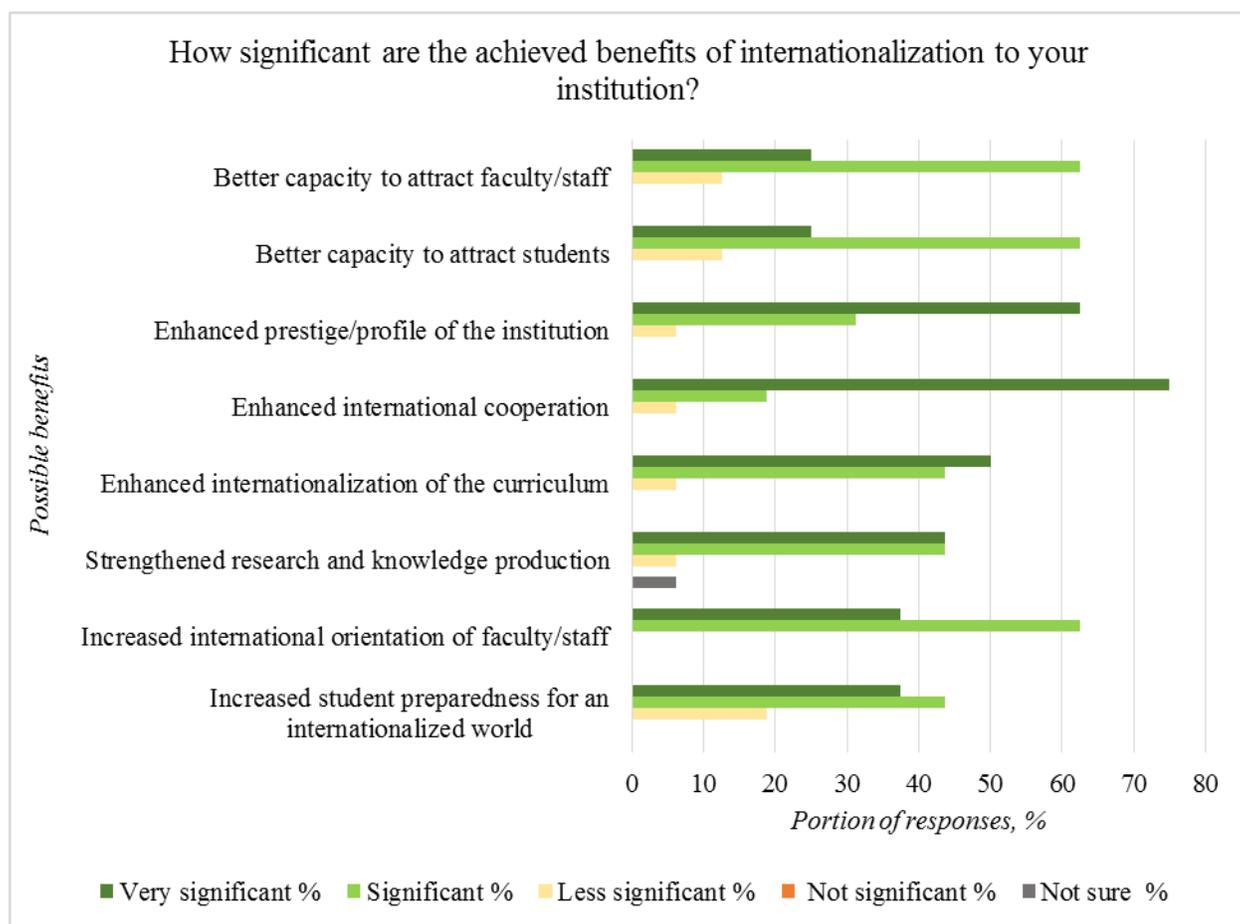
(N=16)



When asked to identify the risk of IHE using an open ended question option, , survey participants mentioned such potential threat from internationalization as “a risk of losing national identity” and “a risk of losing features and advantages of the national educational system,” “open online educational platforms,” “growing immigration rates,” and “worsening of the Kazakh language competence.” In addition, one respondent mentioned that all the potential risks were already mentioned in the table offered by the survey. However, it became clear that the respondents of Kazakhstan had reservations toward opening educational borders that the internationalization processes often bring.

Benefits for universities from internationalization

Figure 6. Benefits from internationalization for Kazakhstani universities (N=16)



Despite potential risks, survey participants considered IHE as a beneficial process. Thus, the survey suggested to rank the level of significance to such possible benefits from internationalization as “increased student preparedness for an internationalized world,” “increased international orientation of faculty/staff,” “strengthened research and knowledge production,” “enhanced internationalization of the curriculum,” “enhanced international cooperation,” “enhanced prestige/profile of the institution,” “better capacity to attract students,” and “better capacity to attract faculty/staff.” As the results illustrate, the presupposition that most of Kazakhstani universities were oriented to international cooperation and prestige on the international educational arena – the assumption was s on the fact that the state education

development policy in Kazakhstan was found primarily oriented to those two directions. So, the survey responses again confirmed the findings of the qualitative stages of research (*see Figure 6. Benefits from internationalization for Kazakhstani universities*).

Moreover, as the survey data uncovered, higher education institutions of Kazakhstan could also see other benefits brought up by internationalization, such as “an opportunity to gain international experience in teaching and learning processes, as well as in research,” “enhancement of the quality of educational programs” and “competitiveness of educational programs” offered by universities, “increased opportunities for international teachers and research staff recruitment” (mentioned two times), enhanced competitiveness of universities’ graduates.

Obstacles to internationalization

According to the data gathered from the in-depth interviews, in their activities Kazakhstani universities were highly depended on the financial support from the state government – furthermore, limited budgetary of internationalization was defined as one of the main problems in the process implementation. At the quantitative stage of the research, participants were also offered to express their perspective on the obstacles they met when implementing internationalization. Thus, all survey respondents were offered a list of possible obstacles to be identified with the level of significance, and actually almost all the listed obstacles were labeled as equally significant (*see Table 7. Obstacles to implementing internationalization at Kazakhstani universities*).

Further, some of the survey respondents also added such obstacle to the suggested list, as “limited number of state programs for financial support of academic mobility” and “lack of governmental support of the process” in general, as well as “limited experience of universities’

staff in internationalization,” “low motivation of Kazakhstani universities,” “non-modernized system of education in Kazakhstan,” and “unstable political and economic situation in the world.”

Table 7. Obstacles to implementing internationalization at Kazakhstani universities (N=16)

<i>Possible obstacles</i>	<i>Participants' responses</i>				
	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Not significant</i>	<i>Less significant</i>	<i>Significant</i>	<i>Very significant</i>
Absence of strategic plan to guide the process	37%	6%	-	13%	44%
Lack of organizational structure and office responsible for internationalization	38%	6%	-	19%	37%
Lack of interest to internationalization among university administration	37%	6%	-	13%	44%
Lack of support from state administration	19%	6%	19%	25%	31%
Limited faculty interest and involvement	19%	-	13%	31%	37%
Limited student interest	31%	6%	6%	25%	32%
Lack of foreign language proficiency	-	-	6%	44%	50%
Lack of budgetary provision for internationalization implementation	-	-	-	37%	63%
Too inflexible curriculum to make changes for the purposes of internationalization	13%	6%	6%	44%	31%

Upon the whole, the survey data were in agreement with the data gained from the qualitative data analyses. As mentioned, many Kazakhstani higher education institutions found internationalization as a positive and necessary stage of development of the system of higher education in Kazakhstan in general, and for the universities in particular. As it was drawn up

from the survey responses, internationalization of higher education system and institutions in Kazakhstan could bring a number of significant benefits to both students, teaching and academic staff, and to the institution in general, though there still remained some risks behind the process like losing national identity and growing competition between Kazakhstani universities.

Nevertheless, the majority of Kazakhstani universities have their own strategies and plans in terms of internationalization – often based on state policies – which were under realization in many respects (covering academic mobility, international cooperation, and other trends) to the moment of gaining quantitative data.

Chapter 5. Conclusions and Discussions

The research questions for this study were as follows: (1) what is a dominant understanding and planned implementation of IHE in Kazakhstan?; and (2) how does national interpretation of IHE correlate with international frameworks adopted by Kazakhstan?

In terms of interpretation of IHE, the research findings illustrated that IHE is a highlighted priority as reflected in Kazakhstani national policy documents, but there is a comparatively open interpretation of IHE in the state legislative and normative documentation, though it is always an “activities” definition as reflected in academic literature. In other words, the national policy documents prioritize following international standards in higher education or implementing other particular elements of IHE, but there is no specific definition for IHE and no concrete strategy of implementing IHE as suggested by the government. It should be noted, though, that there are given definitions for particular elements of IHE (like academic mobility), but not for the entire process of IHE. This facts impacted interpretation (and consequently, implementation) of IHE at institutional level in Kazakhstan, and caused the diversity in understanding of IHE by different national and state higher education institutions. At the same time, whereas for the first sight it may seem that, for instance, the law “On Education” gives freedom in activities to universities (like in arranging academic mobility), in fact the law is very restrictive in many peculiarities (for example, it regulates universities’ activities with particular requirements or limiting them by certain definitions, or restricts universities in managing procedures giving more power to state authorities).

However, through the state legislative and normative documentation the government of Kazakhstan requires all state higher educational institutions of the republic to develop to the extent that universities provide higher education on the level of international standards.

According to the documents, this could be arranged via different types of international activities at the institutional level, including international cooperation, participation in a diversity of academic mobility programs both for students and for teaching staff, and necessarily membership in the European Higher Education Area in general, and the Bologna Process in particular. Thus, such a governmental approach obviously provided with more freedom to universities in their IHE-related activities, but to the current stage of the development of Kazakhstan, wasn't it too early to give so much free space to universities in their activities? To the moment of research, among all, that could lead to a huge divergence in universities' direction in internationalization and all processes it included. On the one hand It might have a positive impact on the process of IHE in Kazakhstan that the government gives freedom to higher education institutions in their international activities; but on the other hand, it might have a cause a divergence in understanding IHE nationally and exclude a possibility for developing a common or a dominant understanding of IHE in Kazakhstan.

The other findings were that interpretation of IHE in Kazakhstan at the national level was narrower than that at the institutional level, and less corresponding with academic literature on IHE as a set of activities (because there was almost no evidence for the "process" definition of IHE in Kazakhstani national or institutional interpretations) (Knight 2006, Huang 2007).

According to academic literature review, IHE includes organizational (governance, operations support services) and academic elements (academic programs, research and scholarly collaboration, extra-curricular activities, and external relations and services) (Qiang 2003, 258-259). While the national policy documents cover some elements from each group, universities' strategic documents mention specific plans covering almost all the elements of IHE presented in academic literature. Again, this may lead to ambivalent conclusions: the government either aims

to give more freedom to universities in deciding on their own internationalization strategies, or it aims not to simply follow the international trend in IHE but to develop Kazakhstan's own IHE interpretation. The possible impacts of the first option were mentioned a little bit earlier. In case of the second option, it might be good intention to develop Kazakhstan's own model of IHE, but then higher education institutions of Kazakhstan (at least national and state) need to follow it, not simply implementing the more complex model of IHE presented in academic literature.

In terms of implementation of IHE in Kazakhstan, the findings show that in their institutional practices, national and state universities of Kazakhstan develop on the basis of own experience and with consideration of the normative policy documents operating in Kazakhstan. This study shows that universities of Kazakhstan pay much attention to such elements of IHE as academic mobility and international cooperation. At the same time, often international cooperation agreements target particularly students and staff mobility (outgoing mobility, for the most part) and research collaboration, thus ignoring other possible IHE activities. Rarely, higher education institutions in Kazakhstan implement double-diploma programs, and recruit international teaching staff for full-time occupation. The main reason behind many obstacles that universities of Kazakhstan face in their IHE activities was financial part of the process. Since the national and state universities participating in the current study are fully dependent on the state budgeting, they are limited in their IHE activities, unless those are sponsored by such international programs as Erasmus, Tempus, DAAD, etc. Nonetheless, at the institutional level IHE plans are often fully implemented. This is possible because at the stage of planning, university staff takes into consideration their available resources and all possible risks, and includes in their plans only those activities that they will be able to implement.

Based on this research findings, it could be argued that there is a developing process of

internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan. By this I mean that the notion of internationalization – what it is and how it should take place in realization – is not clearly understood in Kazakhstan both at the national and institutional levels. This might be explained by the finding that though both the national policy documents and universities' strategies in Kazakhstan prioritize following international standards in higher education, there is still no definition of what should be “international” for Kazakhstan. This might be interpreted in the way that Kazakhstan both at the national and institutional levels in higher education tends to borrow some international standards in order to implement them locally, but there is no common (and even dominant) understanding which IHE model (among all in the international higher education community) it needs to choose. By this I mean that according to the national and institutional strategically significant documents in the field of higher education in Kazakhstan, there is an intention to follow some international standards in higher education and meet international requirements of providing higher education, but there is no particular model that both the government and the institutions would agree on. Again, this causes the diversity in interpretations and implementation of IHE in Kazakhstan at national and institutional levels, and among different higher education institutions as well.

There are several strengths of this research. First of all, the study is be unique in a sense that previous works in the field of higher education in Kazakhstan were either studying the stages of development of the system of higher education in the country since independence, or describing the main trends in IHE in Kazakhstan. In comparison, this study provides an analysis of the diversity in interpretations of IHE in Kazakhstan at national and institutional levels, and resulting different approaches to implementation of IHE at institutional level in Kazakhstan. Second, for the sphere of IHE in general terms, studying interpretations and implementation of

IHE in the post-Soviet space, and particularly in Central Asia, is still a new area of research.

Despite the strengths of the study, there are several limitations undermining it. First, it is institutional constraints. By this I mean that because the scope of the study was only national and state universities of Kazakhstan (whereas there are also private, autonomous, international universities, etc. in the country), the research did not cover all higher education institutions in Kazakhstan, but this might be done in further research projects. Further, the research did not cover specific processes related to IHE, like the Bologna Process, because the focus of the study was broader on interpretation and implementation of IHE in Kazakhstan. Also, it is time constraints: since the research project timeline covered the period from 2014 to 2017, and the data collection was conducted in 2016-2017, it is more like a shot of results particularly in the period of study, but not in longitudinal term.

Since the purpose of the current research project was to examine the process of internationalization of higher education in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, focusing on the understanding and implementation of such at national and institutional levels, as well as differences between national and institutional perspectives onto the process, further research in the field might focus on the peculiarities of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan on the institutional level. Further research can look into all types of higher education institutions in Kazakhstan, expand the time period for analysis of interpretation and implementation of IHE in Kazakhstan, as well as examine specific processes of IHE in Kazakhstan, such as the Bologna Process.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Verbal Recruitment (to be told to potential interviewees on phone or in person in the first meeting asking to participate in the research)

Greetings! My name is Aliya Tazhibayeva and I am a Masters student of Eurasian Studies at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Nazarbayev University. I'm calling to invite you to participate in a study. This is a study about the trends in internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan after independence, the issues and challenges of the process of internationalization of higher education. I am asking you because you coordinate (or oversee) the international cooperation at your university. I obtained your contact information from the official website of your institution.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to meet with me for a 30-60 minute interview with me. There are no direct benefits in participating in this study but it gives an opportunity to share your knowledge and ideas about internationalization of higher education. Your name or the names of your institution and your city/town will never be mentioned in any research documentation.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you'd like to participate, we can go ahead and schedule a time for me to meet with you to give you more information. If you need more time to decide if you would like to participate, you may also call or email me with your decision.

Do you have any questions for me at this time?

If you have any more questions about this project or if you need to contact me about participation, I may be reached by the following contact information:

Aliya Tazhibayeva

MA Student in Eurasian Studies

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Nazarbayev University

Email: aliya.tazhibayeva@nu.edu.kz

Tel. (mob.): +77028540360 or +77085960268.

OR you may contact my thesis advisor:

Sofia An

Assistant Professor

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Nazarbayev University

Office # 8.402

Email: sofiya.an@nu.edu.kz .

Do you agree to participate in the research project?

Thank you so much.

Appendix 2

Verbal Informed Consent for Interviewees

Researcher: Aliya Tazhibayeva, MA Student of Eurasian Studies

Institution: Nazarbayev University, School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Project: Internationalization of Higher Education in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan

Introduction and the Purpose of the Study

Aliya Tazhibayeva, MA Student of Eurasian Studies at Nazarbayev University (Astana, Kazakhstan), is conducting this study. The study will look at the trends, issues and challenges in the process of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet period. The research is also aimed at identifying how the process of internationalization is identified and regulated at the national level, as well as at understanding of the process of internationalization at institutional level, and the main risks, obstacles and benefits from the process for higher education institutions in Kazakhstan.

Participation in the study

Before we begin, let me describe what this study involves. After I've described the study to you, you can decide whether or not you would like to participate. An interview should take about 30-60 minutes of your time and consist of 11 questions about the internationalization work at your university that you coordinate or oversee. Participation in the interview is absolutely voluntary, You can skip any question you don't want to answer, or you can stop an interview at any time. I would like to audiotape the interview because I don't want to miss any important information but if you don't want to be audiotaped, I will take notes. Even if you agree to be interviewed but later on change your mind, you will call me, and I will withdraw any information that you don't want to be on file.

Privacy and Confidentiality

I will protect your privacy and confidentiality of your data. I will use the information you provide for the purposes of this study only. The names of yourself, your institution, and your town will not appear anywhere in the research documentation. If the interviews will be audio recorded, your name or the name of your institution will not be mentioned on the tape. The audio files and the transcripts will be kept separately from any identifiable information, such as your name, the name of your institution or town. Only the investigator will have an access to the interviews data. Your individual data will not be associated with your name, the names of your institution or town in any way in the research documentation and will be kept confidential.

Risks and Benefits

There are no risks expected that are greater than you would normally encounter in your daily life. But sometimes you may feel emotional or nervous when asked questions related to your work or your university. If this happens, please let me know, and we take a break or skip questions that you don't want to answer.

There are no any financial or in-kind benefits for participating in this study. However, you may find it beneficial to have an opportunity to share your expertise and ideas about the internationalization of university education in Kazakhstan.

Do you have any questions? If you have questions later, you may contact me at any time according to the contact information below.

Are you interested in participating in this study? If yes, we can agree the most appropriate date and time for the interview.

Participants Identification Code (not name):

Date:

Time:

Investigator: Aliya Tazhibayeva

Contact Information:

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Nazarbayev University

Email: aliya.tazhibayeva@nu.edu.kz

Tel. (mob.): +77028540360, +77085960268.

OR you may contact my thesis advisor:

Sofia An

Assistant Professor

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Nazarbayev University

Office # 8.402

Email: sofiya.an@nu.edu.kz .

OR the Nazarbayev University Ethics Committee by email: resethics@nu.edu.kz

Do you want to participate at this time?

Appendix 3**Interview questions:**

1. Today there are many talks about internationalization of higher education in literature, at conferences, forums, seminars, etc. How do you understand internationalization of higher education at your university?
2. Can you define when the process of internationalization started at your university?
3. What is the main focus of the strategy/plan/policy of internationalization in your institution?
4. What elements of internationalization are implemented at your institution?
5. How is internationalization implemented and regulated at your institution? Is it your administration or the Ministry of Education and Science that regulates the process? Give examples, please.
6. What are the geographical priorities of your internationalization activities?
7. How does implementation of internationalization strategy/plan/policy affect university's activities? Is it beneficial or detrimental? In what respect?
8. Are there any risks that you take because of the process of internationalization?
9. What kind of external support do you have for the process of internationalization at your institution (from government? from private companies?)?
10. Out of all the planned internationalization activities, which ones you are able to implement, which – not? Why?
11. How would you see the ideal process of internationalization at your university?

Appendix 4

Verbal Recruitment (to be told to potential survey respondents on phone asking to participate in the research)

Greetings! My name is Aliya Tazhibayeva and I am a Masters student of Eurasian Studies at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Nazarbayev University. I'm calling/to invite you to participate in a study. This is a study about the trends in internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan after independence, the issues and challenges of the process of internationalization of higher education. I am asking you because you coordinate (or oversee) the international cooperation at your university. I obtained your contact information from the official website of your institution.

If you decide to participate in this study, I will send you an invitation to participate in an online survey via email. You will be asked to answer to the online survey questions. There are no direct benefits in participating in this study but it gives an opportunity to share your knowledge and ideas about internationalization of higher education. Participation in the survey will be anonymous. Your name or the names of your institution and your city/town will never be mentioned in any research documentation.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you'd like to participate, we can go ahead and I can provide you with more information on the project, and send you a link to the online survey.

Do you have any questions for me at this time?

If you have any more questions about this project or if you need to contact me about participation, I may be reached by the following contact information:

Aliya Tazhibayeva

MA Student in Eurasian Studies

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Nazarbayev University

Email: aliya.tazhibayeva@nu.edu.kz

Tel. (mob.): +77028540360 or +77085960268.

OR you may contact my thesis advisor:

Sofia An

Assistant Professor

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Nazarbayev University

Office # 8.402

Email: sofia.an@nu.edu.kz .

Would you like to participate in the survey?

Thank you so much.

Appendix 5

Informed Consent for Survey Respondents

Researcher: Aliya Tazhibayeva, MA Student of Eurasian Studies

Institution: Nazarbayev University, School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Project: Internationalization of Higher Education in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan

Introduction and the Purpose of the Study

Aliya Tazhibayeva, MA Students of Eurasian Studies at Nazarbayev University (Astana, Kazakhstan), is conducting this study. The study will look at the trends, issues and challenges in the process of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet period. The research is also aimed at identifying how the process of internationalization is identified and regulated at the national level, as well as at understanding of the process of internationalization at institutional level, and the main risks, obstacles and benefits from the process for higher education institutions in Kazakhstan. The study involves an online-survey.

Participation in the study

If you agree to participate, please follow the link to the online survey. The survey consists of 11 questions about the internationalization work at your university that you coordinate or oversee and should take about 30 minutes of your time. Participation in the interview is absolutely voluntary, You can skip any question you don't want to answer, or you can withdraw at any time.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Participation in the survey is anonymous. I will protect your privacy and confidentiality of your data. I will use the information you provide for the purposes of this study only. Only the investigator will have an access to the survey data. The data that you provide will not be

associated with your name, the names of your institution or town in any way in the research documentation and will be kept confidential.

Risks and Benefits

There are no risks expected that are greater than you would normally encounter in your daily life.

There are no any financial or in-kind benefits for participating in this study. However, you may find it beneficial to have an opportunity to share your expertise and ideas about the internationalization of university education in Kazakhstan.

Do you have any questions? If you have questions later, you may contact me at any time according to the contact information below.

Are you interested in participating in this study? If yes, please follow the link to the online survey provided in email below.

[LINK TO THE SURVEY HERE]

By clicking on the survey link you are providing your informed consent to participate in the survey.

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OR you may contact my thesis advisor:

Sofia An

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Email: sofiya.an@nu.edu.kz .

OR the Nazarbayev University Ethics Committee by email: resethics@nu.edu.kz

Do you want to participate at this time?

Appendix 6

Online Survey Questions

- 1) Programs offered:
 Bachelor; Masters; PhD.

- 2) Please answer the following general questions about the internationalization process:

<i>Description of the policy/strategy</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
Is internationalization mentioned in your institutional strategy of development?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a developed plan for implementing internationalization?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the internationalization strategy wide?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the strategy for internationalization a separate document?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there an office to oversee the internationalization implementation process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a budgetary provision for implementing internationalization?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the progress?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have any explicit targets and benchmarks included in the strategy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 3) When was the strategy for internationalization developed (*Please select one*)

- Less than 1 year ago
 Between 1 and 3 years ago
 Between 3 and 5 years ago
 Between 5 and 10 years ago
 More than 10 years ago
 Not sure

- 4) In your strategy for internationalization, what levels of priority are given to the following goals?

<i>Possible goals</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Not significant</i>	<i>Less significant</i>	<i>Significant</i>	<i>Very significant</i>
International research collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Outgoing mobility opportunities for students	<input type="checkbox"/>				

(including exchange programs)					
Outgoing mobility opportunities for faculty/staff	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Recruiting international students	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Recruiting international scholars and professors	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Increasing the university's ranking for the purposes of marketing and recruiting fee paying students	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Delivery of distance education courses and programs to students living outside Kazakhstan	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Others	<i>(Please, specify)</i>				

5) At your institution, how important are the rationales for internationalization listed below?

<i>Rationales</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Not significant</i>	<i>Less significant</i>	<i>Significant</i>	<i>Very significant</i>
Improve student preparedness for a globalized/internationalized world	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Enhance international profile and reputation (university branding)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Increase and improve research capacities of students and faculty/staff	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Improve academic quality	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Others	<i>(Please, specify)</i>				

6) How significant are the listed below potential risks of internationalization for a university of Kazakhstan in general, to Your mind?

<i>Possible risks</i>	<i>Not significant</i>	<i>Significant</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
Growing elitism in access to international education opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Overuse of English as a medium of instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loss of cultural identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commodification and commercialization of education programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase in number of low quality “degree mills”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brain drain from Kazakhstan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Growing competition between Kazakhstani universities for better positions in international university rankings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over-emphasis on attracting international students with limiting the number of positions for local candidates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over-emphasis on internationalization in general at the expense of other priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others	<i>(Please, specify)</i>		

7) Of the total number of students enrolled at your institution, what was the percentage of full time international students in 2015 – 2016 academic year?

<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Undergraduate Students</i>	<i>Graduate and Post-Graduate Students</i>
Less than 1%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Between 1% and 3%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Between 3% and 7%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Between 7% and 10%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Between 10% and 15%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than 15%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8) For the last three academic years, what proportion of your students were able to study overseas as part of their study program for minimum 6 months?

<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Undergraduate Students</i>	<i>Graduate and Post-Graduate Students</i>
Less than 1%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Between 1% and 3%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Between 3% and 7%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Between 7% and 10%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Between 10% and 15%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than 15%	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9) At your institution, how important are the roles of the following drivers of internationalization?

<i>Possible internal drivers</i>	<i>Not significant</i>	<i>Significant</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
Students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faculty members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
International office and individuals responsible for internationalization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
President/Rector	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other administrative staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10) For your institution, what is the key external driver of internationalization?

<i>Possible external drivers</i>	<i>Not significant</i>	<i>Significant</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
The demand of the state policy: law on education, higher education development program, annual addresses of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The demand of the local executive board (oblast/town/regional mayor administration)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regional business and industry demand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others	<i>(Please, specify)</i>		

11) How significant are the achieved benefits of internationalization to your institution?

<i>Possible benefits</i>	<i>Not significant</i>	<i>Significant</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
Increased student preparedness for an internationalized world	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased international orientation of faculty/staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strengthened research and knowledge production	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enhanced internationalization of the curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enhanced international cooperation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enhanced prestige/profile of the institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Better capacity to attract students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Better capacity to attract faculty/staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others	<i>(Please, specify)</i>		

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12) How significant are the listed below obstacles to implementing internationalization at your institution?

<i>Possible obstacles</i>	<i>Not significant</i>	<i>Significant</i>	<i>Not sure</i>
Absence of strategic plan to guide the process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of organizational structure and office responsible for internationalization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of interest to internationalization among university administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of support from state administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limited faculty interest and involvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limited student interest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of foreign language proficiency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Too inflexible curriculum to make changes for the purposes of internationalization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others	<i>(Please, specify)</i>		
