

Role of BOTA Foundation educational grants in education of students from low-income
families in Kazakhstan

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

in

Educational leadership

Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education

July, 2014

Word Count: 15.776

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NUGSE RESEARCH APPROVAL DECISION LETTER

The NUGSE Research Committee reviewed the project entitled "Influence of BOTA foundation grants on education of students from low-income families in Kazakhstan" by MeruyertSarsetova and decided:

- ☐ To grant approval for this study
- ☒ To grant approval for this study subject to minor changes, to be signed off by supervisor
- ☐ To request additional information/clarification to determine approval
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Sincerely,

NUGSE Research Committee

Acknowledgements

First of all I would like to thank my supervisor Professor DuishonShamatov. His enormous support and guidance was very helpful and gave me an opportunity to conduct research under the professional supervision.

Secondly, I would like to thank administration of BOTA Foundation, namely Executive Director Aaron Bornstein and Tuition Assistance Program department Director NurilyaShakhanova for their permission and kind attitude toward research and their assistance in providing all opportunities to get all necessary information and documents.

Thirdly, I would like to thank all BOTA Foundation staff for their help in conducting research, for providing materials, and conference room for interviews.

Fourthly, I would like to thank all participants of the study: TAP staff, students, graduates, parents and university staff for their participating in interviews and sharing with their knowledge.

My thanks to the Director of Research Institute of GSE KairatKurakbayev for his assistance with searching literature for the study.

My thanks to Professor Laura Perna for sharing with her works on the financial aids for students in USA.

My special thanks to Academic English instructor KuralayBozymbekova for her help in editing and proofreading of the thesis.

I am also grateful for Professor Jason Sparks for his constructive advices on the writing process of my thesis.

Abstract

Role of BOTA Foundation grants in education of students

from low-income families in Kazakhstan

This study is devoted to the role of BOTA Foundation educational grants in the education of students from low-income families in Kazakhstan. The current situation with access to higher education of students from low-income families is very important. It was one of the issues that were discussed during the Eurasian Higher Education Leaders' Forum held at Nazarbayev University in June, 2014. So, in this study I present the support of BOTA Foundation toward students from low-income families and investigate the influence of these grants on the education, social and professional development of students. As there is a shortage of research on such organizations that support students from low-income families in Kazakhstan, the findings of this research can be useful in a wider context for educational institutions and other governmental agencies, and can contribute to educational policy regarding the problem of provision of financial support to students from low-income Kazakhstani families.

In my research I used qualitative method and document analysis, in order to find the significance of these grants for students' study, performance, social and professional development. I used maximal variation purposeful sampling to gather data from different perspectives of varied groups such as students, graduates and parents, university faculty and BOTA staff.

Findings of my research show that BOTA Foundation educational grants give an opportunity to students with low socio-economic status to enter the universities and to receive a Diploma. Grant holders' academic performance is largely exceptional and many

of them actively participate in conferences, academic mobility programs, and different competitions. Engaging in volunteering activities develops a strong sense of social responsibility and reciprocity in students. Professional trainings give them additional knowledge and skill and they gain much confidence and belief in their prospects.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Background

During my education at the Graduate School of Education (GSE), I continued my interest in exploring the issues of access to higher education for the youth from low income families. Prior to studies at the GSE, I worked at BOTA Foundation's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) department and I extensively visited different regions of Kazakhstan and observed many examples of the difficulties of access to higher education that youth from low income families have to face.

Acquiring higher education is very important everywhere in the world and Kazakhstan is not left aside. During the Soviet period, higher education in Kazakhstan was free of charge, as Katz (1999) observes, "tuition was free of charge and most full-time university students received non-refundable grants at subsistence level" (p.420). But, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstani higher education system changed and universities began to charge tuition fees. State provided grants for studies at the higher education institutions, but many students, who were not capable of winning such grants, studied on commercial basis. Such order of things exists at present. Actually, at present many students in Kazakhstani universities study at their own expense and in most cases find it difficult to pay for their tuition.

According to the National Report on the status and development of the education system of Kazakhstan, in 2012 there were 107.724 students studying by the state educational grants, 11.914 students – by other form of grants (from district authorities, NGOs) and 160.784 students studying on paid basis. The statistics show that the number of self-funding students exceeds the number of those who study on state grant. The issue of affordability

of higher education in Kazakhstan was widely discussed during the Eurasian Higher Education Leaders' Forum held at Nazarbayev University in June, 2014. According to the presentation by Dr. Mary Canning (2014), in 2013 only 27 percent of school graduates studied by state grants (p. 22) and 73 percent studied on commercial basis (p.19) in Kazakhstan.

However, there is another set of data on students who discontinued their education in 2012 due to various reasons. In total 105.695 students discontinued their education and the second largest reason for drop outs (22.9% out of 100%) was identified as financial diversity (National report of MOES, 2012). So, there is not only limited number of state grants holders, and also those who start to study, but could not continue their education due to the absence of finance.

Those who could not receive state grants and could not afford tuition fees at the university probably apply for the state grants next year with the school graduates of that year, probably some of them go to study at colleges. It is a big issue, because the data on enrollment to the higher education institutions is also not so high. In Kazakhstan "Estimated total enrolment in higher education is 24.4% of the 18-24 year olds" (Canning, 2014, p.2).

Statistics show that there are many students with challenges of access to higher education. Some students have an opportunity to study via state credits(loans), some via scholarships from organizations, different companies and foundations, but their number is not big. The most well-known among them is BOTA Foundation, which gives an opportunity to get higher and vocational education for the youth from this category. Since BOTA Foundation, in comparison with other organizations such as YerzhanTatishev's Foundation, Foundation of the first President and others, financing students' education

provided educational grants for the largest number of students from low-income families, I decided to conduct research on the role of the BOTA Foundation's educational grants' in education and development of students' from low-income families in Kazakhstani universities. My desire and interest is to investigate any influences for students' study, performance, social and professional development from different perspectives of such groups as students, graduates and parents, university faculty and BOTA staff. Although these grants are provided to the individuals to study in universities and colleges, in my study I focus on students studying at universities only.

BOTA Foundation

The mission of the BOTA Foundation is to support children from low-income families. BOTA Foundation was established in 2007 by the agreement of the three countries: Kazakhstan, USA and Swiss Confederation and started its operation in 2009. The capital of BOTA Foundation is \$84 million that was transferred to the Swiss bank account from Kazakhstan. This fund was sanctioned by the Department of Justice of the United States, because of U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act involving U.S. citizen. Due to the trilateral agreement of abovementioned countries governments decided to return the money to Kazakhstan to establish BOTA Foundation to improve living conditions of the children and youth from poor families. Oversight of the financial management of these funds is done by a Board of Trustees of the BOTA Foundation and International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) Program Manager with World Bank assistance. One of the three programs of BOTA Foundation is Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) which provides educational grants to young people from poor families. Thus, TAP provides educational grants for the youth from low-income families to study at colleges and universities in Kazakhstan in order to increase their opportunities to improve their families and theirs'

future. From 2009 to 2013 BOTA Foundation has awarded educational grants to 841 students from poor families. In addition to paying tuition fees BOTA Foundation provides monthly stipend, accommodation, book allowance and transportation (see www.bota.kz). Such grants help students from low-income families to get higher and vocational education and receive Diploma, and thus increase their chances to find a job and improve their lives. Students who held BOTA Foundation grants also have professional development trainings from the Foundation and according to the terms of their agreement they have to do volunteer work in orphanages, elderly houses, and houses for disabled people and so on.

The example of BOTA Foundation shows that support of students from low-income families gives enormous opportunity to students to get higher education, enhance their skills and improve the economic situation of their families. In this study I problematize the lack of research on foundations such as BOTA Foundation which support education of students from low-income families in Kazakhstan and the influence of these grants on students study and development.

Statement and significance of the problem

It is important to investigate the support of BOTA Foundation to students from low-income families and the role of the grants in students' academic performance, professional and social development. The results of this research can be useful for educational institutions and other governmental agencies, and will contribute to the problem of the financing students from low-income Kazakhstani families. The significance of this topic is also linked to the recent government initiatives that emphasize the access of students from poor families to higher education. One of the priorities of the government's future plans on development of state is given to education. In "Strategy of Kazakhstan 2050" concerning education it states: "Social responsibility of the private sector, non-governmental and

charitable organizations, individuals should especially manifest in education. In particular this applies to help for young people who are not able to pay for education, in getting a decent education” (Strategy of Kazakhstan 2050). So, BOTA Foundation’s work on supporting students will be a good example for all stated above organizations.

Rationale for the study

The purpose of this qualitative research is to explore the role of BOTA Foundation grants in education of students from low-income families in higher education institutions of Kazakhstan. I wanted to examine how BOTA Foundation grants influenced the academic study of grant holders, how their training programs help to develop particular skills of students, how it influenced on their development in social life, how Foundations’ support affected on their future development, such as getting job (for graduates), participation in international exchange programs (current students). To explore the above aspects, the following research questions are employed.

Research questions

RQ1: How do students with BOTA Foundation educational grants perform at the university?

RQ2: How do students benefit from this program in the matter of social, professional development?

The first question explores students’ academic progress at the university, how they get through the selection process to obtain this grant, how this grant affected on their study. The second question examines the impact of professional trainings conducted by BOTA Foundation on their skills and knowledge and explores their perception on the volunteer work as one of the ways of increasing social responsibility.

Chapter 2. Literature review

Introduction

This chapter presents literature review for my study. The chapter describes literature that discusses the importance of need-based financial aid and its' influences on students from low-income families. In this chapter I am going to present the literature review on the access to higher education for students from low-income families, and the impacts of need-based aids on such students' enrollment to the colleges, influence of financial aid on the retention of students and their academic performance, social behavior at the colleges and universities.

Support students from low-income families

Access to higher education of students from low-income families is a very important educational issue for many countries. Moreover, there are many research studies on the matter of the consideration of access to higher education in their country, reconsidering the existing system of students' financing, introducing additional support, looking for the other sources and to promote equity in access to higher education (Kozlovskaya, 2013; Mueller, 2007; Scherbak, 2010). Some developed countries not so sharply define the programs for support students from low-income families, because of education is free for their citizens or tuition fees are very low. These European countries such as France, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Sweden, and Netherlands have a good financial state support for the higher education and many school graduates have opportunity to enter to the colleges and universities (Kozlovskaya, 2013). In some countries, such as Kazakhstan certain portion of students can get free higher education thanks to the state grants, these

grants are mostly merit-based and awarded to students who get high scores in testing and for winners of different competitions (Macridi, 2007; Zhetsova&Erakhtina, 2012).

In addition to the merit-based grants there are alternative types of financial support for students. For instance, students in the USA have access to various schemes such as state loans, need-based financial aids, study and work programs, and different foundations stipends (Deming & Dynarski, 2009; Kaverina, 2007; Toutkoushian& Hillman, 2012). Furthermore, the importance of increasing access to higher education in the US is also widely discussed in literature and one way of increasing the entrance is through increasing the need-based funding (John, 2007).

However, in the US despite various types of students' education support, still issues with the equity of education for students from low-income families and minority students, mainly addressing their chances to study and graduate universities and colleges continue to exist. According to the data on Civil Right Project at Harvard, twelve states spent much more financing on merit based grants than need-based grants in 2002-2003 and there were little works done on the matter of access to higher education for needed and minority students and racial and social inequity still persists (Heller, 2004).

One of the reasons is that majority of students from low-income families are less prepared to continue their studies at the colleges and universities, and perhaps they could not meet the requirements of merit-based grants. As an illustration of the issue it is necessary to look at HOPE merit based scholarship requires GPA 3.0 in Georgia, USA in which "low-income, black and Hispanic students have traditionally fared relatively poorly. For example, only 15 percent of blacks and Hispanic high school students have at least a 3.0 GPA, while 40 percent of all students meet this standard" (Dynarski, 2002, p. 76). The same situation is also in Russia, because many graduates are from rural areas, where the

quality of school education is not so high and they cannot compete for the state grants with better prepared peers from urban areas (Shishkin, 2004). The same situation in Ukraine, and according to Tolstokorova (2007), in Ukraine school graduates from rural areas and low-income families have less access to higher education than their better prepared peers from urban areas or more advantaged families.

There is an ongoing debate about increasing the equity of education for students by indicators such as race and economic status of students in the USA. The Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (2006, as cited in Perna, 2010, p.5) counts, “between 2000 and 2010 1.4 million to 2.4 million students from low- and middle-income families will be academically qualified for college but will not complete a bachelor’s degree because of insufficient financial resources.” So, the financial difficulties do not give an opportunity to students’ with low social-economic status to get education. This is also mentioned in the study about access to higher education of migrants’ children in Russia, in which “80 percent of parents and 70 percent of school graduates think that opportunity to get higher education depends on financial status of parents” (Tyuryukanova&Ledeneva, 2005, p.97). Moreover, the youth from migrant families, Mexican American and Hispanic students mostly do not go to colleges. Moreover, they do not apply for the aids and loans. The reasons are varied, starting from the fear of taking loan and having to return the money for years, and necessity to work and support their families (Burdman, 2005). Students from-low income families have a fear in borrowing or taking money for education, and according to Callender and Jackson, (as cited in Perna, 2010, p.44) “debt aversion had a greater negative relationship to the probability of applying for admission for students from low- than high-income families.”

Students from low-income families mostly enter to the lower quality institutions because of low tuition fees of those universities. According to the research on accessibility of higher education in Russia, “poorer choose cheaper options education: less prestigious universities and specialties, less expensive forms of education. People with low incomes often taught in the evening and distance learning forms of study” (Shishkin, 2004, p.15).

In the case of USA, according to the Baum and Ma, (as cited in Perna, 2010, p.5) study shows that financial status of students, affect their choice and enrollment to the universities that mostly students from low-income families go to the public two-years or public for-profit organizations than in four-year study. So, students from low-income families do not apply for the top ranked universities, such as universities of the Ivy League due to the high tuition fees, and “only 38% of high achieving school kids from low income homes complete their studies and receive a college degree in contrast with 78% of kids from the highest quarter of America’s homes” (Judah, 2013).

The research on the student financial aid shows that this aid has a positive effect for the college enrollment of students from low-income families and also by the race of students, namely for Afro-American and Hispanic students (Perna, 2010). This proves that the higher number of need-based grants will provide a chance to such students to enter to the universities.

Impacts of financial aid to the students outcome

Some research studies consider that need-based financial aid has positive impacts on students study and opportunities to complete their study (Glocker, 2011; Ingeno, 2013).

Need-based aid gives students opportunity to concentrate on their study and do not spend their time on work, in order to cover their tuition and other expenses.

The research on the effect of student aid in Germany shows that” student aid recipients finish faster than comparable students who are supported by the same amount of parental/private transfers only” (Glocker, 2011, p.177). Also, in USA, according to Alon (2007), “aid amounts exert a positive influence on graduation, conditional on eligibility for aid” between black and Hispanic students (p 296).

The positive influence of need-based grant can be seen by a study conducted on the influence of Gates Millennium Scholars program to the financially disadvantaged students with high performance. According to the data from web-survey designed in 2002 by University of Chicago’s National Opinion Research Center (NORC), students who have scholarships are less likely to stress over tuition fees than those who are self-funded. The study found that to be ‘particularly true’ for Black and Asian Pacific Americans. (Hurtado, Laird & Perorazio, 2003)

Furthermore, Hurtado, Laird and Perorazio (2003) argued that stipend holders “took out significantly less money in student loans, worked significantly fewer hours per week, and were more likely to choose to live on campus than non-recipients in the first year of college” (p.1). Due to receiving financial aid students are likely to be more engaged in college activities, in the study process and tend not to drop their study.

Financial aid can also influence on the student persistence in the college. As Lam (1999, as cited in Nora, Barlow and Crisp, 2006, p. 1641) wrote, “all forms of financial assistance positively reduced the time it took students to graduate.” So, students can graduate university in less time, instead of spending time to earn money and extend their study. The positive impacts of financial aid to students from low-income families, especially psychological effect was widely discussed in the research of Nora, Barlow and Crisp (2006), and whose study showed that financial aid increased students participation in

social life of colleges, decreased stress on different students' expenses, improved interaction with peers and university faculty. They observed, "Financial assistance allows time for the student to make use of academic resources that could have an impact on his or her academic performance" (p. 1642).

In conclusion, issues of access to higher education of students from low social - economic families are discussed in many works, and need-based aids is considered as an important tool in increasing enrollment and retention of such students. It shows that students from low-income families, migrant students do not usually take loans to pay for their tuition, as such is why opportunity to receive support in forms of need-based financial aid helps them to enter to the universities. The impacts of need-based aids as shown in the studies illustrate its positive influence on college attendance, probability to graduate the university, less psychological stress for students and participation in social activities of the colleges.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that I use in order to investigate what is the role of need based grants provided by BOTA Foundation in grant holder's educational, professional and social development. In the following sections I describe my research design, participants and data collection procedures and the methods for analyzing the gathered information. The limitations and the ethics of the research are also considered in this chapter.

Research design

In my research I use qualitative research design. According to the Gonzales (as cited in Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2011, p.219), "Qualitative research provides an in depth, intricate and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviors." So, qualitative design helped me to explore the participants' views on BOTA Foundation and its financial support, their perception on the role of financial support in their academic study, professional and social life. A qualitative design enabled me to work directly with research participants and explore their own attitudes, feelings, opinions related to the educational grant and its influence on their education. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) noted, that qualitative research design "gives voices to participants, and probes issues that lie beneath the surface of presenting behaviors and actions" (p.219.) This research design gave me an opportunity to receive more detailed information from participants.

Sampling

I used maximal variation sampling within purposeful sampling to understand the role of BOTA Foundation educational grants in education of students from low-income families in Kazakhstani universities. According to Hatch (2002) such sampling is utilized “in studies that seek to find central themes that are shared by a variety of participants” (p.50). I used maximal variation sampling in order to receive opinions of people who can speak from different perspectives. In total 12 participants took a part in my research.

Table 1: List of participants

Participants	Number
Administrative staff of BOTA Foundation	2
Students-recipients of BOTA educational grants	4
Parents of the grant holders	2
Graduates of the program (former BOTA educational grant recipients)	2
University faculty	2
Total	12

Four students were chosen from the list of the educational grant holders of BOTA Foundation, who study in different universities in Almaty, and I decided to choose these universities in Almaty because BOTA Foundation office is located there. I selected two male and two female students, and they were from different universities and specialties. Two university graduates who got BOTA foundation scholarships were chosen from those who work in Almaty city. Universities normally designate a staff member for liaising with BOTA Foundation and two faculty staff were chosen from two universities. This sample was relevant to my research study, because all of them are related to BOTA Foundation as

the grant holders, their parents, graduates and administrative staff. Faculty staff was important in my research because they represented the opinions from different sides.

Two persons from administrative staff of BOTA Foundation were included in the sample. In order to receive a full picture of the program I chose an official of TAP, and second person was a staff of the TAP, who directly works with students. The sample also included two parents of the students who got BOTA Foundation grants.

The number of BOTA educational grant holders varies from University to University. Although it might be a significant factor for a research in the future, in this particular research it does not play an important role. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that participants can be divided into two categories based on the popularity of their universities for BOTA Foundation educational grant holders. I did not have intention to choose students from different social status, but as a matter of fact I learned that one student and one graduate in my sampling group were orphans, another student was *oralman* (a Kazakh ethnic returnee)¹, and the fourth one was a student with special needs. I negotiated with several graduates and students before I could find the volunteers who agreed to take part in my research. First chosen two graduates could not agree to participate for particular reasons. One had a vacation and went to his hometown and intended to be back after my data collection period, the second one had an order from a construction company to work out of city. So, I conducted interviews with other graduates. Also, two students primarily chosen for the project refused to participate because of their internship. One student had a journalist practice in the TV channel and could not participate due to the irregular schedule be able to give me feedback on time.

Piloting

¹ “Oralmans”, Kazakhs who lived in other countries and returned back to Kazakhstan.

At the beginning of the data collection I did piloting of my interview questions on 26 and 27th of February, 2014. The purpose of piloting was to test interview questions and to see to what extent these questions would be clear to the study participants.

One student from Turkestan city agreed to participate in the pilot interview. She studies at the final course in the university and during interview I realized that I needed to revise some of my questions, for example I needed combine questions concerning professional trainings into one and add more follow up questions in the real interview. This student said many interesting things about studying by BOTA Foundation educational grants. Also, I have received additional information concerning the attitudes of people, students toward BOTA Foundation educational grants. For example, she said, “Nobody believed in BOTA Foundation. Even at the University, deans and other teachers asked me if BOTA really helped. “Probably you will work for them after graduation and give your salary for them,” and “Are you sure that they will not teach you religion? May be they are an extremist religious group”. Her classmates did not apply for BOTA Foundation educational grants because most of them did not believe that BOTA Foundation would really help, that it would give money for their education without future obligations. She also added that Foundation increased the amount of their stipend twice during three years and their stipend is little more than state grant stipend.

The second person who participated in piloting was from administrative staff of BOTA Foundation. She is an associate of the Tuition assistance program department and currently on the maternity leave. During this interview, I realized that I needed to add more questions about selection process, about practice places of the students and about association of alumni of BOTA Foundation. According to this participant, BOTA Foundation did agreement with National union (Atameken) about practice and job

placement of their students and planning to make another agreement with National Welfare Fund Samruk-Kazyna. So, due to the piloting I changed questions that were unclear for participants or were repeated by meaning and added clarifying and follow up additional questions.

Data collection

Before data collection, official letters with request to give permission to do research were sent by the Graduate School of Education to the BOTA Foundation and two Almaty universities. These letters included the aims and description of the research. Confirmations from them were received via phone calls. Thus data collection of the study lasted one week (from 11th to 17th of March, 2014). On the first day of my data collection I conducted two interviews with TAP official and TAP staff. On that day I was provided with the two lists: One was the list of students studying in Almaty with the name of universities, their specialties and contacts and the second one was the list of graduates of BOTA Foundation, who were in Almaty city. After I chose students I started to call and invite them to take part in the interview. Three students agreed to come to the BOTA Foundation office and we arranged the time and date of the interviews. One student twice changed the time and place of the interview due to her examination schedule. It was difficult to agree on dates and time with parents and graduates. They asked to meet on the weekend or at the evening time because of their work. Finally, we met on the weekend with parents and one graduate. The second graduate was interviewed during the week. Faculty staff also changed the time of the interviews due to the university staff meetings and I had to spend whole day at the universities, waiting for the time when they would be free.

Interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 participants. According Oppenheim (as cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.412) “Interviews have a higher response rate than questionnaires because respondents become more involved and, hence, motivated... and they are better than questionnaires for handling more difficult and open-ended questions”. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to one hour.

Interview questions varied according to the participants. There were interview questions for administrative staff, for students, for graduates, for parents, for faculty staff (see appendix A). The interviews also differed from each other. The administrative staff gave a lot of information and detailed answers for all interview questions. Students answered for all questions, however, they gave mostly short answers and I had to ask more additional questions. On the other side, graduates gave lot information; they were more open, more reflective. They gave many examples from their study, about trainings, volunteering. They shared with their feelings, opinions, future plans.

Recording and transcription. All interviews were audio-taped with participants' permission. The interviews were conducted in Russian and Kazakh, and they were transcribed afterwards. According to Pitty, Thomson and Stew (2012), transcription “can take up to ten times the length of the interview” (p.378). Transcribing process took time and I spent about six hours to each interview transcription. However, during transcribing I analyzed data and identified common themes in the interviews.

Document analysis. According to Bell (2010), in some research projects, “documentary analysis will be used to supplement information obtained by other methods” (p.124). I analyzed internal documents of the TAP of BOTA Foundation, such as samples of three-sided agreement between TAP of BOTA Foundation, students and parents or guardians, agreement with the universities. I analyzed statistics provided by administrative

staff concerning their work with students, especially on the number of students, graduates, volunteering hours and others. In addition, articles on successful stories of students and graduates written in BOTA Foundation's official journal "BOTAzhan" were reviewed and considered.

Data analysis

I started analyzing the data by coding that "enables the researcher to identify similar information" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.559). After that I combined codes into themes. Many themes emerged from the preliminary coding, and they were combined into categories. After revising drafts with my supervisor, some themes were merged together. For example, in the professional trainings section, in the beginning all trainings were separated into separate themes. However, after cohesive deliberations and revision of the research they were combined in one theme. Documents received from BOTA Foundation were analyzed and compared with data received from interviews and used as support and addition for the themes. Then these themes were combined into categories related to the research questions.

Limitations

There are some limitations of the study. First is the limited time for data collection. As was mentioned in methodology part, the interviews were conducted in different places, such as office of BOTA Foundation, Universities, cafes and at different time, including weekends. Due to that Almaty city is big and interviews were conducted in different part of the city, it also took much time to get to the interview places.

The second limitation was language issue. Interview question were prepared in English language and was translated into Russian and Kazakh languages. After transcribing, data

was translated into English, and there can be some misunderstanding or do not exact presentation of meaning.

The third limitation was the limited number of participants. Due to the short time of data collection and time for writing master thesis, there was not included other participants that can also give their attitude to the role of BOTA Foundation educational grants, and to give data from larger perspectives, such as district authorities, representatives of orphanages, NGO's and employers.

However, the received data from students, graduates and parents give sufficient information and examples of the direct impacts of the BOTA Foundation educational grants on the students and students' families live.

Ethical considerations

Before the beginning of data collection process, ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Graduate School of Education of Nazarbayev University. The ethics application documents included informed consent form, sample interview questions which assisted in receiving the approval that my research does not pose any risks to participants. At the interview participants signed informed consent form (see appendix B). According to Diener and Crandall, (as cited in Cohen, Manion&Morrison, 2011, p.78) informed consent is "the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions." Hence, participants were acquainted with the aims of research, their rights and benefits. Informed consent form stated that participation is voluntary and participant can withdraw from research. I also make sure that data on participants' identity remain in anonymity and all interview data are confidential throughout the study. The interviews started after their signing the form.

All of the described procedures helped me to conduct this study in compliance with the requirements of the research, such as checking with research committee in order to exclude any risks and negative impacts of the study to participants, sending official request letters to sites to receive permissions to do research, and sharing informed consent forms with participants to provide them with their rights and benefits. Difficulties encountered during research process were presented in the limitations of the study. All received and analyzed data helped me collect an intricate set of answers to my research questions and identify what is the role of BOTA Foundations educational grants on educational experience of students from low-income families in Kazakhstan.

Chapter 4. Findings and discussion

Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the findings of my study which analyzed the role of BOTA Foundation educational grants in education of students from low-income families. The findings are presented around the following themes: educational grants for youth from low income families, volunteering, professional trainings, successes and benefits of the educational grant, and “we are not aware of the future fate of the foundation” which presents the uncertainty of the future of the project.

Educational grants for youth from low income families

This section presents information on BOTA Foundation educational grants. The section is analyzed around the following themes: (a) the mission of BOTA Foundation, (b) fair selection, and (c) “nobody believed in BOTA”.

The mission of BOTA Foundation. The main mission of BOTA Foundation is to support children from low income families. One of the programs of BOTA Foundation TAP provides educational grants for young people to get higher and vocational education. I will use the term BOTA Foundation educational grants, because it is stated in official documents of TAP of the BOTA Foundation. TAP official who was interviewed commented, “The aim of BOTA is to help youth to get out from the circle of poverty. Because those young people would never be able to do so without BOTA Foundation’s support.”

According to the requirements of the BOTA Foundation educational grant, students applying for BOTA Foundation educational grants can enter at any specialization of any

university. As TAP staff mentioned, “We have grant holders studying at KIMEP, KBTU, and Medical University. These are the most expensive universities.”

The BOTA Foundation’s TAP program started to operate in 2009 and up to 2013 there have been four rounds of grants awarding. This grant program operates across Kazakhstan. TAP students study at 77 colleges and 88 universities in all regions of Kazakhstan (TAP statistics in “BOTA Foundation: educational grants for youth (2009-2013), 2013). So, it shows that there is a wide coverage of the colleges and universities of Kazakhstan and a lot of students are studying through this program across the country. There are few other scholarship programs in Kazakhstan, and the BOTA Foundation is by far the largest. Also, unlike some other program, BOTA Foundation educational grant holders are not required to return money back, both if they lose grant or graduate from the university.

As was mentioned above, BOTA Foundation educational grants were awarded annually since 2009, and in 2012 the grants were awarded for the last time. The last award educational grants were given for two academic years, because of completion of the program in 2014. Until now, 841 people received BOTA educational grants in total. In 2009, the number of grants was 87, in 2010 – 237, in 2011 – 328, in 2012 – 189 (TAP statistics). So far, 154 people graduated from universities with BOTA Foundation educational grants, while 565 students are getting university education currently with BOTA Foundation educational grants.

The main criterion for candidates is that “they should be citizens of Kazakhstan aged below 29 and originating from needy families”, said TAP official. BOTA Foundation makes sure that the selection procedure is open and transparent. There is an open

advertisement, and independent selection committee members help to select the most deserving candidates.

In the last competition for 2012 BOTA Foundation educational grants the criteria of candidates' selection was different from previous awards. The reason of changes was that financing of the BOTA Foundation would have ended by 2014 and BOTA Foundation was able to award educational grants only for two years, not for the four years as previously. The 2012 educational grants award was for university students with excellent academic performance who were studying in or dropped out from the university in their final two years of study due to financial difficulties, and for secondary school graduates to study in two year college program.

BOTA Foundation educational grants are widely advertised across Kazakhstan with the help of mass media. In addition, BOTA Foundation TAP staff members send application forms to *akimats*(local government authorities), non-governmental organizations and schools. They also use internet connections to advertise their program. Moreover, TAP staff members themselves travel around the country to advertise their program and they often use the services of their students to promote the program. As TAP official commented, "We mobilized our students in 2012 and deployed them into rural areas, where they made public presentations in schools and communities."

Fair selection. Selection process consists of four stages. First, filled application forms are reviewed to find out the applicants' potential to study at a university and to what extent their family needs support. Next, candidates' essays are checked to assess their abilities and intentions to future study. According to a TAP official, "An essay is justification of the selection of future profession, specialty and academic institution. By means of that we observe candidates capacities to formulate their thoughts and we evaluate

their common literacy.” Those candidates, whose essays score the highest points, are then eligible to go to the next stage of selection, which is interview. The interviews are conducted in different cities of Kazakhstan by committee members who include one representative of TAP staff and two representatives’ education sector workers and activists, officials from NGO, who also were selected via competition.

The last stage is assessment of the candidates’ financial needs and checking supporting documents of candidates’ household. Candidates who successfully pass all stages may be offered BOTA Foundation educational grant. TAP staff members sometimes visit households of candidates to assess their need to get BOTA Foundation educational grants.

The TAP staff members, students and parents have very strong views that selection process is fair and transparent. Due to the fact that all data is kept and financial needs calculated in information management system, TAP official noted “the influence from human factor and subjective and potentially biased attitude is practically excluded.” One parent stated,

It was a long and tough procedure, but it was also fair. The competition was very large as we had candidates from different regions, districts, villages, towns. When we learned that our daughter won the contest, it was a great joy for us! *We felt as if our son was born!*

Although this study focuses on those students with low-income status, it is important to note that among the holders of BOTA Foundation educational grants, a large number of students also struggle with physical disabilities and other challenges. As TAP official states, “it happens that each seventh student is an orphan. Besides, we have 17 students with physical disabilities.”

When the candidates are offered BOTA Foundation educational grants three-sided agreements are signed that regulate all rules concerning the grants. Three sides are: TAP director, grant holder and their parents. In case, the student is orphan, a third party – the guardian of youth’ house or orphanage official – can sign the agreement. This agreement prescribes all duties of two sides (i.e. student and BOTA Foundation). University specialty, sum of annual tuition fee and types of payments from BOTA’s side such as monthly stipend, monthly transport fee, fee for stationery twice a year, road expenses from students’ home to university twice a year and payment for dormitory is counted. In case of the University has not dormitory, there is a payment for the rent of an apartment. TAP official commented, “Our program is not about stipend distribution. It is an opportunity to enjoy an educational grant that will cover almost all expenditures of students.” Here, it should be noted that BOTA Foundation increased number of stipend twice, in November 2011 and September, 2013 and they plan to increase again next year. BOTA Foundation stopped its work this year, but they will support students, who will study and finish their study next academic year. This kind of financial support from BOTA Foundation was mentioned by all participants. One student said, “Those who study by the state grants have stipend lower for 5 thousand tenge than me,” and “My mom never worried about how I would come home on vacation; because she knew that we will be provided money for going home and back to university” said a graduate. The requirements set for students are good academic performance, volunteer work for 20 hours per year and participation in professional trainings conducted by BOTA Foundation. Students must submit their academic transcripts and report after semester and report on volunteering once a year for TAP after each semester. Educational grants in turn “are subject to annual renewal,” noted TAP official. Student who study well and submit all required documents were eligible to study next year.

One important thing that students who study by BOTAFoundation educational grants are not obliged to return money or work for BOTAFoundation. TAP official explained:

There are no money return conditions that we impose on students. Even after leaving the program by student, we do not demand compensation for expenditures and other forms of compensation and payments whatsoever. So, scholarships are for free. That shows its great advantage.

“Nobody believed in BOTAFoundation.” Considering the successes and benefits of this grant, it is necessary to show how people thought before receiving a grant about it. There are many examples of their uncertainty. As was noted by one parent “When we started to collect documents for the competition, our relatives, neighbors said it's a waste of time, and you won't get the scholarship, but we decided to try.” Because of distrust many students did not apply for it and lost their chance to get education. For example, one student said, that between only she and another girl from all friends who had physical disability applied to the competition and when they received educational grant everybody wondered, but they could not apply for the next year, because they could not meet the age criteria, as they were older than the maximum age of 29. This student said, “If they had applied last year they would have been grant holders”. The second student reflected that her group mates in need also participated in competition, but due to the skepticism did not go to the interview, or did not send required documents in time. “Afterwards I censured the girls, as they were from my university, and also needed the support of BOTAFoundation” added this student.

There is also disbelief on help of BOTAFoundation as group mates and teachers' that thought that they will have to work for BOTAFoundation after graduation. One graduate said “Even now, after graduation, many ask: do you work? Work for BOTAFoundation? I say “no, I work for myself, earn for myself. And spend all money for myself”.

Volunteering

This section presents information on volunteering, one of the requirements for BOTAFoundation educational grant holders. The section is analyzed around the following themes: (a) volunteering places and activities, and (b) “chain of care to each other,” that presents the attitudes of participants toward volunteering.

Volunteering places and activities.By the requirements of the program every student needs to complete 20 hours volunteer work per year to contribute to the benefit of the society. The places for volunteering are different: there are orphanages, homes for elderly people, homes for people with disabilities and others. After completing volunteer work students are provided with certificates after they submit report on hours of volunteering to BOTAFoundation. According to TAP official, “Some students choose to do volunteering in difficult places. For example, children’s hospitals, where they dealt with children who suffer from severe illnesses with no hope to survive.” BOTAFoundation expects to raise awareness of their students by doing these types of volunteering work, and also develop their compassion and caring attitudes.

Students also appreciated volunteering, although some students mentioned during interviews that they used to do volunteering before they got the grant from BOTAFoundation. One graduate said that she did volunteering at the Center for temporary isolation, adaptation and rehabilitation of minors, while another graduate said that he helped a NGO “Zabota” on a campaign against HIV and AIDS and still continues to participate in such campaigns for raising awareness on various issues. One student said that he did volunteering at the kindergarten where he helped educators to work with children. Another student told about two places where he had volunteered, the first was the

Center of the Child's voice, where he taught mathematics for the refugee children². The second one is teaching, he works with children from low-income families at the International Association of Social Projects. The last student did volunteering in elderly house and in the house for people with disabilities (nervous system disorder).

During the interviews, the participants mentioned about popularity of volunteering. For example, all participants said that they did more than required by the program 20 hours of volunteering. According to the TAP staff member, there are students who did more than 500 hours per year. She further observed, "they love and they attract their classmates to go to schools for children with special needs." This is also supported by the official statistics of the TAP:

Table 2: TAP students' volunteering practice hours

Academic years	Volunteer practice ⁷ hours	Number of students	Average volunteering hours per student
2009-2010	3323	82	41,0
2010-2011	14113	237	60,0
2011-2012	26853	621	43,0
2012-2013	37420	722	52,0

² The number of refugees in Kazakhstan reaches over 8000 people and they are mostly from Afghanistan (Valsamaki, 2012).

So, the average hours for each students of volunteering work is much higher than it is required. “We are very proud of that, because our scholarship program and the BOTA Foundation, is in pursuit of cultivation of charity, compassion and social mutual support among our students” said TAP official. It should be noted that BOTA Foundation makes incentives for the volunteering, such as best volunteering project of the students. Several years, they held competition for the best five projects and winners received netbooks.

“Chain of care to each other.” The next theme emerged during data analysis is concerning attitudes, perceptions of students toward volunteering practice. All of the participants commented on the importance of volunteering for them. TAP staff explained “This work raises them, and makes them feel the need to help people who need this help.” This can be seen from the answer of the graduate “After these volunteering works you realize that you are needed, and can help someone. You're responsible for someone.”

The importance of help, the attitude of people who receive this help have a big influence on students. “Those people just need to speak with somebody, because they are disabled and could not go outside” said student, who worked in house for disabled elderly people. Another student added that “it is like an aid of boomerang, since BOTA Foundation helped us and we were able to realize that we should share our knowledge with others, so that those kinds of people will no longer see trouble.” Students shared their attitude toward continuing volunteering work after graduation. There are many comments on what they planning to do. One student said “it is a kind of chain of care to each other, and BOTA Foundation helped me, and I believe that I will help other people for free.” One graduate said “I will continue to do volunteering; in the future, I plan to help at least one student in need to get higher education.” As this graduate already pays tuition for her sibling, she mentioned that “It is my duty” and that volunteering is another. Then one of

the parents mentioned about his son's future plans for volunteering. He claims that, "It is the initiative of his my son's soul".

Professional trainings

In addition to providing grants, BOTA foundation also conducts various professional trainings to make better impact on its grant holders. By designing and organizing these trainings, BOTA hopes that their grant holders become successful in finding jobs and in contributing to the improvement of the society in general. This section presents the professional trainings conducted by BOTA staff including their purposes, importance for students and practical necessity of such trainings for the students and graduates. The following themes will be presented: purpose of the professional trainings, professional trainings and "Trainings conducted by BOTA is free for us" that presents students' perception on trainings.

Purpose of professional trainings. Professional trainings are aimed at the improvement of students' personal and professional skills. TAP official said that the purpose of those trainings is "to encourage personal growth, rather than academic and professional." Another TAP staff added, "We hope that our professional trainings will help them after they graduate to become successful people in their adult lives." Trainings are conducted twice a year for all students in different cities and conducting trainings was mixed by professionals from particular spheres who are invited to share their experience with students.

One of the first trainings for students conducted on communication skills. The necessity of such training for students is that many of them came from the different environment after school – from different city, university, "They had to adapt themselves to live in dormitories and as they faced problems with communication" said TAP official. As was

noted by one student, “I am from rural area, after entering university, we hadn’t skills and BOTA Foundation provided us with trainings on how to communicate with people, to fulfill tasks in time.”

Participants also commented on the importance and help of the next training on time-management and budget management skills. TAP official said “Rural youth with the first exposure to urban environments and studies at central universities have very poor understanding of personal time management”. So, this training teaches them how to organize their time correctly. “I learned to manage my time” commented one student. There is more reflection on effective budget management from students and graduates side. The necessity of this training was mentioned by TAP official “Some of them could spend monthly stipend in the matter of 2 to 3 days. They didn’t know how to spend efficiently given budget throughout a certain period of time.” So this training taught them how to spend money, as another student added “for example, how to calculate monthly stipend, to divide for transport, food, other things.”

In order to get the students acquainted with volunteering a special training is held. TAP official said, “We dedicated a special workshop to volunteering and its history, mission and targets. We made available list of NGO’s.” One graduate also reflected about training on volunteering. She said about the influence of information received from officials invited to the training about work in their organizations “In one organization named “Kenes” they have children with disabilities. And I know that I can’t do volunteering there, because I will cry. We were taught that we shouldn’t show our senses to children, because they see and feel it.” Students receive from this trainings information on volunteering places and volunteering nature.

Next trainings on professional career devoted to the senior year students with the aim to prepare them for the future career. This training consists of three parts and was prepared together with IREX headquarters in Washington DC. TAP official said, “IREX is our partner in administration of various programs.” All interviewed participants (students and graduates) mentioned the usefulness of this training. They commented that they were taught how to write CV’s and cover letter, how to pass through interviewing to the job, where to look for vacancies, how to create own business, make business plan. According to one graduate “we learned how to find a job; even how to apply for public service, what documents we need for it.” The practical help was mentioned by one of the student “It is a great theme to me and will help me in opening my own business.”

“Trainings conducted by BOTA are free for us.” During analyzing of data, a theme on perception of students and graduates on professional trainings emerged. All participants pointed the importance of such trainings for their development and improving skills. One student observed, “Such trainings mostly are paid based, BOTA conducts it free for us”, “we receive additional knowledge and skills, that don’t receive at the University.” said another student. Many of them said that they awaited trainings. One graduate mentioned “it is useful for us; they invite persons who tell us useful, necessary information.” They also added that these trainings last whole day; sometimes two days and they received and learnt all related information. Another student added, “Theory and practice, in addition they mix it with various games. We communicate and work.” So, during trainings students communicated with each other and it helped them to become more open, share ideas. Another graduate commented, “We become one big family, it is like a home,” and “It was real. You recognize that there are other windows in the world. Everything is changed.”

Importance of certificates given by BOTA Foundation also has a great importance for students and graduates. As was said by one graduate, “When you look for your certificate you realize that you made next step toward your dream.” Second graduate added about the help of certificates “During the interview to one job position, I was asked how we know that you had such trainings? For the next stage I just brought certificates with me and showed them.” Students also gave their attitude toward help of trainings, that they pass all stage of competition to the practice place and job, because they already have knowledge on interview process, writing CV. Students also highlighted, that they help their friends, group mates (not BOTA students) with composing and writing CV’s. “My many friends sent me their CV’s by email and ask to check it” shared one of the graduate.

Successes and benefits of the educational grant

This section presents the successes and benefits of BOTA Foundation educational grants. The section is analyzed around the following themes: (a) academic performance of BOTA Foundation students, (b) no higher education without BOTA Foundation educational grants, (c) “education as a social lift,” (d) students’ and graduates’ successes, (e) assisting students with internship place and employment.

Academic performance of BOTA Foundation students.As mentioned above, BOTA Foundation requires good academic performance from its grant holders. However, they do not expect their students to get strait excellent marks because they are aware that many students come from low income families and may not have got good quality school education and an opportunity to get additional education. Furthermore, many students go to study in large universities, where study environment is different than in schools and they face many changes. “We respect their aspiration towards knowledge” commented TAP official and noted that good academic performance is sufficient.

Moreover, most rural youth face a problem of living in a big cities and studying with better prepared peers. One student stated, “It was very hard for me at the beginning not only to get education but also to live in a big city”. So such difficulties were taken into account by TAP department in setting the requirements for students.

TAP does not have very strict requirements for grant holders. Nevertheless, many students study with excellent marks. They study well in order to retain BOTA Foundation educational grants, and as one student commented, “I try to get only excellent marks because it is important for me to retain my grant”. Parents who were interviewed also commented about good academic performance of their children. One parent commented “when my daughter received grant, we decided that the best return for BOTA Foundation would be her Diploma with excellent marks. So, she studies very well.”

According to university faculty member, students perform well and “some of them even give private lessons for students with the aim to help, pull performance, evaluation. They basically help their classmates and this confirms that the level of their performance is high enough.” From the information of TAP staff 40 percent of program graduates finished their study with *Diplom s otlichiem* (university diploma with distinction).

There were also students who left program due to the receiving grants from government or akimats. As the grants of government and akimat are mostly for the students with good academic performance, many grant holders of BOTA receive those grants, which is an indication of their good academic performance under BOTA Foundation educational grants. By the rules of BOTA Foundation educational grants students with other sources of funding cannot continue their study within the program. It was made in order to give a chance for other needy students, who require support from BOTA Foundation.

However, some students dropped out from the program due to having poor academic results, and there were 53 of them. The following table presents the official statistics of TAP Department about the reasons for leaving the program:

Table 3: Reasons of drops-out from TAP

Reasons	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	Total # of dropouts
Academic failure	4	15	23	11	53
Getting State/akim's grants	0	3	8	7	18
Voluntary give up	0	2	6	10	18
Violation of terms of TAP Grant Agreement	0	1	9	4	14
Health condition	0	0	2	0	2
Total	4	21	48	32	124

TAP staff makes regular monitoring of the students' performance. There is an attention to students in risk. As was mentioned by TAP staff, "we do particular conversation with those kinds of students. We speak with their parents, guardians, and university faculty. We give them chance to re-take exams." So, students have to re-take their exams in summer semester for their own money, and should correct their transcripts, if the students do not pass the exam then they lose the grant.

TAP also encourages students' excellent academic performance by organizing annual competitions for the best students and for the best volunteering projects. Winners receive netbooks. A university graduate said "As an incentive TAP presents various awards such as laptops to those students who perform well academically. It is a very useful thing for the students and a great incentive". Those students who get excellent marks throughout the academic year are eligible to participate in this contest. TAP official added, "We provide all sorts of incentives to our students to study well, and we present gifts such as camera or voice recorder to those who become winners next year too. We noticed that many students became motivated and number of students who perform well increased. For example last academic year; we awarded gifts to the record number of 85 students". The rising number of students participated in this contest shows that incentives are good motivation tool.

"No higher education without BOTA educational grants." BOTA Foundation educational grants give a chance to get higher and vocational education for youth from low-income families. All interviewed participants discussed about the difficulties of studying without BOTA Foundation educational grants. Parents mentioned that they would try to educate their children but it would be very hard to them, "Considering the financial side, he would not be able to study at university. We thought about working for two-three years to earn money and collect for our child's education. We could not pay" said one parent.

Students mentioned that they couldn't be able to study at the university, if they did not get grant. One student said "It takes me 12 years after graduating school to start my study at the university. I had not opportunity to study before. I dreamt about getting higher education. I tried to get state grant in previous years, but without success." Another student noted that if she had not gotten the grant, then she would have had to work hard to earn

money and as a result, she would not have been able to study well. She said, “Because it would be very hard. After the first year, first semester, I already was expelled from the University due to the lack of money; I went home and cried, I’ve built a plan for how I make money”. The third student also commented “I wouldn’t be able to study. There was not chance to enter to the university.” All interviewed participants said that it would be very difficult for them to study without BOTA Foundation educational grants.

TAP staff mentioned about the opportunity of such students to get higher or vocational education that this grants gave them chance to obtain higher education. “Because education is very expensive not everyone can afford to pay for their child’s education. We have students who are from large size families. There are sometimes two siblings from the same family who study at the university because of BOTA Foundation educational grant. One can imagine how hard it would be to pay for education of two children from the same family,” said TAP staff. In addition, they shared the statistical data made by their department on access to education of their students and the results are that 69.1 percent of such children are the first children in family, who get an access to higher education and TAP official added “91 percent of those whose parents never studied before.”

Table 4: TAP grant holders-first kids (within other kids in their families) with access to higher education

TAP students, 2009-2012 cohorts	First kids with access to higher education	%	2009	%	2010	%	2011	%	2012	%
692	478	69,1	38	7,9	141	29,5	201	42	98	20,5

Table 5. TAP grant holders – first in their families (including parents) with access to higher education

The data provided above shows that this educational grants opened doors for those who

First kids with access to higher education	First in family with access to higher education including parents	%	2009	%	2010	%	2011	%	2012	%
478	433	90,6	34	7,85	30	0,02	82	42,03	87	20,09

could not enter the university and colleges without support.

“Education as social lift.”The study showed that because of the BOTA educational grant, some families got opportunities to improve their life situations. This grant gives their children a chance to live better in the future through education, and as was commented by TAP official “our grant decreases social tension and improves the social being of poor families.” And according to TAP official it can be compared with “social lift theory. By that theory, education is social lift that helps deprived children and orphans’ to get higher level of life. Education truly is a very effective means of social lift.” Many examples were given from students, graduates and parents on this matter. They commented that this grant gave them an opportunity to believe in future, that it makes them more confident and believe themselves. For example, one graduate mentioned “I received higher education that I was not able to obtain otherwise. Now I live in a big city, I have new friends, I have aims and I have a vision and I understand that. I can walk confidently.” She also added that now she was working in the area of her specialization and educating her sibling because her mother could not afford to pay for tuition and boasted “My mom is proud of me.” One parent commented “Prior to receiving the grant he had no confidence for the future, and now he has big plans for the future and confidence. He became active, well-rounded and informed.” So, this gave them belief in future, as one student said “Before receiving the grant I sat at home with my little daughter, I received a pension from government”, the pension was given because she has disability and it was the only source of living for the student. Now she says that “When I lived in Shymkent I always was afraid about my future, on future of my daughter, how I would support her. And now I am not afraid. I have faith.” These are the thoughts of handicapped student with a child of her own; she is graduating this year and already works in the area of her specialization. One graduate said,

When I lived in orphanage I thought that everybody was indifferent, after receiving the grant my world view was changed. It looks like they adopted a child and do not let him go till he grows up and finds a job.

The university faculty staff also commented on the influence of BOTA Foundation educational grants. According to their internal analysis of the dynamics of learning, performance and achievement, “Educators found out that the students from low-income families are more nonresident, of the villages, districts are less psychologically adapted to life in such a large team, in general. And thanks to the grant, they become more confident.” She added that BOTA Foundation students’ became leaders in class and among their peers. Students commented that TAP staff provided them with psychological support, when they had problems or difficult situations. One graduate said “You can come and speak with your tutor and find decision together.” One student added “Tutors are teachers of different subjects. You can come and discuss subject that you have difficulty.”

Students’ and graduates’ successes. After discussing the influence and importance of the BOTA Foundation educational grants there were appeared the theme about the evidences of the successes of students in the study. There are a lot of examples of the success of students studying by this educational grant. As was mentioned by TAP staff, there are many successful students and they publish stories in the journal of BOTA Foundation named “BOTAzhan.” Some of students actively engaged in research activities in universities, took part in various competitions. They have students who are the winners of such competitions. For example, one student is a winner of the World’s championships in taekwondo, held in South Korea, China and France. TAP staff shared “There are guys who are so passionate, and in addition to studying they do other activities. And it is commendable. We collect their certificates, diplomas.”

About 16 BOTA Foundation students participated in academic mobility programs and studied in such countries as Japan, South Korea, Turkey and China. TAP official said “It is one grand for their families. Our students never expected to study abroad and now their knowledge expanded.” One of the students participated in academic mobility program in China said “It was a great opportunity for me to improve my language skills. All that I learned in class, I could practice outside” (Yesmagambetova, 2013, p.4). According to one parent, “My daughter twice received 1st place in competitions amongst different university students.” The TAP staff mentioned, that one graduate from national university in Almaty was included in the list of “100 best students of Almaty city”. It is a source of much pride for TAP staff. She shares,

Now she works in her home city Atyrau, in HSBC Bank and I am very proud of her, she is really a hardworking and decent person, who met all our expectations, and my work and my colleagues work was not in vain, and she will now become representative of intelligencia of Atyrau.

One faculty staff gave examples of success of BOTA students. For example, some students participated in scientific conferences, and two students have published works in scientific journals. One student takes part in Kazakhstani students’ debates, has a lot of certificates. She also noted that students actively participate in social life of the university, in volunteering actions held in the university, in different competitions.

Many examples of success stories of students and graduates are written in “BOTAzhan” journal. There are some examples from this journal, “BOTA Foundation student AzamatAmantayev is a participant of many international conferences, author of scientific works and was included in “the book of gifted youth of Kazakhstan.” Another graduate whose name is Maria “became a winner of the contest of the best BOTA Foundation

students twice in a row and now she is an assistant of the head of the personnel department in one of the largest industrial enterprise of the Almaty city.” Many examples on students’ success on other activities, one of the student wrote “I received black belt and refereecertificate from the Japan Federation of Jiu-Jitsu, I was accepted as a member of the biggest and famous federations in the world” (Madiyev, 2012, p.5) and social activities, such as one student “She was as elected as a Chairman of Public Association of parents of children with disabilities “Batylana”, which means the brave mother” (Zhanserikova & Raifeld, 2012, p.6).

The influence of BOTA Foundation educational grants on students was commented by one of the faculty staff, “all of them become more confident, adaptable, and this gives them financial independence to feel of equality with others.” Some of the students receive different stipend in the universities, for example, “one student had received a stipend named after Chumbalov³” added TAP staff.

Assisting students with internship place and employment. The BOTA TAP staff assists students with practice if needed. They send letters to companies, organizations and local employment centers. TAP official commented “we have precedents of successful trainings that our students were placed in some major international companies operating in Almaty.” They also send letter to regional companies. Graduates claimed that every day they received letters from TAP staff with the name of company and requirements of practicing. One graduate mentioned “BOTA provides interns in good companies. I wanted to participate in its practices, but I was sent to practice by the university.” One student added, “I had a practice via BOTA Foundation in Centras Securities Company⁴, after practice they called me and invited to work in their company.” TAP assistance with

³ One-time stipend named after professor of chemical science Chumbalov devoted for the best students of the Al-Farabi Kazakh National university

⁴ Centras Securities Company –one of the biggest investment company in Kazakhstan

internship places is very helpful for students. As was commented by graduate, “We have not powerful relatives who can provide us with practice place.”

Moreover, TAP staff also tries to help graduates with employment. The work of staff on assisting graduate students with employment is systematic. TAP official said “In spring we distribute letters about employment to local authorities, as well as to big companies and universities.” They ask them to assist with employments of the graduates.

TAP of BOTA Foundation in 2013 signed Memorandum of Mutual Understanding with the National Industrial Chamber Ata-Meken on cooperation with assisting trainings and employment of students and graduates. According to TAP official, Ata-Meken was transformed to the National Trade Chamber of Kazakhstan and “we had a meeting with the delegation of new members and its new branch in Almaty region. We discussed a cooperation projects and they undertook the employment of our graduates in Almaty and in Almaty region.”

One graduate commented the initiative of BOTA Foundation on assisting with employment “Foundation is not obliged to employ us, but they helped us. They thought about us!” So, this expression shows the attitude of graduates and students concerning help of BOTA Foundation with employment. As was mentioned by other graduate, “My tutor permanently has sent me information about employment opportunities. I did not apply, because BOTA Foundation already gave me a lot and I decided and found work by myself.”

Work done by TAP staff gave good results, because some of graduates were employed with the help of BOTA Foundation. Support from TAP staff with employment assisting, trainings on career gives good results. TAP official said “Our efforts, so far, resulted in employment for 60 per cent of our graduates.” According to the staff in 2011 one of four

graduates employed, in 2012 -11% of 22, in 2013 -60%. “Most of graduates 65% work by specialty and average salary about 60.000 tenge” (News of BOTA, 2013, p.3).

The graduates of BOTA Foundation have their Alumni club that was organized by TAP staff. All students and graduates commented the importance of such club, because it will help them to be in touch in future. In spite of the facts that this club is young, they already had meetings and planning to take a part in such action as “Plant a tree” which held in Almaty city. BOTA Foundation issues special certificates for graduates of BOTA Foundation. Students mentioned that they will join to this club. One student said “It is in order to remember BOTA Foundation.” Graduates added that BOTA Foundation organized a big celebration of graduation ceremony in Almaty and invited graduates from all Kazakhstani colleges and universities, media, local authorities and faculty staff. One faculty staff commented, “I was invited last year, (2013) to the graduation ceremony and I was wondered that they have so many graduates.” As the one of the administrator of BOTA Foundation is IREX, the alumni club of BOTA Foundation graduates may be included in the association of alumni of IREX.

“We are not aware of the future fate of the Foundation”

In this section I am going to present the participants’ concerns about the future of BOTA Foundation.

It was mentioned before that BOTA Foundation stops its operation in May, 2014. TAP official said, “The finances, the size of which was agreed by the governments of USA, Switzerland and Kazakhstan, in the course of foundation will end by that time.” There is concern of staff on the future of the BOTA Foundation. They commented that the TAP will work till the end of December, 2014 and the education of students who will finish their study in 2014-2015 academic will be paid in full for the universities. They

commented that stipend and other fees for students will be paid monthly by one of the commercial banks, because as was commented by TAP staff “we can’t pay to students for advance. It is a big sum, and we don’t know, how they will spend it.” In spite of that educational grant intended for four year study, they had students with five years study program and BOTA Foundation also paid for the 5th year of study for such students. It is an enormous help for students. As TAP official said, “We will fulfill all our obligations before students.”

Attitudes of participants towards closing of BOTA Foundation. Participants said a lot about the importance of this scholarship and the necessity of such foundations for the society. BOTA Foundation educational grants gave chance for more than 800 students to receive education. One student commented “It is sad that it will be closed. Many people ask me about Foundation, about how they can apply. It might help for many rural students.” One graduate added “I am upset that Foundation will finish its work. Because, it did a lot for me and there are a lot of students like me. We need such Foundations.” One faculty staff shared that there are many needed families and no one knows how they live “they are left out.” Another faculty staff added, “Such types of scholarships are absolutely necessary. It gives for socially vulnerable students’ opportunity to get education and feel themselves worthy citizens.” So, there is lack of support for students from low-income families and those, who could not get state grant and other support just do not study and work on low paid and unqualified positions. Students noted that they want to become commendable members of society and prove the efforts of BOTA Foundation.

Discussions

The findings of the study showed that BOTA foundation grants helped youth from low-income families gain access to higher education due to fair selection process. All students

who got BOTA Foundation educational grants were students from low-income families, including students with disabilities, students-orphans, students from large families and so on.

Moreover, the findings also showed that majority of the students who got BOTA Foundation educational grants were the first ones in their families to get higher education and without BOTA Foundation educational grants, it would have been extremely difficult, even likely impossible for them to get higher education.

The study also showed that many people did not have trust initially for the BOTA Foundation educational grants, and they did not believe that their children would access higher education. Many young people from low-income families would have had to work to earn money for themselves and for their families without higher degree. But, these young people got BOTA Foundation education grants and were able to improve their life conditions. They started to believe in their future and raised their confidence that they can make their life better.

The study findings showed that students who got BOTA Foundation educational grants tended to perform well academically. BOTA TAP staff supported the students to perform well and they encouraged these students to re-take examinations should they fail in the first place.

Thus, the students put a lot of efforts and study well. The study findings also showed that a large number of students with BOTA Foundation grants demonstrated good academic performance and BOTA Foundation's TAP provided such incentives as contest for best students encourage them to perform well. Students' success in the study, such as participation in conferences, publishing works, going abroad by mobility programs also

showed that the educational grant gave them an opportunity to improve or strengthen their abilities and realize their potential.

Without the grant all of their goals probably would not have been achieved. So, the BOTA Foundation educational grants had a positive influence on their academic success and study. This finding is supported by a study conducted on the influence of a Gates Millennium Scholarships for students from low-income families in USA that shows that this scholarship leads to increasing academic performance of the students (DesJardins& McCall, 2013).

The results of the study on "The impact of State Appropriations and Grants on Access to Higher Education and Outmigration" shows that there is "no evidence that increases in funding for need based grants within states led either to gains in the college-going rates of students or to reduced outmigration" (Toutkoushian& Hillman, 2012, p.78) However, the statistics of BOTA Foundation TAP Department shows that such students mostly successfully graduate the universities and colleges and the numbers of drop-outs are not so high. There should be noted, that this is due to the fact, that youth who have not higher, or vocational education have no chances to improve the quality of their life. Because, they will not be in demand and will work on the low paid position. Otherwise, the amount of support from the government for unemployed people is little and not sufficient to living. So, students try to get higher education and have confident in the future. The help of the educational grant not only in covering tuition fees and also monthly stipend and other support give to students chance to concentrate on their study and do not think about the source of living during study. There is an example of one graduate, who as was mentioned before works in a large industrial company in Almaty. She is an orphan and the guardian of her siblings, and single mother, "Years are gone. I worked as a housekeeper, as a seller,

as a scrubwoman” (Yesmagambetova&Izbasarova, 2013, p.7). The grants give her an opportunity to change her life, to receive a good job and to believe in the future.

The study also showed that BOTA Foundation grant holders benefit a lot from the volunteering promoted by BOTA Foundation TAP. The students find volunteering very useful and it is very popular among the BOTA Foundation grant holders. Volunteering, gives them a sense of compassion and equity and while being engaged in volunteering they observed that there are people who need their help. They participate in many social actions, such as fairs, charity actions and sometimes they organized such actions themselves. The examples of their volunteering activities and their reflections show that they are becoming caring people who are not indifferent to other people’s needs.

The study also demonstrated that BOTA Foundation’s TAP helps grant holders by organizing internships for them. The students gain valuable work experience and develop their practical skills by attending the internships. Moreover, the BOTA Foundation’s TAP also assists its grant holders with finding jobs after they graduate from universities.

BOTA Foundation’s TAP also conducts professional trainings to develop its grant holders additional skills and knowledge. These trainings provide them with knowledge that they do not receive in the colleges and universities. Due to the trainings they become more open and prepared for the future, both in life situation and in a professional sphere. Trainings help them to be more communicative, more confident and flexible. In addition, they share their knowledge with others, such as one graduate mentioned her help to peers and friends, one parent noted that his daughter shares information from trainings with her sibling and so on. Furthermore, it helps them in future employment, because they will have not only Diploma, also additional skills, that needed. These skills are communications skills that are helpful in work environment, time-management skills, skills of effective aims setting and

others. Thus, the BOTA TAP education grant holders greatly benefit not only by getting grant itself, but also by participating many additional activities prepared by the BOTA Foundation's TAP.

The support for students of BOTA Foundation has a great effect on students' development; students become more confident and believe in their abilities and future life. The examples are given by interviewed participants confirms the positive impacts of this educational grants on personal and professional development of the students. The necessity of such scholarship is without doubt because it helps students from socially disadvantaged families to get higher education and gain knowledge in the field of their future profession, and thus to widen their opportunities in the world. Moreover, these students support their families, help their siblings and give hope for others of similar circumstances that there is an opportunity to improve the conditions that they live in. Each student will hopefully become a worthy citizen of the country and contribute to the society and economy of the country. In comparison with other students, these students can be more thoughtful to the people, to the people needed help, because they found themselves in a similar situation before grant and due to their volunteering practices are familiarized with the state of people with special needs, people in diseases and others.

Thereby, the importance of the example of BOTA Foundation and learning from its experience is relevant and timely. The experience of BOTA Foundation on work with youth from low income families confirmed its viability and effectiveness. The future of BOTA Foundation is unclear, TAP official commented, "We do not know whether a new foundation will be organized and that foundation will ensure the fund-raising." Moreover, it is important to try to keep and use its experience on selecting process and work with students. A TAP official suggested:

This is when Graduate School of Education and the Nazarbayev University, as well as the Ministry of Education and Science, will have to consider the issue of such a program and whether it is still necessary. May be, there should be ways to make use of experience and methodologies designed by BOTA, in addition to state scholarships. Because, as of today, BOTA is the only successful experience of allocation of educational scholarships to socially unprotected youth all over Kazakhstan.

The findings from the study demonstrated that these need-based grants have many implications for students' education and future. BOTA Foundation educational grants give a good opportunity to young people from low-income families, students with disabilities and young orphan students to get higher education and as a result to improve their life conditions. Higher education also gives the students more opportunities to become independent, self-sufficient and confident members of society. Moreover, it increases their faith in justice and equity. It is an attitude shared by not only the students, but also their parents, relatives, their peers and others. People with low income mostly do not believe in the equity in access to higher education, and this can be proved by a survey on accessibility of higher education in Russia, when 48% from all citizens of Russia with the low economic status replied that higher education is totally unavailable for them and "low-income parents especially expressed their sense of injustice and sensations of invincibility of their children facing obstacles" (Shishkin, 2004, p.15).

Students' from low-income families mostly do not go to study at the elite universities. The reasons are different, some students think that they will have no additional money for students' social activities, such as going out with peers, going to the concerts and events. (McGrath, 2013).

All these examples show that students from low-income families have some problems due to their economic status and are not confident in near future like their peers.

BOTA Foundation students mostly perform well, and they have achieved much success. However, there is a question why such students who show good and sometimes excellent results do not study on the state support basis. The reasons are that students from low income families have lower opportunity to participate in state grant competition due to fewer opportunities to receive additional preparation.

As I mentioned in the introduction chapter, there is insufficient grants to the number of school graduates in Kazakhstan, and there is a high competition between school graduates and mostly students from low-income families have not money to better preparation. As was commented by the Aslan Sarinzhapov, Minister of the Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan “As a result of research outcomes of UNT2014 revealed that there is a relationship between the level of income of the population, and test results. Income positively affects student progress.” (IA, Zakon.kz).

This notion also exists in Russia as school graduates also cannot afford additional preparation there (Shishkin, 2004). Hence, their chances are reduced from the school level, because of lower level of rural schools teaching quality, lack of additional preparation and limited resources such as internet connection. Stratification in US higher education also shown by the differences between students from low-income families’ academic preparation that do not give them chance to study at elite universities (Bastedo & Jaquette, 2011, p.335)

Need-based grants provide equity between students from the different social-economical background. Many students want to get higher education that gives them a chance to improve their life conditions. It is really important when a country like Kazakhstan aims to

be among the 30 highly developed countries. The top rank of countries is factored by their economic advantages and social development. The significance of higher education for the state is invaluable. According to Carnevale and Desrochers, (as cited in Perna, 2006 p. 103), “postsecondary education is increasingly important to the nation’s global competitiveness, given the shift from an industrial economy to information and technology-driven economy.” The countries, whose citizens do not have higher education and work for the low paid position, may never gain positive development because the most important force in the country is human capital that will make efforts and contributions to the country’s economy and further development.

Also, it should be noted that increasing number of people who have not got higher education by the years will also increase the number of people who are not content with their life conditions and future perspectives that can lead to the social instability. This may lead to the issues with social cohesion, because of the differences in living conditions; they will lose the sense of equity, democracy and believe in the future. Furthermore, youth can immigrate to other countries in order to find better living conditions and jobs. So, the country can lose its brain force. There is an example of Ukraine, where “educational inequality is the result of socio-economic reflects the growing inequality and social stratification of Ukrainian society” (Tolstokorova, 2007, p. 5) and as a result many youth going abroad to work, and “According to the World Bank Report 2006 today Ukraine among the ten largest countries that are both suppliers and migrant-receiving countries” (Tolstokorova, 2007, p. 13).

On the examples of findings we can say that students who receive the opportunity to get education and changing their living situation and support their families increase their believes and independence, they will become aware of their future and will connect their

future with the country, so they will work on the future of their country, share the ideas, aims of the country.

So, there is a question on the importance of the reconsidering the current situation in access to higher education, introducing and developing the system of need-based grants, where the family income will be taken into consideration.

During the Eurasian Higher Education Leaders' Forum at Nazarbayev University, there were suggestions from Universities leaders and education experts to develop other forms of support students from low-income families, such as working on the establishment of an endowment and attract business and industry.

In addition is very important to introduce other types of funding, such as giving an opportunity to get a higher education, to cover only tuition for those who can cover other expenses for themselves, provide educational grants on probation basis for one semester or one year with the right to extend grants on the results of the performance.

All of these incentives will increase the opportunity of students from low-income to study and get quality education without the fears to work during the study that will decrease the quality of their education.

The model of BOTA Foundation system on defining the most needed status among low-income students can be used by the government agencies or Ministry of Education and Science in considering the allocation of grants.

Chapter 5. Conclusion and Implications

Introduction

In this chapter I present conclusion of the study on the main aspects of the influence of BOTA Foundation educational grants on education of students from low-income families and write about implications of my research.

Role of BOTA Foundation educational grants in education of students from low-income families.

In order to give answer to the question about the role of BOTA educational grants there were set two research questions. After data analysis I can conclude that it positively influences on students' performance and development.

- a) Students' performance is good; many students graduate their study with excellent marks.
- b) The increasing number of students becoming winners of the contest on the high academic performance also shows students' good performance.
- c) Students' actively participate in different universities' and international competitions and conferences.
- d) Some students' participants of academic mobility program in Kazakhstani universities and foreign universities.
- e) Two students were included as the best students in publications as "100 best students of Almaty universities" and "The book of gifted youth of Kazakhstan."
- f) Students have published works in different digests.
- g) Students better prepared for the future job searching due to the professional trainings that give them information on finding vacancies, writing CV's.

- h) Students know how to pass interviews. Students have skills on time – management, aims setting, budget planning, leadership skills.
- i) Students become more engaged in social activities.
- j) Students do more hours on volunteering than required.
- k) Students become more responsible to society via volunteering.
- l) Students plan to continue volunteering after graduation.
- m) Students have an opportunity to do internships in good companies.
- n) Students have an opportunity to job placement by BOTA Foundation support.
- o) Students and graduates are more confident about their future prospects
- p) Graduates support their families.

In conclusion, we can see that the role of BOTA Foundation educational grants in education of students from low-income families in Kazakhstani universities is enormous and it gives them opportunities not only to receive education, but also gives them chances to increase their potential, to get additional knowledge and skills, and to look for their future with faith and competence.

Implications

There are many implications of this study, namely there are policy implications, implications for the Universities administration, and implications for the researchers and for myself, as a researcher.

Policy implications. This study offers policy implications, namely to the Ministry of Education and Science about the need to establish and develop needs-based scholarships in Kazakhstan. There is a necessity to introduce or to consider the issue of students from low-income families and from rural areas, because provided quota and grants are not sufficient for the number of graduates from rural areas. The model of BOTA Foundation

grant distribution can be used in order to choose the most needed students from these categories of students.

The government inducements on allowing 10 percent tax reduction for those, who engage in charity and other support (Delovye novosti Kazakhstananasegodnya, 2014), can also be a good opportunity for university administrations to establish connections with companies and organizations in order to gain their support and sponsorship for needy students.

Implications for the Universities officials. Due to the finding on the positive role of professional trainings conducted by TAP staff to their grant holders there is suggestion to the Universities officials to introduce such types of trainings to their students. In addition to the universities support system to the first year students, these types of trainings will help their students to be more prepared for the future professional career. Many students do not have additional skills in areas as professional communications, business correspondence, aims settings, interview passing and leadership skills. And such trainings will be essential. Furthermore, it will increase universities ratings among employers, because the graduates' behavior is also important in work environment. Also, the example of supporting of students from low-income families and its positive influences can be also used by universities in considering their own financial assistance for students from this category.

Implications for other researchers. This study is the first study on the influence of need-based grants on students' performance in Kazakhstan. There is a lack of studies on the areas of needed students' opportunity to study, their performance, also on academic performance of students from rural areas and low-income family's holders of state grants. However, it is also important to find relationships between the financial status of students and their choices of the specialty and college or university. In addition, future researchers

can explore the study and performance of BOTA Foundation students studying at colleges, and to do quantitative research on the outcomes of the BOTA Foundation educational grants.

Implications for me as a researcher. During doing my research I better understood and learned in practice about the whole process of research. Regarding help and assistance of my supervisor I learned how to point out the main important issues in analyzing data, how to present findings. I realized that data analyzing and reviewing previous research can give more deep understanding of the issue.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview questions for Students and graduates

How did you find out about BOTA Foundation scholarship? What was the reason you won competition?

What would be able to study at the University if you had not won the BOTA scholarship?

How did you select the university or faculty after you won the scholarship? (or do you first become students and then compete for the scholarship?)

What challenges did you face after receiving a scholarship?

What are the requirements you must meet to keep the grant and receive a scholarship?

How BOTA Foundation grant affected to your study and academic performance?

How BOTA Foundation grant affected to your life and personal development?

What other options did BOTA Foundation grant provide you with besides training?

What effect does volunteer work have on you?

What kind of support do you get from BOTA Foundation while you are a student?

How do you like professional trainings?

What are the professional trainings about? How do they help you?

What changes have you experienced after receiving the grant?

What kind of financial assistance did BOTA Foundation provide you with?

How does BOTA Foundation scholarship help you achieve your dreams?

Interview questions for TAP staff

What is the purpose of BOTA Foundation scholarships?

How many students do you have?

How do you select students to your program?

Did you give priorities to students with special needs, to orphans during selection procedure? How do you do this?

How do you monitor students' progress ?

Are you satisfied with progress of students?

What do you undertake to encourage students for good academic performance?

How do you make a set of students in the program?

What do you do with the students with poor academic performance?

How does scholarship help your students?

What do you suggest to students except scholarships?

What professional training do you offer to students? For what purpose?

What requirements must a graduate complete in the program?

What are the conditions you set for alumni?

How do you assist students with job placement or practice place?

Can you give examples of success stories of the students and graduates?

Interview questions for University faculty

What do you know about BOTA Foundation grants?

What do you think of the students who get BOTA Foundation grants?

Do you know how BOTA Foundation grants affect their education?

How BOTA Foundation grant holders perform in the university?

How do students with BOTA Foundation grants participate in the social life of the university?

Do you think it is necessary to have such scholarships?

Interview questions for student's parents

How did you find out about BOTA Foundation scholarship? Why did your son/daughter apply for it?

Would your child be able to study at the University if he/she did not receive grant from BOTA Foundation?

What do you think about professional trainings provided by BOTA Foundation? Do you think it is helpful for your son/daughter?

What do you think about requirements of BOTA Foundation concerning academic performance? Volunteer work?

How did BOTA Foundation grant affect on your child's life? Or your family's life?

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Role of BOTA Foundation grants in education of students from low-income families in Kazakhstan

You are invited to participate in **a research study** which explores the role of BOTA Foundation grants in education of students from low-income families in Kazakhstani universities.

You will be asked to participate in an interview which will take approximately 1,5 hours and interview will take from March 10th to 28th, 2014. Interview's date and time will be agreed with you in advance. With your permission, I will tape record the interview for further analysis. All interview data will be confidential. Your name, occupation, and other information will remain in anonymity. The data will be kept in my own computer, and only I am and my research supervisor will have an access to the data. When we complete the research, all data will be destroyed.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefit from your participation in this study is that you will help to develop our understanding about BOTA Foundation and its support for students from low-income families in Kazakhstan. **PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS:** If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your **participation is voluntary** and you have the **right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled**. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Questions: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact me or my thesis supervisor Dr.DuishonShamatov at:

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Independent Contact: If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to speak to someone independent of the research team at [+7 7172 709350](tel:+77172709350). You can also write an email to the NUGSE Research Committee at gse@nu.edu.kz

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.

According to the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan an individual under the age of 18 is considered a child. Any participant falling into that category should be given the Parental Consent Form and have it signed by at least one of his/her parent(s) or guardian(s).

