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**International Scholarship Program Returnees' Re-entry Adaptation Process:**

**Exploring Experiences of Bolashak Scholarship Alumni**

Karlygash Kairanova

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

in

Educational Leadership in Higher Education

NU Graduate School of Education

Nazarbayev University

June 2019

Words count: 17 582

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**International Scholarship Program Returnees' Re-entry Adaptation Process:  
Exploring Experiences of Bolashak Scholarship Alumni**

**Abstract**

As the number of Bolashak scholarship recipients has increased over the past few decades the issues of their re-adapting to their home environment is an issue needing attention. Such returnees experience a degree of re-entry challenges when readjusting to their home countries. The purpose of this study is to explore the re-entry experiences of Bolashak scholarship program alumni returning to Kazakhstan, their country of origin, after having lived and studied overseas for a certain period of time. This study primarily focuses on the issues returnees have had to deal with and identifies the factors influencing their re-adaptation. It also describes the strategies they have used to better adapt to the social and professional life of their country.

The phenomenological qualitative research approach was used to answer the research questions. Data collection covered the period from the beginning of March until the middle of May 2019. All of the research participants were recruited via the snowball and purposeful sampling techniques and were reached via social networks, e-mail and through phone calls. The instruments used to conduct this study were in-depth semi-structured interviews, and the participants included ten Bolashak scholarship alumni (three males and seven females), aged between 25 and 35.

According to the research findings the study participants, for the most part, were able to adequately re-adjust to life back home. However, it was revealed that most of them had experienced social, and predominantly, professional challenges upon re-entry. Female participants were found to be experience more challenges in adapting to former relationships with their families and friends. The different work ethic and poorer work conditions and workplace environment back in the home country were also significant



factors of the re-adjustment process. Based on the results of the interviews a recommendation that came up was to set up additional services as part of the Bolashak Scholarship Program which could provide emotional and social support for returnees for their initial time back home.

*Key words:* re-entry, readjustment, re-entry adjustment and re-adaptation, sojourner, returnee

**Процесс реадaptации выпускников Международной стипендиальной программы: изучение опыта выпускников программы «Болашак»**

**Аннотация**

Поскольку число получателей стипендии «Болашак» увеличилось за последние несколько десятилетий, проблемы их повторной адаптации к домашней обстановке требуют особого внимания. Выпускники сталкиваются с определенными трудностями при возвращении в страну. Цель данного исследования – изучить опыт повторного въезда в Казахстан выпускников стипендиальной программы «Болашак», в страну их происхождения, после того, как они жили и учились за границей в течение определенного периода времени. В этом исследовании основное внимание уделяется проблемам, с которыми сталкиваются возвращающиеся лица, и выявляются факторы, влияющие на их повторную адаптацию. В нем также описываются стратегии, которые они использовали для лучшей адаптации к социальной и профессиональной жизни своей страны.

В данном исследовании использовался феноменологический качественный исследовательский подход, для получения ответа на вопросы исследования. Сбор данных охватывал период с начала марта до середины мая 2019 года. Все участники исследования были набраны с помощью целенаправленных методов отбора через социальные сети, электронную почту и телефонные звонки. Инструментами, использованными для проведения данного исследования, были глубокие полуструктурированные интервью, и участниками были десять выпускников стипендий «Болашак» (трое мужчины и семь женщин) в возрасте от 25 до 35 лет.

Согласно результатам интервью, участники исследования, по большей части, смогли адекватно приспособиться к жизни дома. Однако, выяснилось, что

большинство из них столкнулись с социальными и, преимущественно, профессиональными проблемами по возвращению. Оказалось, что женщины-участницы испытывают больше проблем в адаптации к прежним отношениям со своими семьями и друзьями. Различная трудовая этика и более плохие условия труда на родине также были важными факторами процесса повторной адаптации. По результатам собеседований была выдвинута рекомендация о создании дополнительных служб в рамках стипендиальной программы «Болашак», которые могли бы обеспечить эмоциональную и социальную поддержку возвращающимся лицам в начальном этапе прибытия на родину.

*Ключевые слова:* повторный въезд, переналадка, корректировка и повторная адаптация, временный въезд, возвращенец.

**Халықаралық стипендиялық бағдарламасы бойынша шет елдерде  
білім алып отанына қайтып оралған тұлғалардың реадaptациялық үрдісі:  
«Болашақ» стипендиясы түлектерінің тәжірибесін зерттеу**

**Андатпа**

Соңғы жылдары «Болашақ» стипендиясы иегерлерінің санының көбеюіне байланысты олардың өз елдеріндегі жағдайға қайта бейімделу мәселесі елеулі аландаушылық туғызуда. Мұндай азаматтар өз еліне қайта бейімделу кезінде бірқатар қиындықтарға тап болуда. Бұл зерттеудің мақсаты – белгілі бір уақыт аралығында шетелде білім алып келген «Болашақ» түлектерінің өз отанына қайту тәжірибесін зерттеу. Бұл зерттеу «Болашақ» бағдарламасы түлектерінің мәселелеріне баса назар аударады және олардың өз еліндегі жағдайға қайта бейімделуіне әсер ететін факторларды анықтайды. Сондай-ақ, бұл зерттеу студенттердің өз еліндегі әлеуметтік және кәсіби жағдайға қайта бейімделу стратегияларын да сипаттайды.

Зерттеу сұрақтарына жауап беру үшін феноменологиялық сапалы зерттеу әдісі қолданылды. Деректерді жинау кезеңі 2019 жылдың наурыз айының ортасынан бастап мамыр айының ортасына дейін жалғасты. Қатысушылардың барлығы әлеуметтік желілер, электрондық пошта және телефон қоңыраулары арқылы таңдалды. 26 жастан 35 жасқа дейінгі 10 «Болашақ» бағдарламасының түлегімен (3 ер адам және 7 әйел) терең сұхбат жүргізілді.

Зерттеу нәтижелері жалпы алғанда барлық зерттеушілердің қайтып келгеннен кейін пайда болған мәселелерді толықтай шеше алғандығын көрсетті. Алайда, олардың басым бөлігі әлеуметтік және кәсіби проблемаларға тап болғандығы анықталды. Зерттеу барысында, көбіне, әйел затының өз отбасы және достарымен бастапқы қарым-қатынасқа қайта бейімделуі күрделі болғаны байқалды. Қызмет

барысында көптеген қатысушылардың этикалық және нашар еңбек жағдайларына кезігуі қайта бейімделу қиындығын туғызды.

Зерттеу барысында жүргізілген сауалнамалардың негізінде «Болашақ» стипендиясының шеңберінде түлектерге елге оралғаннан кейін эмоционалды және әлеуметтік қолдау көрсететін қызметті құру туралы ұсыныс жасалды.

*Кілтті сөздер:* қайта оралу, қайта бейімделу, уақытша қоныстау, елге қайта оралу.

## Table of Contents

AUTHOR AGREEMENT .....	ii
Declaration of authorship .....	iv
CITI TRAINING CERTIFICATE .....	v
Ethical Approval.....	vi
Abstract.....	vii
List of tables .....	xvi
List of figures .....	xvii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Purpose of the Study .....	4
1.4 Research Questions .....	4
1.5 Significance of the Study .....	5
1.6 Definition of Key Terms.....	5
1.7 Plan of the Thesis.....	6
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Student Population.....	7
2.3 Re-entry challenges.....	8
2.3.1 Psychological issues.....	8
2.3.1 Sociocultural issues.....	9
2.3.3 Professional issues.....	10
2.4 Factors Influencing Individual's Re-entry Adjustment .....	11
2.4.1 Gender.....	11

2.4.2 Age.....	12
2.4.3 Marital status.....	13
2.4.5 Cultural distance.....	14
2.4.6 Time spent abroad.....	15
2.4.7 Contact with home-country individuals.....	16
2.4.8 Previous intercultural experience.....	17
2.5 Re-entry Copying Strategies.....	17
2.6 “U” and “UU” (W) Curves Adjustment Models.....	19
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	22
3.1 Introduction.....	22
3.2 Research Design.....	22
3.3 Participants.....	23
3.4 Instrument.....	24
3.5 Procedure.....	25
3.6 Data Analysis.....	26
3.7 Ethical Issues.....	27
3.8 Risks and Benefits of the Study.....	28
Chapter 4: Findings.....	29
4.1 Introduction.....	29
4.2 Participants.....	29
4.3 Results Related to Research Question 1:.....	30
4.3.1 Sociocultural challenges.....	30

4.3.2 Professional challenges. ....	38
4.3.3 Factors influencing international students' re-entry adjustment. ....	41
4.4 Results Related to Research Question 2: What Strategies have the Returnees Used for a Smooth Re-Entry Adaptation? .....	44
5.1 Introduction.....	47
5.2 Findings Related to RQ 1: .....	47
5.2.1 Re-entry challenges. ....	47
5.2.2 Factors influencing the re-entry adjustment.....	51
5.3 Findings Related to RQ 2. Re-entry Coping Strategies .....	55
5.4 Summary .....	55
CHAPTER 6: Conclusion.....	57
6.1 Conclusion .....	57
6.2 Limitations and Practical Recommendations for of the current study.....	58
References .....	61



**List of tables**

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants.....29

**List of figures**

Figure 1. Initial U-Curve proposed by Lysgaard (1955).....	20
Figure 2. The W-Curve model developed by Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963).....	21

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

In the context of today's internationalized and globalized world, a significantly high proportion of studies devoted to cross-cultural adjustment experiences of a diverse sojourner population have increasingly appeared in the literature. According to articles and literature produced on the subject, sojourners might be corporate and governmental employees (Adler, 1981), returning veterans (Adler, 1975), Peace Corps volunteers, missionaries, migrants, married couple repatriates (Szkudlarek, 2009), business employees, self-initiated individuals and students (Brabant, Palmer and Gramling, 1990; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991), though one of the most discussed and examined groups of sojourners are international student populations (Uehara, 1986; Sussman, 1986; Brabant et al., 1990; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Gaw, 2000; Butcher, 2002; Arthur, 2003; Thompson & Christofi, 2006; Pritchard, 2011; Presbitero, 2016; Kartoshkina, 2015, Dettweiler et al., 2014; Altweck & Marshall, 2015; Le & LaCost, 2017; Pitts 2016; Zhu & Gao 2016). Early papers indicate that the issues of initial entry to a foreign culture have been a focus of most of the literature since the mid-twentieth century. However, less attention has been paid to the re-entry phenomenon, that is, an individual's readjustment to the home environment after a certain period of time of staying abroad (Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Cox, 2004; Pitts, 2016; Gama & Pedersen, 1977).

In analyzing and reviewing the limited research literature which has been devoted to re-entry matters, one study (Kartoshkina, 2015) claims that returning to one's home country might be both exciting and challenging for international students. However, most of the research on the subject has been focused on foreign students' re-entry difficulties. Szkudlarek (2010) argues that nothing much has changed since the time when Martin (1984) stated that difficulties appeared upon returning home after an international sojourn

are mainly unanticipated. Most scholars argue that the re-entry to home culture requires a large amount of transition related efforts, and that it is more difficult and problematic than one's initial move to the host country (Adler, 1981; Brabant et al., 1990; Gaw 2000). Re-entry challenges such as grief (Butcher, 2002), shock (Thompson & Christofi, 2006), pain (Brabant et al., 1990), trauma (Pritchard, 2011) and distress (Gaw, 2000) may be experienced upon re-entry. The current study concentrates on the overall re-entry experience of returning alumni of Kazakhstan's Bolashak Scholarship Program, with an emphasis on the challenges caused by the impact of a variety of internal and external factors.

Over the last few decades, due to educational migration, the majority of students from Kazakhstan who are involved in programs of academic mobility have the opportunity to earn their undergraduate, master's and doctoral degrees and participate in various internship programs abroad. According to the statistics of Bolashak, a government-sponsored international scholarship program, about 10, 096 specialists have completed their academic training programs since 1993 and 1,255 scholarship holders are currently completing their graduate degrees in Great Britain and Ireland, the USA, Canada, and in countries of continental Europe, Asia, Oceania, and in the Russian Federation (Bolashak, 2019). There are particular program features and selection criteria which oblige these graduate student returnees to work in Kazakhstan for a certain period of time (3-5 years) after accomplishing all the requirements of their academic program abroad (Perna, Orosz & Jumakulov, 2015). The experiences of scholarship alumni's re-adaptation in the Kazakhstani context has hardly been investigated; therefore, it is of great interest to explore how Bolashak scholarship program alumni experience their re-entry adjustment to their home environment and how they manage the challenges that arise, and their consequent self-development upon return. Thus, the findings of this study provide insight

into the re-entry experiences lived by Bolashak alumni returning to Kazakhstan, which remains a less researched area.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

This exploration of international students' re-entry adjustment is motivated by a need to find the answers to several issues associated with the re-entry phenomenon. Firstly, research on the subject has mostly been conducted and developed in the context of students from developed countries (Szukudlarek, 2009), and it would be interesting to establish whether such findings can be applicable worldwide. Secondly, studies on cross-cultural readjustment are very limited in the context of Kazakhstan, and very little empirical data has been introduced and few theoretical works have been published. International higher education institutions are usually able to provide international students with sufficient support upon arrival to the host country, both academically and culturally (Pritchard, 2011), though less is known about the degree to which the re-entry stage receives similar attention.

In addition, the administrators, stakeholders and coordinators of governmental scholarships (Bolashak being only one example) do not often perceive the re-entry phase as critical and incorrectly take it for granted as being problem-free, while the pre-departure process to the host country remains as a priority. Even students might not realize the extent to which the re-entry transitional period can be challenging. Arthur (2003) claims that neither the sponsoring organization in the home country nor the international students going abroad might be prepared for the difficulties that emerge upon re-entry. While some are able to go through the re-entry transition easily, others can endure long-lasting stress upon arrival. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to assist and provide sufficient support to returning students in their endeavours to adapt to life at home.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The goal of this research project is to examine how Bolashak scholarship alumni, namely master's degree program graduates who have studied and lived abroad, undergo the process of re-entry adaptation by identifying demographic characteristics and external variables influencing their re-entry adjustment, in particular with regards to family, friends, work and daily life, and pinpointing the strategies they use to re-adapt after a sojourn abroad. The central concern of the current inquiry is the re-entry challenges associated with the sociocultural, professional and emotional well-being of Bolashak scholarship program returnees. Moreover, this study will attempt to draw the attention of government officials, and scholarship program administrators and employees to the issues of returning international students' re-adaptation and to prepare supporting mechanisms such as re-entry workshops and post-return training programs which can facilitate the readjustment process and provide a smoother re-entry transition.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

In order to make a comparison of Kazakhstani returning students' re-entry adjustment experience with similar studies conducted in other countries, scholarship alumni's re-adaption steps and their related issues are examined. More specifically, this research explores returnees' post-return status and makes an in-depth analysis of the nature of the re-entry adaptation process in an attempt to highlight returnees' most common adaptation issues, and more significantly, to learn about returnees' journey during the readjustment period. Thus, this study focuses on finding answers to the following research questions:

RQ 1: What is the overall experience of the international scholarship program returnees' after their studies overseas?

SQ 1: What are the challenges students might encounter upon re-entry to their home country?

SQ 2: What are the factors influencing international students' re-entry adjustment?

RQ2: What strategies have the returnees used for a smooth re-entry adaptation?

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

With an increase in the number of students returning to Kazakhstan from their overseas studies, this research hopes to raise stakeholders' awareness of returnees' re-entry experience to their own society and the findings can be a starting point for a deeper exploration of this topic.

This research provides empirical data and the results can be taken into consideration by the scholarship administrators, employees, and government and educational institution officials. The findings might stimulate the creation of re-entry orientation training programs by providing additional information and informing the types of administrative support that can further aid returnee students and facilitate their re-entry transition.

### 1.6 Definition of Key Terms

**Re-entry** has been defined as a transitional period of returning (Adler, 1974; Brabant et. al. 1990; Zhu & Gao, 2016), re-integrating (Pitts, 2016), re-aculturating (Arthur, 2003) and re-adjustment into one's home country after an extended stay in a foreign country.

**Readjustment, re-entry adjustment and re-adaptation** is an effort to adapt to one's familiar environment and home country upon returning from a host nation (Zhu & Gao, 2016).

**Sojourner** – in this study, sojourner refers to the international student population (Sussman, 1986; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991) who have experienced a temporary stay in a foreign country in order to achieve academic goals within a certain period of time.

According to Furnham and Bochner (1989) this “temporary stay” might range between six months to a five-year time period.

**Returnee** is the person who has returned home country after living overseas for a certain period of time.

### **1.7 Plan of the Thesis**

Overall, this thesis consists of six chapters, the introduction, the literature review, the methodology, the findings, the discussion, and the conclusion, which includes a list of references and applications. This first chapter begins with an introductory part which incorporates the significant components of the research. It outlines the problem statement, purpose, research questions and significance of the study. The second chapter reviews the existing literature related to the research topic. It focuses on the theoretical background and considers different researchers' positions on the re-entry phenomenon. The third chapter describes the basic methodological principles underlying the research. It includes the methods chosen for the study, sampling characteristics, tools used for the data collection and data analysis procedures. In addition, the ethical issues, limitations, risks and benefits of the study are outlined in this chapter. Chapter four reports on the findings of the study, which represents qualitative data. It encompasses detailed responses to the interview questions and subsequent analysis. The next chapter is the discussion of the findings. This chapter highlights the main results of the study and provides an interpretation of them. Moreover, the data obtained shows the extent to which the results support the previous studies reviewed in the second chapter. The final chapter of the thesis provides the conclusion to all issues raised in previous chapters and also includes recommendations and the rationale for future studies on the re-entry phenomenon.



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces the discussion of significant inquiries to understand the re-entry experiences of returning population after international sojourn. It outlines the re-entry adjustment challenges, factors and coping strategies returnees encounter and use to manage adaptation issues. The U-shaped and W-shaped models of cross-cultural readjustment are considered. The analysis of factors influencing cross-border readjustment: age, gender, marital status, previous experience, cultural distance, time spent abroad is discussed.

### **2.2 Student Population**

Student sojourners are one of the most examined social groups in the context of cross-cultural integration. (Uehara 1986; Arthur, 2003; Szkudlarek, 2009; Presbitero, 2016). Scientific interest in examining student population has been growing and studied deeply. Brabant et al. (1990) claim that since World War II, the number of international students doing university degree programs in the United States has significantly increased. Rohrlich & Martin (1991) similarly state that the issue of international students matriculated at American university degree programs, and those enrolled in academic programs abroad became central.

According to Brown (1983) since 1980 (as cited in Rohrlich & Martin, 1991, p. 163) the number of U.S. undergraduates, who made such choice reached approximately 750,000 per year. In 2000, the number of Cypriots enrolled in U.S. higher educational settings reached 515,000, which was nearly two and a half times more than in 1976 (Thompson & Christofi, 2006). Presbitero (2016) documented that in 2012, more than 400,000 foreign students visited Australia for the purpose of obtaining college/university degrees.

Latest papers suggest that the number of the inbound and outbound international student population has gradually grown year by year. For example, Zhu & Gao (2016) state that Chinese overseas students had an increase by 3, 58% in 2013 in contrast to 2012 and those returning home exceeded by 29, 53% compared with the year before. Given the steady growth towards the international student sojourn indicates the urgency of understanding foreign students' re-entry experiences.

As a part of the international exchange program, Bolashak scholarship holders are likely the largest student sojourn population in the country. Over 25 years, about 12,000 specialists have been graduated from overseas university academic programs and many have already returned back to Kazakhstan. Their re-entry experiences and adjustment issues to the home country upon return are of great concern and need to be managed accordingly. Such a considerable number of returned graduates encourage examining their adjustment difficulties to the life at home upon return.

### **2.3 Re-entry challenges**

The re-entry transition has been found not simply as physical resettlement from host to home country, but the rather physiological and social process of readjustment (Arthur, 2003). Several studies indicate that students' re-entry experiences are inconsistent in their perception of the re-entry phenomenon, that is, some have the feeling of strong disorientation, psychological distress (Ward et al., 2001) or social, professional non-adaptation while others simply do not experience any significant readjustment difficulties and take the things as granted (Zhu & Gao, 2016).

**2.3.1 Psychological issues.** A number of research findings evidenced that physiological issues might range from the feeling of anxiety, sense of loss, frustration to distress reaching even clinical level (Szkudlarek, 2009; Kartoshkina, 2015, Gaw 2000; Butcher 2002). For example, in a study of 50 East Asian students returning from an international academic program in New Zealand, Butcher (2002) defines their re-entry to

the home country as a grieving process. Many study participants had a strong feeling of loss of friends, overseas experiences and overall life abroad.

Gaw's (2000) findings showed that the re-entry concerns of returning 66 American college students were mostly associated with their emotional states. About 30 % of returnees suffered from loneliness and isolation, 22% coped with feelings of alienation and depression and 15% had a high level of anxiety.

Moreover, studies of Sahin (1990) indicates that overall (as cited in Gaw, 2000, p.87), about 52 % out of 785 Turkish teenaged students after returning back to their home country had reported anxiety problems and experienced clinical levels of depression. Similarly, in examining U.S. college students' re-entry challenges, Kartoshkina (2015) revealed that most of them had expressed the feelings of loss, sadness, alienation, frustration and depression.

**2.3.1 Sociocultural issues.** According to literature dedicated to the problems of adjustment to the sociocultural environment in the home country of a returnee, relationships with family and friends were considered to be another difficult aspect of the re-adaptation.

Three decades ago, Gama and Pederson (1977) found that most of LASPAU Scholars after returning back to Brazil were challenged to get used back to life at home, in particular, with family and friends. Many study participants were barely able to cope with such parental care after arriving from the United States, where they were accustomed to a more independent life.

Brabant et al. (1990) similarly aimed at exploring the re-entry experience of foreign students returned from the United States to family, friends and in everyday life at home. The results of the empirical study corresponded to the research findings of Gama and Pederson conducted earlier (1977). For many, it was problematic to cope with family expectations and maintain a former friendship with old friends.

More recently, the results of research conducted by Butcher (2002) with East Asian graduates returned from their studies in New Zealand confirmed that renegotiating relations with family and friends caused the most problem upon re-entry. However, one study demonstrates a more positive re-entry experience with respect to relationships with family. Le and Lacost (2017) research findings suggest that most returning Vietnamese students after coming back from studying in the U.S. experienced positive emotional support from their families. Some have reported that their relationships with family got even better and improved, though friendship with old friends for some have ended up upon return.

**2.3.3 Professional issues.** A large number of existing studies in the literature on the subject have examined the psychological and social aspects of the re-entry in large, but little have been talked about professional side of the re-entry.

The greatest research effort on this issue have been made by Gama & Pedersen (1977), who found the professional life as the most difficult area for returnees to re-adapt. The authors identified that for many scholars adjusting back to the system at working environment created many difficulties. The vast majority of grantees reported that they struggled with various restrictions at their educational settings.

The university was not sufficiently equipped, administration staff was not easily approachable, dealing with rivalry at the workplace, and was in a poor level, and not enough time was dedicated to do research. Such conflicts occur when home country lifestyle is not compatible with the conditions in the host country. For example, in this study, all of the LASPAU scholars resided in America and had to return to their sponsoring university in Brazil where working conditions were far from their expectations.

A similar conclusion was reached by Le and LaCost (2017), though the results are not clearly discussed in detail. The authors just stressed on existing career-related difficulties. They stated that most of the international student returnees had the re-entry

problems in adjusting back to the Vietnamese working environment upon return from the U.S.

The findings of Pritchard (2011) went beyond previous mentioned reports, showing that a huge majority of Asian graduates returned from the UK, were successfully readjusted to their professional life. Clarity in a job description and finding their place within society led to the successful readjustment.

## **2.4 Factors Influencing Individual's Re-entry Adjustment**

A significant number of researches related to the re-entry issues focus on the demographic characteristics of an international sojourner and define situational or external factors influencing on the process of cross-border re-adaptation. Empirical studies on the re-entry suggest that similar factors might influence on adaptation both while an individual in a host or in home country environment. Such variables as age, gender, marital status, cultural distance, length of sojourn in host culture, time since return might impact on returnees' psycho-sociocultural well-being, professional challenges and overall the degree of their re-entry adjustment satisfaction (Szkudlarek, 2009).

**2.4.1 Gender.** An increasing amount of research suggests that male and female perceive the native cultural patterns after returning home from overseas differently (Szkudlarek, 2009; Le & LaCost, 2017) that is, it turned out re-adjustment is more problematic for women than men.

Brabant et al. (1990) in the examination of international students' re-entry experiences who studied in the U.S. revealed that unlike men, female students more subtly noticed changes in their previously familiar social environment, and faced with family issues, friends and problems with daily life upon return. They claim that such re-entry adjustment difficulties had occurred as a result of living in a society with more liberal values, while the family adheres to more conservative views.

Le and LaCost (2017) explored the post-return experience of Vietnamese returnees who studied in the United States, concluded that for women participants it cost many efforts to cope with traditional norms of local society where women pursuing higher education were not welcomed.

Studying the experience of Brazilian LASPAU scholarship program graduates returning from study in the U.S., Gama and Pedersen (1977) stated that women less adequately overcame issues related to family expectations. Not considerably, but they found the value conflict and high supervision of the family as more of a problem. According to data provided, women's values and attitude towards interpersonal relations and intimate friendship changed.

Thus, according to many researchers' findings, gender is found as one of the important factors that might predict the re-entry problems. However, Sussman (2001) and Cox (2004) do not acknowledge gender as a decisive variable in the re-entry challenges. The authors found no significant correlation between gender and difficulties appeared while living overseas nor upon return and highlight the need for further investigation of sex-related the re-entry problems.

**2.4.2 Age.** Several empirical studies indicate that age is one of the basic and critical variables in determining the level of returnee's re-entry satisfaction and directly relates to individual's socio-cultural challenges and distress occurred upon return (Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Cox 2004; Szkudlarek, 2009, Gama & Pedersen, 1977; Uehara 1986). Some researchers argue that the process of re-adaptation is more difficult for younger aged individuals than for adults returning from host to home country.

Cox's (2004) findings showed that older aged individuals experienced a lower level of the re-entry difficulties from both social and psychological perspectives. The author argues that a younger sojourner might advantage more in a new cultural environment, but harder his re-entry transition might be.

Martin (1986) states that while older people are concerned about professional life and career, rebuilding interpersonal relationship gets more central for younger returnees. In the study of American student returnees' re-entry experience after an extended period of time spent overseas, Uehara (1986) concluded that the age overall did not correlate much with the re-entry adjustment issues.

According to Gama and Pedersen (1977), younger sojourners encounter re-entry crisis more, however, it is important to note that most of the research participants engaged in their study were initially young professors who had very little work experience before going to the place of assignment. That is, the question may remain open whether age was a determining factor, indeed, influencing on the re-entry. Given the previous research, the authors assume that older participants with considerable work experiences might have fewer readjustment difficulties.

**2.4.3 Marital status.** Status is another variable associated with international sojourner adaptation difficulties that often arise upon returning home environment. According to literature reviewed Szkudlarek (2009) argues that married couples are less likely to experience re-entry problems, while single ones might get more depressed after sojourn. Going back to the empirical investigation of Brazilians returning from study in the U.S., Gama and Pedersen (1977) stress on single returnees' complaint on insufficient privacy and freedom which they experienced overseas.

Cox's (2004) studies somewhat support the research findings of Gama and Pederson (1977). The results of his study showed that the single status returnees experienced high depression upon return. He refers to the very nature of marriage that in general, marriage can provide social support diminishing stress emerged. Cox (2004) highlights that the participants of the study were all missionaries and findings of the research might not be valid for other groups of returning individuals. The limited number of research in regard to

the impact of marital status on a sojourner re-entry adjustment leaves the space for further investigation of this variable.

**2.4.5 Cultural distance.** Another external factor determining the ease of intercultural adjustment and readjustment of a sojourner is cultural distance (Galchenko & Van de Vijver, 2007). Several studies indicate that cultural distance positively correlates with a cultural adaptation process, in terms of similarity or difference between cultures. Adjustment is considerably challenging in a case when the host culture norms differ from home culture values (Bochner, 2003).

To assess the degree of similarity of cultures Babiker et al. (1980) proposed a Cultural Distance Index, which measures distances between several cultures based on their physical and cultural parameters. (Furukawa, 1997; Berezhenova, 2010). Babiker et al. (1980) developed and applied the Cultural Distance Questionnaire, an instrument for examining the level of foreign student adaptation studying in Scotland. It measured the individual's perception of differences between the social and physical attributes of the home and host cultures, including language, religion, family structure, and level of education, material comfort, climate, food, clothing, and others. The study revealed that the more significant the distance between cultures, the higher was the level of anxiety of individuals (Babiker et al., 1980).

Later, the cultural distance scale proposed by Babiker et al. (1980) was borrowed by other scholars. In particular, Farnham and Bochner (1986) classified cultures according to certain aspects (as cited in Berezhenova, 2010, p.). In their empirical study, religion, language, and climate have been taken as the main criteria for making comparisons between cultures. Participants were ranged by countries that have the most and least similar or had common cultural attributes with Great Britain. Empirical data shows that Northern and Central Europe were found to have the "closest" similarities, while Southern Europe and Latin America were less similar; a group of cultures the most "distant" to Great



Britain have been turned out Asian and African regions. Thus, the results of the study suggest that the greater the difference between countries is, the more traumatic the adaptation process might be.

Interesting were the results of the research conducted by Galchenko et al. (2007). They studied the perceived cultural distance of exchange program students who came to Russia from different countries, such as China, sub-Saharan Africa, North Korea and the former Soviet Republics (Armenia and Georgia). The study intended to support the hypothesis that the larger cultural distance, the more difficulties in the process of psychological and sociocultural re-adaptation occurs. As a result, the participants of East Asian countries demonstrated the largest Perceived Cultural Distance and the least adjustment. Speaking the same language, confession of the same religion and having well-organized ethnical communities reduced Perceived Cultural Distance between Russia and former USSR countries making the adjustment process for the group of participants from Georgia and Armenia much easier.

According to Szkudlarek (2009), some studies refute the hypothesis that the re-entry from a country similar to native culture can facilitate re-adaptation to home culture, but rather returning from countries where cultures are different. For example, in a study of the Canadian government and corporate employees' re-entry adjustment process after work assignments in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Caribbean countries Adler (1981) did not associate the re-entry challenges with the area of assignment. Thus, the empirical data suggests that readjustment to home culture is not always easier or less challenging for those returning from the country with similar cultural patterns.

**2.4.6 Time spent abroad.** The results of the studies related to the impact of the length of time spent abroad on sojourners' readjustment are contradictory. According to Szkudlarek (2009), some research findings suggest that sojourners who spent a

considerable number of years overseas made more effort in readjusting their home culture comparing to those who went on short –term stay abroad.

Bennett et al. (1958) states (as cited in Uehara, 1986, p. 419) that length of time spent overseas positively correlates with the re-entry challenges, though Uehara (1986) later in the investigation of American students' re-adaptation experiences did not unfold any relationship between the length of time overseas and problems emerged after returning home.

Similarly, Sorimachi (1994) states (as cited in Thompson and Christofi, 2006, p.25) that despite the time spent abroad, all respondents equally reported the re-entry culture shock after a sojourn. According to Szkudlarek (2009), some authors agree that time spent abroad is indeed related to the re-entry adjustment only in work context; others came to the opposite conclusion that length of time spent abroad can be a predictor in terms of readjustment as a whole and is not associated with predicting job outcomes.

For example, Gregersen and Stroh (1997) reported that, although Finnish returnees encountered some serious problems with re-adaptation at work and home, the total years they spent overseas was not an essential predictor of their general readjustment difficulties. Thus, more research indicates that the length of international sojourn partially influences returnees' adjustment at home.

**2.4.7 Contact with home-country individuals.** Some research suggests that keeping regular contact with home country individuals while have stayed abroad can minimize the re-entry challenges if occurred such. Brabant et al. (1990) claim that constant visits to the home country while studying overseas can also positively correlate with readjustment, though Szkudlarek, (2009) argues that the quality of such visits is more important than its frequency.

Cox (2004) defines quality as a more in-depth and satisfying communication process. He explored how much communication technologies influence individual's re-

entry adaptation. The author concluded that technologies such as e-mail, the internet and other methods of online communication can contribute to maintaining relationships with home country individuals and considered to be equally or even more valuable and satisfying than *tete-a-tete* communication. Thus, this situational variable can be considered as one of the important predictors for the successful re-entry adjustment.

**2.4.8 Previous intercultural experience.** Martin and Harrell (2004) assume (as cited in Szkudlarek, 2009, p.6) that an individual who had early intercultural transition experience would more likely overcome consecutive cross-cultural transition challenges. Rohrlich and Martin's (1991) early research findings support the assumption that sojourners with the number of previous cross-cultural moves reported less re-entry distress in contrast to those with no previous cross-border transition experiences (Cox, 2004).

## **2.5 Re-entry Copying Strategies**

Regardless of the number of literature devoted to the problems of the re-entry phenomenon, not many copying practices have been systematically examined. However, some publications on the subject provide several recommendations for more successful international sojourners' re-entry adjustment. Among the most offered re-entry copying strategies are training sessions and coaching.

For example, Sussman (1986) highlights three key elements that should be taken into consideration in planning re-entry training sessions: (1) Who are the participants, that is, take into account participants' background, (2) When it takes place, time framing of the workshop and (3) Where, the place of the re-entry session, that is, if it is conducted in a host or home country environment. The author argues that re-entry sessions should cover several topics: "awareness of change", that is when training provides an opportunity for exploration changes in an individual's behavior.

Another key component of re-entry training is to give a deeper explanation of cross-border adjustment and readjustment processes. The last is to focus on an individual's

personal adjustment to social and work environment i.e. to provide coping techniques on how to apply gained skills, knowledge and manage stress upon re-entry.

Sussman (1986) points out workshops and training seminars designed by NAFSA (1976) and several higher educational settings at that time to help international student population re-entry issues, focusing on students' personal changes and changes in their home culture, providing methods to combat these changes.

Moreover, some American educational institutions organized re-entry course seminars for international students, which included movies, papers, exercises and lectures. Foreign students even had an opportunity to earn credits for the attending of re-entry sessions that could last for several weeks. Later Texas Technical University provided similar courses designed by Behrens and Bennet (1981) for foreign students.

Arthur (2003) defines counselling as one of the helpful supporting services that are able to address the re-entry transition issues experienced by international students. The author argues that such a supporting mechanism can include working with individual or groups of students who have the same or different cultural backgrounds. Such a group approach might serve as a platform where all international students will be able to share their experiences and ideas that can be useful for anyone who will experience the re-entry transition. Similarly, studying the re-entry experience of 66 American college students Gaw (2000) revealed that 42% of the research participants reported their willingness to see counsellor support specifically for professional concerns.

The results of the empirical research by Zhu and Gao (2016) suggest that most study participants noted that they were looking for support among international students who had also experienced the same re-adaptation difficulties. Regardless more than half of 216 respondents reported that they did not apply special coping strategies, but rather relied on time, 20% of the 216 returnees attempted to make new friends, seek the endorsement

from colleagues, ask friends for advice, watched TV shows and other activities to cope with re-adaptation issues.

## **2.6 “U” and “UU” (W) Curves Adjustment Models**

For the last decades, a number of cultural adaptation models, associated with intercultural transition experience of a sojourn, have been introduced by the scientific community. Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1963) classical W-Curve model is widely recognized as one of the influential theories developed from Lysgaard's (1955) the U-Curve model of intercultural adjustment which provides an overall valuable theoretical framework particularly for the subject under investigation.

Lysgaard's (1955) U-curve hypothesis describes a sojourner initial adjustment in a host environment and introduces the adaptation process in certain stages. Each phase demonstrates individual's emotional response to a new surrounding which changes gradually from positive in the beginning following up negative in the middle of the acculturation process and finally reaching positive fulfilment of sojourner expectations or needs.

Based on Lysgaard's (1955) U-Curve intercultural adjustment theory, Oberg (1960) describes the mechanism of cultural shock development in more detail. The author argues that people gradually achieve a satisfactory level of adaptation to a foreign culture, going through certain levels of experience. He introduces four consecutive phases of an international sojourn: (1) honeymoon, the perception of the new environment as friendly and welcoming; (2) culture/crisis, experiencing negative feeling such as frustration, anxiety, anger, inadequacy caused by differences in language, values, roles, etc.; (3) recovery is a way out of the crisis as the language, norms and customs of a new culture are mastered; and the last, (4) adjustment to life in a new culture and its acceptance.

Once a person successfully adapted to host culture, he faces the need to re-adapt to his own culture upon re-entry. Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1963) W-shaped model covers

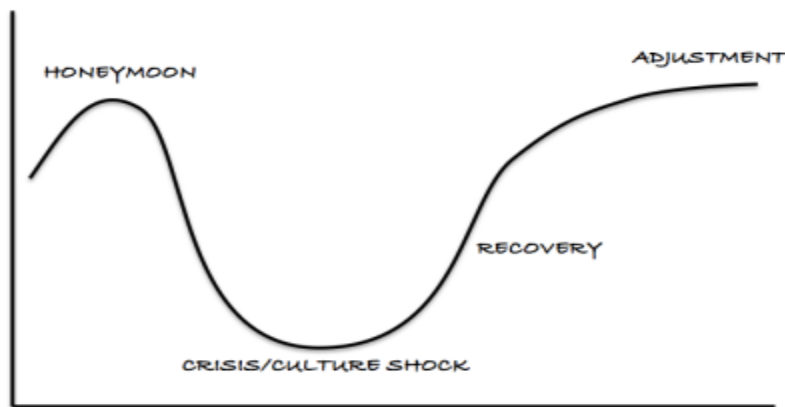
the whole cycle of intercultural adaptation and re-adaptation of an international sojourn suggesting that an individual similarly repeats the stages of adaptation as previously introduced in the U-curve model.

According to the interview results of returned 5300 American students grantees studied worldwide, it was revealed that in the process of readjusting to the home culture, respondents experienced the same difficulties as they experienced overseas (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963). The authors elaborated the idea of a U-shaped curve and consider the adaptation process not only at the time of international sojourners' stay in a foreign culture but also when they return to their home country. Thus, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) expanded the U-shaped curve, presenting it as a W-curve model, that is, when the person experiences so-called “reverse culture shock” as he/she returns back home country.

Graphically, such adjustment models can be illustrated as follow.

Figure 1.

*Initial U-Curve proposed by Lysgaard (1955).*

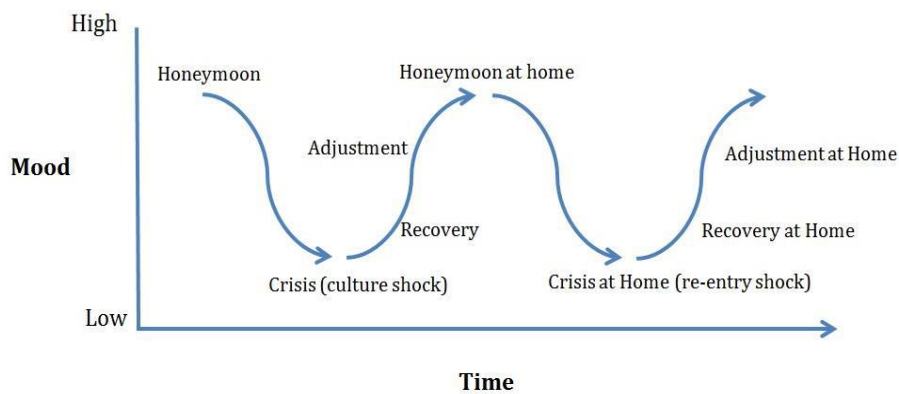


Regardless of the U-shaped and W-shaped curve models have gained acknowledgement amongst the scientific community, some significant differences between two adjustment processes and limited support of W-curve readjustment theory are revealed. Sussman (1986, 2001) finds readjustment more severe than the initial adjustment

to the host environment and calls into question the curve-linearity of the re-adaptation process portrayed by W-curve cycle. He claims that it should be viewed as a more dynamic process.

Figure 2.

*The W-Curve model developed by Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963).*



Adler's (1981) argues that the re-entry move was more psychologically challenging for returning individuals than primary entry to a new culture, contrary, in the evaluation of W-curve hypothesis applicability, Pritchard (2011) did not witness any readjustment difficulties or the re-entry crisis previously described in adjustment models. Most participants of his study articulated no re-entry trauma with neither friends nor family, but rather slight emotional discomfort in readjusting to their social environment.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the research methodology of the study and introduces following sections: research design overview, sampling, procedures, data collection instruments, analysis of the data gathered, ethical issues and limitations of the study.

### **3.2 Research Design**

A qualitative inquiry was used in this research to explore participants' re-entry experiences viewed from their own perspectives. The phenomenological qualitative research approach is found the most appropriate method for this study that fits with the research purpose and questions. Creswell (2007) points out that phenomenology is popular in areas such as sociology, psychology and education and data collection in this approach often based on one-on-one in-depth interviews with participants.

Butler (2010) provides some general guidelines of phenomenological approach based on Moustakas' (1994), Creswell's (2007) findings: to collaborate with participants in order to generate better in-depth insight about features of a phenomenon, to examine as much as possible of several individuals' experiences related to the phenomenon under research, to design systematized open-ended questions regarding participants' experience of the phenomenon and what context and situations impact upon individuals' experience of the phenomenon. A phenomenological model is used for study which focuses on individuals' "lived experience" and defines some common features through experiences shared.

Thus, this phenomenological approach identifies what all participants have in common since they all have experienced re-entry phenomenon. This common experience might be as previously mentioned in the literature "grief", "trauma", "feeling of loss" "disappointment" and etc. It is important to identify and compose a description of the



intrinsic nature, the core essence of the phenomenon or human experience relying on "what" and "how" individuals have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Besides, Moustakas (1994, as cited by Creswell, 2013; Padilla-Diaz, 2015) defines "bracketing" as one of the key concepts in phenomenological study. That is, in a process of data collection, the researcher should put aside any assumptions, biases and minimize his/her personal understanding of the phenomenon, as far as possible, to get a fresh view toward the subject in question described by participants. However, Creswell (2013) argues that bracketing might be rarely perfectly achieved since the data often includes the assumptions that the researcher brings to the issue under consideration.

### **3.3 Participants**

The present study aimed at examining a particular group of individuals who have all a study abroad experience and returned to their home country, the Republic of Kazakhstan with a finished Master's degree. Creswell (2013) argues that the phenomenological approach requires participants to be carefully selected, those who have all experienced the phenomenon in question. Several common criteria were taken into consideration prior to the process of participant recruitment for this study: 1) Lived and studied abroad no less than 12 months, 2) returned to the home country no more than 5 years ago, 3) Master's degree program graduates of overseas universities, 4) being able to articulate and willing to share their experiences, 5) residents of Kazakhstan.

According to Polkinghorne (1989), the interview in phenomenological studies usually includes from 5-25 participants (as cited Creswell, 2013). Overall 10 individuals have agreed to participate in this research. The participants involved in this study are Bolashak scholarship program alumni including 3 males and 7 females, aged between 25 and 35 who did their Master's degree in the USA, UK, Russia and Japan higher education institutions. All participants had experiences of living in a host country between 1 and the 5-year time period and came back to their home country, Kazakhstan where they are

already from 1 to 5 years since return. The selection of master's degree program alumni as study participants was due to the fact that since 2011, within the Bolashak scholarship program, sending individuals for bachelor's studies was discontinued. The need to train highly qualified personnel for master's and doctoral programs has increased and the number of students graduating from the Master's program in the last 5-10 years has been growing. Therefore, exploring the re-entry experience of this category of graduates is of greater interest.

### **3.4 Instrument**

The interview was chosen as a data collection instrument in this study. Among many research genres, the interview is acknowledged as one of the commonly used (Leavy, 2017) and fundamental tools for data collection in conducting a qualitative inquiry across multiple disciplines (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Although there are various interview techniques, central in this study is an in-depth interview which is often used in conducting phenomenological studies with participants and leads to a deeper insight into the essence of the problem. (Creswell, 2013; Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Open-ended and semi-structured interviews started with a general question: "What have you experienced upon returning to Kazakhstan after your extended time lived abroad?", with no strict time limit until all points of participants' personal experiences were shared and uncovered. This type of interview expanded the understanding of the subject explored and get detailed information about the "lived experience" of the participants.

The number of advantages derived from the specific nature of this in-depth interview method includes: a) potential to collect rich data and description, b) is similar to conversation people are usually involved in which in turn contribute to a familiar and welcoming environment increasing the opportunity to get honest answers, c) the researcher has an opportunity to observe participants' reaction to questions or any physical cues, if necessary, can adjust questions for making conversation more effortless, d) ask follow-up

or semi-structured questions to encourage the interview process and stimulate the participants for explicit answers.

The interview has certain benefits, not only relying upon the researcher's skills to guide the process, especially, when not all individuals are equally responsive and cooperative (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012) but in this study, an interview protocol was more helpful in keeping the participants to the point.

### **3.5 Procedure**

Once the list of potential participants including their contact details was compiled, the recruitment was fulfilled via phone call, an e-mail and diverse messaging platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram. The purpose of the research project was briefly explained to participants. Ten people were willing to take part in the research project, three has left the messages and letter sent to their e-mails unanswered, 4 has simply refused to talk about their experiences. Once participants have confirmed their participation in the study, the informed consent form was sent out to electronically and hard copies were signed at a time of interviews.

The informed consent forms provided participants with complete information regarding all aspects of research including purpose, methods, expected benefits and potential risks. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the participation, that is, they can discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled. The alternative was not to participate in the research.

Data collection covered the period from the beginning of March until the mid of May 2019. Overall, participants were recruited via a purposeful and snowball sampling technique. Participants have been reached via social networks, e-mail and through phone calls. Participants felt free to ask any questions they are concerned about regarding the study. As soon as the questions were answered, the time and location were confirmed. Despite many benefits of face-to-face interview, some were carried out via Skype due to

geographic location. Participants were interviewed individually in the environment of their choice, though the university setting was recommended. In fact, several locations for the interview were in a neutral environment convenient for the participants, though the room with good sound insulation was essential to eliminate any external interference or noise. So participants' workplaces and Nazarbayev University has served as the most desired interview sites.

The interviews were conducted in three languages: Kazakh, Russian, which are used on equal grounds in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Speaking in a native or an official language made the participants feel more comfortable. A couple of participants were willing to answer the interview questions in English which saved the time for the translation. Kazakh and Russian were translated into English during the transcription process.

The interview duration varied from 30 to no more than 60 minutes. Schostack (2002) notes that the typical duration of the interview should last at least 30 minutes to unravel the phenomenon under investigation. To avoid the data loss and facilitate subsequent decoding the interviews were digitally recorded on a cell phone voice recording app only with the permission of the participants. Recorded materials were transcribed into text and analyzed accordingly.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

The data processing went through several steps that incorporate description and analysis of the results of interviews (Creswell, 2013). First, all recorded interviews and transcription of voice recordings of interviews with participants including notes made during the interviews were re-read and listened several times in order to get a general idea of the phenomenon being examined. Then, after a careful reading interview materials, the small pieces of data, "significant units": phrases, quotes or fragments of text were highlighted and coded by hand to have a visual understanding on how things work. These

elements provided a deeper understanding of participants' experiences. Next, these key units were categorized and elaborated into themes and the analysis of each passage was carried out in more detail basically focusing on participants' common experiences. As a result of the description of what and how the participants experienced the re-entry phenomenon, its essence has been emerged (Creswell, 2013).

### **3.7 Ethical Issues**

The ethical issue remains central in conducting research and no inquiry can be undertaken without due regard to the code of ethics (Ramrathan, Grange, & Higgs, 2017) and the protection of the individuals' interests involved in the research study are extremely important (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). From this point, none of the participants has been forced to take part in research project since the principle of fair selection of participants is respect for the individual autonomy, that is the participation was entirely voluntary (The Belmont Report, 1978).

First of all, this research study was not started until it had been approved by Nazarbayev University Institutional Research Ethics Committee which is responsible for safeguarding the rights and welfare of every human subject who takes part in studies undertaken by university faculty members, students and staff. The informed consent form was a key component throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the inquiry and their rights were deemed as a priority in providing any reports and dissemination of information. Maximum efforts were made to keep participants' personal information confidential.

I was the only person who had access to the data collected and the identity characteristics of the participants were not easily reached since the respondents' names were replaced with pseudonyms marked as Participant 1, Participant 2 to ensure the sense of security and confidentiality. Once all data is processed and final work is submitted,

some interview materials, such as recording, extra notes will be destroyed and deleted. The results of the study are used for academic purposes only.

### **3.8 Risks and Benefits of the Study**

The risks associated with this study are minimal. The feeling of discomfort might occur during the discussion of some topics related to re-entry experience, in large with those participants who had no previous experience giving the interviews.

The benefits which may reasonably be expected to result from this study are that it may be of great value in case of further study of the topic. Besides, the results of the study can lead to positive changes in policy making and addressing the issues in regard to re-entry difficulties. Decisions, whether to participate or not in this study, will not affect participants' further career development, job progression or personal life.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings and analysis obtained from in-depth interviews which answers the questions stated in this study. Two research questions are considered and addressed in this chapter. They are 1. What is the overall experience of the international scholarship program returnees after their studies overseas? The challenges students encounter upon re-entry to their home country and the factors influencing international students' re-entry adjustment. 2. What strategies have the returnees used for a smooth re-entry adaptation?

A total of 10 interviews were conducted for this research project. At the initial stage, the interviews were built according to the type of free narrative. Participants shared their experiences at a host country and then focused on what were their experiences like after they returned to their home country. This helped to identify thematic issues and afterwards the narrative was followed by semi-structured interview. Participants provided information on what has pleased them and what they struggled with most upon re-entry.

### 4.2 Participants

Table 1.

*Demographic characteristics of the participants*

Participant	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Host country	Degree	Time spent in the host country	Time since the return to home country
Participant 1	33	Female	Single	Russia	Master	2 years	3 years
Participant 2	26	Female	Single	Japan	Master	2 years	1 year and 8 months
Participant 3	35	Female	Single	UK	Master	12 months	3 years
Participant 4	29	Male	Married	USA	Master	3,5 years	2,5 years
Participant 5	26	Female	Single	USA	Master	2,5 years	12 months
Participant 6	32	Female	Single	USA	Master	2,5	2 years

Participant 7	25	Male	Single	USA	Master	15 years	9 months
Participant 8	28	Male	Single	USA	Master	2,5 months	Two weeks
Participant 9	27	Female	Single	USA	Master	2,9 years	2 years
Participant 10	31	Female	Single	UK	Master	1 year	5 years

#### 4.3 Results Related to Research Question 1: What is the overall experience of the international scholarship program returnees' after their studies overseas?

In this part, we will discuss the challenges that were most often mentioned in the interviews, those that created the most difficulties in the process of adapting to the home country environment upon return.

Within the timeframe, after returning back to Kazakhstan from studies overseas the returnees have been experiencing different situations in career, family and friends. Their re-entry experiences are both positive and negative. Many were quite excited about returning their home environment, that is, to reunite with family, friends and starting their jobs. At the same time, there were some difficulties to adjust to daily life as well. Most female participants have experienced little conflict in adjusting to their families, regardless they found it not to be very serious since they all were able to cope with such family related issues. In addition, adjusting to professional life is likely to be considered as one of the most difficult re-entry challenges participants encountered. Many have expressed the feelings of “shock”, “disappointment”, “stress”, “surprise”, “loneliness” and “discomfort”.

Both male and female respondents had some difficulties to get used to the fact that they no longer are engaged in as many activities as they had abroad. Upon returning back to Kazakhstan, many have missed an active social life, sport, hobbies that they practiced while studying abroad.

**4.3.1 Sociocultural challenges.** Almost all participants emphasized the presence of social and cultural difficulties after returning back home. Due to the difference in mentality



and norms of behavior between the homeland and the host country, it was difficult for returnees to get used back to their former environment. There were moments when graduates were annoyed by the simple behaviors of their compatriots, by the quality of service and transport system, by poor technical equipment of the premises, which seemed normal before their departure. Some on arrival realized that family and friends had set high expectations regarding alumni's future career and behavior. As a result, they had to reconsider their relationships with family and friends. Some of them even did lose touch with local friends.

*4.3.1.1. Services in public places.* The contrast between Western, Eastern worlds and Kazakhstani peoples' norms of behavior and services provided in public places, for example at the airport, in a public transport, supermarkets, stores, toilets and the contact with people are experienced by returnees quite dramatically and right after returning home from overseas these contrast have caused some disappointment and shock.

One of the participants returned from the U.S. associated his first and the most unpleasant experience upon return with airport bathrooms. He recalled:

“The first barrier and shock that I have experienced started as soon as I landed at Sheremetyevo International Airport (in Russia). First, I headed to the restroom. Right at that moment, the level and the differences in services became evident; it all just started with the restroom entry door located at the airport. I wanted to open the front door of the toilet, but the door handle was broken. I accurately and slowly had to open it with my nails or fingers, I don't remember..., but anyway. I have been to many States; I have visited lots of cities and villages in America. Wherever I travelled, wherever I stayed, public bathrooms are there everywhere. They are all clean, comfortable and sanitary-technically equipped. But in Moscow, there are no such things. Having arrived in Almaty International Airport (in Kazakhstan), the

story so far..., the same picture as in Sheremetyevo International Airport...”.

(Participant 8)

That was his first shock and disappointment indeed upon return.

Another participant arrived from the U.S. had a negative experience regarding transportation-related issues. He found that the transportation at home country is undeveloped, especially by that time, so he had to use his friends' and relatives' vehicles. He rushed to buy a car as soon as possible because it was quite difficult to get used to such conditions after living in the U.S. He said:

“...How the public transportation system poor is here was quite surprising for me”.

(Participant 4)

One of the female returnees studied in the U.S. said that she was pretty upset by the lack of norms of etiquette in people's behaviors in public places. It was difficult for her to accept the fact that how people are easily spitting on the streets, using a foul language, which is a filthy habit, throw garbage wherever they want. In addition, it was difficult for her to get used to people who constantly criticize someone or something.

“...so much rudeness... it was unpleasant to hear that entire negative. But it did not last long, a month or two, and then I just moved to Astana”. (Participant 5)

Another female participant returned from the UK said:

“It all seems to start with customs officers at the airport who are already looking at you, maybe with some suspicion, asking where you came from, what you did there and etc., which at first glance seems not friendly questioning. Home country airport staff is so different from the people who work in London airports. They were people without smiles on their faces. You cannot smile not only with your mouth but even with your eyes. I started realizing right at that moment that I came home, to our harsh winds”. (Participant 3)

Such an attitude does not make Participant 3 feel uncomfortable, but rather it kept her grounded. Overall, it was not the most pleasant memories upon her return to Kazakhstan from the UK.

*4.3.1.2. Changes in patterns of behavior.* While living in a host country, certain forms of verbal and non-verbal communication have been formed in most returnees. For example, in some Western and Eastern countries smiling or bowing to strangers might be viewed as the expressions of politeness, friendliness and greetings.

Many returnees said that they used to always smile in a host environment and took this habit with them to their home country. However, it looked odd and usually turned out to be inappropriate in contact with people in their home country. Smiling or nodding at passport control, restaurants, and shops, on the street or even during job interviews sometimes led to a failure or misunderstanding in communication with people. Some returnees felt uncomfortable when they caught those curious or judging eyes when they emotionally or easily engaged in conversation with people. One of the research participants returned from Japan shared her experience in this regard:

“I remember, when I greeted people or thanked them, I used to bow much. After some time living and studying in Japan, bowing becomes a normal thing and I had such a habit for about six months here, upon return to Kazakhstan. When I talked to my friends in the bus or other public places I started noticing that people were looking at me strangely, which made me feel uncomfortable, even my friends could not understand my behavior. Maybe because I used to talk to my friends, the way I talked to Japanese. I could express my emotions with certain accompanying phrases during conversations. For example, I used such phrases as "Ohh, sou desu ka?" (Is that so? Oh, really, that's pretty damn cool yo") or "hontouni?" (Really, truly, surely?) all the time during the conversations. After all, Kazakhs seem less emotional, they react things unemotionally, it is like “well, ok, yes, and so on”. I

realized that I should give up some habits I had picked up in Japan as soon as possible". (Participant 2)

In the process of re-adaptation to the native environment, a lingering smile often becomes a source of misunderstanding. The female participant returned from the UK added:

"...Unfortunately, upon returning to Kazakhstan, I felt such a contrast, that our people are completely unsmiling. In England, you could smile a stranger and get a friendly smile in response. I got used to it, even more, I liked it and used to smile so much, regardless of whether I knew the person or not. When came back to Kazakhstan, I used to smile, moreover, I sincerely laughed, my laugh was everywhere and I felt so happy. However, when you get a sullenness of people in response you start thinking where you've got or if there something is wrong with you. I remember I felt that rejection when I was going through my first job interview upon return. When I came to the interview I was so excited, felt so happy and had a smile on my face. But the members who make decisions to higher for the job position told me that it was a very serious organization which was looking for serious employees. That was my first disappointment. I don't think if a person smiles, it means that he or she is not serious to work. Well, such an unpleasant experience I had...". (Participant 3)

One of the male participants returned from the U.S. experienced similar feelings regarding locals' attitude towards a person who keeps smiling:

"When I arrived in Kazakhstan there was an uncontrollable smile on my face, I don't know if it was a reflexive smile after returning back from America where smiling to unknown people is a normal thing or may be simply because I was glad to finally come back to my home country. I know, I looked like an idiot because I could easily read it from people's faces. Maybe if I was a foreigner, it would not be

so judgmental...Of course, and then the smile has been gradually faded from my face". (Participant 8)

We see that some patterns of behavior that respondents guided during their stay abroad are almost not a subject to borrow for a longer time. And if they continue to be practised at home country they might become a source of misunderstandings and only slow the process of re-entry adaptation.

*4.3.1.3. Relationships with family and friends.* Some female respondents found it a bit difficult to communicate with family and friends for different reasons after they have returned to the home country from overseas studies (4 out of 6). It is very important to understand that many returnees have experienced significant changes in themselves while studying abroad, in attitudes and behavior which influenced the relationship with family and friends. Several female returnees participated in this study claimed that they have experienced difficulties in adapting again to that rhythm of life in family and had to end their relationships with some old friends upon return.

"After coming back to Kazakhstan, I realized that I had forgotten a little about my family traditions and habits. There were moments when I argued with my parents, it's like when I had discussions with friends in America when you openly discuss any situations and issues. However, in Kazakhstan it is unacceptable, you need to be able to listen and respect the opinions of elders since my family is more conservative I had to be humbler. Of course, it happened when I did not agree with my parents, but they insisted and said, no, it must be the way they decided to be, for example, according to the traditions or it is the right thing to do. But I had to eventually agree with my parents' points of views". (Participant 5)

When the same respondent was asked if she was living with her parents now she answers:

"Before going to the States, I had lived with my parents, now I have moved to Astana and I am living alone, I have become more independent..." (Participant 5)

Similarly, another female returnee arrived from the U.S. has faced difficulties with her family and what she said:

“Well, when I had that bad experience with a senior manager at my first job after coming back to Kazakhstan my dad was not supportive to me. My parents told me to be more modest and humble...do not argue or swear at anyone. However, I don't think that I swore, I just expressed my opinion. My family said that I became too outspoken, in fact, I just had my point of view. While studying in the States, it was regarded as a conversation between two, when each has the right to his or her own opinion and can agree on something, find a compromise. There is no such thing that one wants and another must obey. Such an attitude at work caused problems with my family, I want them to support me and could not understand why they did this to me...I was so sad...when I returned from the U.S. my mindset was completely different and was close to American. I thought that development should not be hindered”. (Participant 9)

According to Participant 10 after returning back to Kazakhstan she felt a little disappointed with the attitude of her family towards herself. She tried not to change her behavior among her family members and friends, whereas her family anticipated some kind of change in her personality for better.

"I am coming from the small village, where no one before studied abroad. Studying by Bolashak was considered as a huge achievement by them. Therefore, my relatives thought that upon arrival I definitely would get a highly paid job and a good position in the capital city. However, that was not my plan. My elder sister once told me that I'd better act like a person who studied abroad. I was shocked and taken aback by that statement. Moreover, my mom thought that I will start earning an enormous amount of money, not only in tenge but in dollars as well".

(Participant 10)

It is important to note that people in Kazakhstan are quite traditional. They cherish traditions and customs and have always sought to determine ways of establishing loyal, non-aggressive, friendly relations between different people. Since childhood, people are taught to respect and honour their elders. In this case, we see that the behaviors of these two female participants were not welcomed and they faced difficulties in the family. Both respondents needed to re-adapt to their previous lifestyle and accept norms of conduct, which were significantly different from those to which they got accustomed to while they were studying in the U.S.

The manner of dressing has become another object of intent attention. Occasionally, Western-style can cause bewilderment in one's native environment and can be a source of conflict in the process of re-adaptation at home society. So, one of the female participants returned from the U.K. had little conflicts with her mother regarding her dressing style.

“When I came back from England, I began to look for warm clothes and everything seemed so boring and monotonous to me. So, my mother strongly urged me to get a fur coat. She used to say that I have such a good education, work for such a good organization and I had to get a fur coat, a fancy bag and wear high heels to look appropriate. Although, after arriving from England, on the contrary, my attitude towards all that stuff out of there has changed. In Western countries, women prefer the convenient and simple style. I was fine to wear comfy coat or jacket and UGG boots. It seems that mom has agreed with my appearance, but nevertheless, yes, some misunderstanding has occurred upon return. Finally, I convinced my mom that clothing is not the main thing; more important is my growth, either personal or professional”. (Participant 3)

As people grow and develop, friendships can also change, unfortunately, sometimes not for the better. People might have little in common, or perhaps friendship has begun to

bring negative emotions. Sometimes it becomes clear that it is time to end such relationships. Some of the interview participants said that they lost touch or have less interest with some of their old friends. After coming back home from overseas, they certainly changed, but their friends were not ready for such changes.

“My social circle hasn't changed much. Many have told me that I have become less sociable. I just realized that those friends who surrounded me before my travel to Japan were those who I used to have always something to talk about”. (Participant 2)

When Participant 2 returned back to the home country it seemed that she was no longer interested in what interested her friends and vice versa. They still treat each other well, but there are fewer topics now to talk about and fewer things they might have in common.

Another female respondent returned from the UK added:

"There are some friends whom I lost contact with. I was disappointed by some old friends. We all were in a good relationship before my departure to England, but when I arrived, I felt that kind of jealousy, I did not just explain all those things in a different way. Moreover, I was surprised by the fact that those people who I didn't get on well with before going to England were looking for meeting with me. Once they knew that I had returned from England, my importance has significantly increased. They wondered how I could ever have achieved that, what I did there, they questioned if I deserved such an opportunity to study abroad. It caused me such discomfort”. (Participant 3)

**4.3.2 Professional challenges.** In the arguments of research participants on the effectiveness of Western models of labour both educational or professional always were in favour of a host country. They do highlight the work culture, work ethics, punctuality, clarity, honesty, time management, relationships between people in a foreign country, in particular, in the U.S. which is most mentioned. For example, those participants who had



work experience in the U.S. point out the very environment where everybody is eager to do something new, something more, something more interesting. Where people always seek for the opportunities to be more academic, more scientific and all of that. They found them a more thriving educational community. However, returning back to Kazakhstan returnees has none of them.

*4.3.2.1. Work ethics.* The disappointment regarding the lack of appropriate work ethic came from one of the returnees studied in the U.S.:

“The work culture here, in Kazakhstan, was quite shocking for me honestly. That was very strange for me to work for two weeks without any money, without any certainty if they would be signing the contract, I think that was quite stressful”.

(Participant 4)

The same respondent continued that people out there had actually sort of low work culture. He faced many difficulties with that...he was not able to apply all his knowledge he gained with those positions that were the problem. He decided to move to another city where he was going to be a deputy director that was their initial agreement with school top management but then as soon as he came to that city he realized that they didn't have that position for him.

“...So they put me as an English teacher and that was a big disappointment. I did resign for that job they wanted to start me to work as an English teacher that was a huge disappointment for me. I started thinking about the way the things were here in Kazakhstan and in that the system particularly so I was very upset...When you study to be a leader but then you are putting on a position where you had to do a lot of mechanical and just regular routine job, you not satisfied with both the things are required from you and then there is no self-satisfaction. Because you want to do something more, something in a bigger scale, but then you are pretty much burned with this routine.” (Participant 4)

Thus, a lot of concerns the Participant 4 are actually aimed at the occupations that he had, rather than his regular life. His regular life has changed a lot, though it didn't cause him many problems because he was easy to adapt. The problem was that his major was Educational Leadership and he wanted to be a leader, the head of something but he was put on managerial positions that away from his expectations and the salary was quite low as he claimed. The senior manager was not something that he was looking for. Now he is a director because he was working hard and had to overcome many obstacles.

Similarly, the female returnee arrived from the U.S. said that the first difficulties started when she first explicitly expressed her point of view. The mentality of host country does not allow expressing thoughts so directly, especially when you are talking to top-management. Finally, she was asked to leave the company, and when she left, it was such a shock for her. She started working at the university, it was a good experience, but again she faced the same difficulties there. She had a conflict with the senior manager. He did not like that she rarely visited the staffroom and did not greet him. Her boss found such attitude as a bad manner, disrespect, although she just did her job and went to the staffroom only when it was necessary.

“I was surprised by the fact that my boss knew too much personal information about me, why and where I worked in parallel, my personal problems and plans, I don't know how, but probably from my colleagues. He even blackmailed me. It was a huge stress for me. And as soon as I got the opportunity to leave that job, I did it”.

(Participant 9)

*4.3.2.2. Work conditions.* One female respondent encountered difficulties in conducting practical lab classes at her workplace and had to make efforts to get out of conditions, which sometimes created stressful situations. She emphasized the time when she was responsible for preparing laboratory works and it was very important to keep the personal locker locked. If it was left open, reagents could be lost, and all the necessary

materials for lab works could just disappear. No one will know who took them, why and where to find them. She used to get alcohol at the pharmacy herself, as it was always lacking at a university laboratory. She did not want students to buy it and bring rubbing alcohol, ammonia, and hydrogen peroxide herself. It was quite expensive. She told that sometimes it was quite challenging to invent something from nothing. She added:

“...For example, the topic of the lesson was “Method of obtaining artificial silk” and according to the curriculum the method was complicated, but I had to simplify it according to the criteria of our laboratory”. (Participant 2)

In many cases, it is difficult when the university requires employer to conduct a lesson on the maximum, but the proper conditions for this are not created. The same respondent said:

“I think my personal skills helped me to overcome such difficulties at work, though it was pretty stressful sometimes”. (Participant 2)

**4.3.3 Factors influencing international students' re-entry adjustment.** During the interviews, several factors were identified that to one degree or another influenced the returnees' re-entry adaptation. Individual characteristics such as age, gender and other external variables are outlined.

**Age:** Some participants attributed themselves to a mature category of people and likely were ready for any changes and situation in the home country upon return. For example, the participant studied in Russia, aged 33 didn't have many difficulties in adapting back home. She argued:

“I earned my master's degree in quite at a mature age, I consciously chose the program, the country of study. Overall, I was ready for anything after my return... I believe those who went to study abroad at a younger age might face more re-entry problems. They did not have work experience in their home country and...”  
(Participant 1)

Gender: It is important to note that gender is found to be one of the key factors influencing returnees' adaptation to the home environment. Six (all females) out of ten respondents reported about the conflicts with family members for different reasons and experienced adjustment difficulties with friends. While men did not complain about such problems.

Previous experience in a host country: Several respondents pointed out that they had already had the experience of visiting and living in a foreign country; upon arrival, they did not feel a strong cultural shock. For example, Participants 3 and 4 used to go to language courses in the UK, and Participant 7 was in the U.S. under the "Work and Travel" student program, and after returning to the home country they were psychologically prepared for the upcoming difficulties. Therefore, it was easier for them to go through a period of re-adaptation.

Cultural distance: The factor of cultural distance turned out to be a key moment for a participant who studied in Russia. She noticed a small difference, but more similarity in mentality and habits which didn't impact much on her re-adaptation. She said:

"I didn't feel there as if I was abroad, generally, the language, the food, everything was clear and familiar to me. I had a feeling that I went to neighbouring Petropavlovsk (a region in the north of Kazakhstan)". (Participant 1)

While graduates from the U.S., Japan, UK experienced difficulties of a sociocultural nature, due to the significant difference in culture, mentality and lifestyle comparing to Kazakhstan.

Contact with home-country individuals: Almost all respondents were in contact with family, 2-3 times a week and tried to visit the home country for winter or summer holidays once a year at least. Despite they constantly kept in touch with family and friends while living abroad, some female participants encountered challenges after coming back home, though for males it contributed to easier re-adaptation.

Time spent abroad: The graduate of the U.S. with the longest stay (almost 4 years) in the country of study noticed that it was more difficult for him to get used to getting back to his homeland realities compared to those returnees who studied there for 1-2 years. He said:

“Well, it is very important to know that overall I was away from Kazakhstan for almost four years. I would not say that it was difficult for me culturally or anything else because I had my family and friends that helped the contact with for the entire period. However, I decided for sure that I am not gonna be working for the same place that I used to work previously. I didn't wanna go back to Kazakhstan and I didn't wanna go back to Pavlodar, I didn't wanna get back to work at the school as an English teacher. So that was a difficulty for me because I wanted to find a new job”. (Participant 4)

Environmental difference: Since the Bolashak scholarship program sends its scholars to the top-ranked universities largely located in developed countries, many research participants noted significant differences between host and home country infrastructure development, weather conditions and etc. (building design, university campuses, well-groomed streets and parks, the beauty of houses). The UK graduates recalled that it took time to get used to the grey tones of the home country. It seemed to them that the buildings were all of the same type, colour and boring, which drove them into a state of depression. For example, participants returning from sunny California noted the difference in weather conditions and miss the beautiful views of the ocean and palm trees.

Bolashak Scholarship program obligations: The contractual obligations in terms of mandatory work policy of Bolashak Scholars for continuous work at home for 5 years is the most important factor that hinders the re-adaptation. Almost all graduates acknowledged the difficulty of accepting this fact. They pointed out that the five-year has put moral pressure on them. Eight out of ten participants expressed a desire to return back

to the host country at the first opportunity once the terms of the contract are fulfilled, in particular, the part of 5-year mandatory work in Kazakhstan. Participant 8 equated Bolashak scholarship program obligations upon return to the “anchor”.

#### **4.4 Results Related to Research Question 2: What Strategies have the Returnees Used for a Smooth Re-Entry Adaptation?**

Maintaining the contact with host-country individuals might be viewed as one of important re-entry practices. Many participants still keep in touch with their foreign friends, classmates and those who had similar experiencing studying and living in a host country. This has positively influenced and facilitated the process of their adjustment to the home environment.

As Participant 5 recalled her time right after coming back from the US, she tried to maintain and keep her habits and lifestyle acquired in the US in order to make herself feel as the journey has not finished yet. Moreover, while living in Kazakhstan already and by trying to be in touch with friends in the U.S., the feeling of an extended new lifestyle was strong enough to smoothly dive into the home country reality.

“Upon returning to Kazakhstan, I tried to maintain the pace that was set in America. I have a schedule, that is, to wake up at 6 in the morning, to go jogging, to visit various events, so that there was a feeling that life was in full swing. Now, I am less involved in such activities, since I am already focused on work, on my projects. I have American friends with whom I constantly talk on the phone and this gives me the feeling that I have not completely drifted away from America. I get the positive emotions that I received there from communicating with them. They are also interested in what is happening here in Kazakhstan. This communication just gives me the emotions that I lack in Kazakhstan, this compensates for and keeps me in good shape”. (Participant 5)

The strategy of maintaining newly acquired habits from the host country and keeping them in motherland also was a perfect solution for coping with the challenges upon arrival for the participant, who studied in Japan. During the interview, she mentioned about starting street photography in Japan and continuing to do so after coming back to Kazakhstan. Just like in Participant's 5, she also tries to be in touch with friends studied with her in Japan and even plans to get reunited in upcoming Olympics-2020 in Tokyo. As we can see maintaining social networks is a good way of coping with the stress and challenges which returnees face during the re-adaptation period.

“In Japan, I started practicing “Street photography”, and when I arrived in Kazakhstan, I wanted to continue all of this. I remember at weekends or holidays, I used to photograph people on the street, I didn't quickly want to apart with the habits that I acquired in Japan...Once I started my job, then I didn't have much time to be involved in photography. But now I want to continue again...”. (Participant 2)

The respondent who studied in Russia decided to occupy her thoughts and emotions with totally different activities. Thereby she did not let the desire to go back, to control her thoughts and emotions.

“You need to be very passionate about something else in order to maximize your time, your thoughts and not to think about how I would go back and stay. If you see yourself in this country, if you like your work, and you associate your future plans with Kazakhstan, then I think there should not be any problems in re-adaptation. You need to be passionate about something”. (Participant 1)

In order to make his return less stressful and challenging, Participant 4 tried to accept and adopt the reality and rules of his homeland faster, i.e. by “playing local game” of a professional.

“First thing is to forget everything that you have experienced good down there in the U.S., get back to the reality here as soon as possible because every single day

will be a struggle for you. Put away the experience that you have where you were a human being, where you are a good specialist and all of that, just consider yourself as a working unit here in Kazakhstan. Try to be initiative but always think about your initiatives can be way out of a box of thinking of most of the people around you. If some ideas that seem brilliant to you that might work somewhere else, here in Kazakhstan will sound like if you are crazy. So be careful with that, do not take a lot of infinitives as soon as you come back to Kazakhstan. When you are at managerial positions that are the most re-entry people facing, forget about that you are a smart guy, just be a normal guy, try to be in a level of people are there with you, do not do the tasks ten time faster than others do, because otherwise you just work ten times more than others and still get the same salary as they do”.

(Participant 4)

Participant 10 watched the same TV shows as she did in the UK during her study.

“I remember missing the UK life a lot. Sometimes I could see in my dreams that I still live there, study and have fun with my foreign friends. It was somewhat stressful at the beginning when I've arrived at my motherland. In order not to forget the British people's manner of speech, I kept watching British TV shows in Kazakhstan as well. After a certain amount of time, I realized that it helped me a lot in coping with the issue of readjustment”. (Participants 10)



## CHAPTER 5: Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the overall re-entry experience of the Bolashak scholarship program alumni. The main focus of the study was to understand the kinds of challenges returning graduates faced with and what factors have most influenced their adaptation or non-adaptation upon their return to a once familiar environment after an international sojourn. It was also important to know what coping strategies they used to manage the re-entry difficulties that emerged.

### 5.2 Findings Related to RQ 1:

**5.2.1 Re-entry challenges.** Overall, the results of the findings tie well with previous studies and empirical research conducted wherein social, professional and physiological issues were defined as the most significant re-entry challenges (Gama & Pedersen, 1977; Brabant et al, 1990; Gaw, 2000; Butcher, 2002; Pritchard, 2011; Kartoshkina, 2015; Dettweiler, 2014; Zhu & Gao, 2016). Regardless of the fact that the re-entry experience of each research participant was a unique case, some common re-entry issues were identified.

Returning home after living abroad is more than just a physical resettlement from host to home country; it is more of a question of being psychologically and socially prepared for the move back. Most of the study participants claimed that they were ready for any possible difficulties upon return and some expected even worse experience in terms of professional and social life. However, although they considered themselves to be sufficiently prepared mentally, many of their responses indicated that they did experience difficulties.

On the one hand, we cannot totally disregard the psychological aspect of the re-entry in this study, since such negative emotions as “shock”, “stress”, “feeling of

loneliness”, “sadness”, “disappointment”, and “discomfort” and “surprise” were mentioned several times during the interviews. These are the expressions which are mostly associated with the psychological symptoms which were earlier revealed and discussed in the research findings of Kartoshkina (2015), Gaw (2000) and Butcher (2002). The results of this study differ from Sahin’s findings (1990) in which many returning students experienced high level of depression and anxiety upon arrival. However, this study is consistent with what has been found in Pritchard’s (2011) findings in which many respondents reported that their re-entry transition was psychologically smooth. Similarly, many of the participants of this study did not devote due attention to their emotional status and did not admit it as much of a problem during their interviews. Yet, while not necessarily being psychological, their responses seem to highlight the existence of factors that affected their emotional wellbeing.

Such feelings of discomfort are quite predictable. We speculate that they might occur when it comes to some aspects of the home country, in this case, Kazakhstan, where the lifestyle and living conditions are perceived as less interesting and less cosmopolitan compared to the lifestyle of the host country, for example, the U.S., the UK or Japan. For instance, some participants were shocked, stressed, and surprised by many things upon return. They were disappointed and surprised about simple things, such as the lack of maintenance, faulty or broken technical equipment in public places, inadequate workplace conditions, workplace culture, and people’s behavior on the streets. They felt lonely when they were unoccupied and idle and missed the host country. That idle state made them feel uncomfortable, while in the host country they used to be passionate about some activities; they could be busy practicing sports, visiting different events, and participating in academic life. A similar pattern of results was obtained in Zhu and Gao’s (2016) research findings in which returning Chinese students felt challenged while re-adapting in their home country whose conditions compared relatively unfavorably, comparing to the

countries of their sojourn. They faced issues related to housing inadequacies, the lack of healthy and fresh food, undeveloped infrastructures, the provision of substandard education, and other related concerns. Returnees also reported that they missed the activities they enjoyed doing abroad.

Apart from minor psychological difficulties experienced by the returnees, re-adapting back to the social life at home, in particular, re-entering and resetting the relationships with family and friends has become another noteworthy challenge for many. It turned out, that the findings associated with adapting back to family life and relationships with friends are more in line with the previous findings of Gama and Pederson (1977), Butcher (2002) and Brabant et al. (1990). The study by Brabant et al. (1990) demonstrates that it was the changes within the person that could have caused adjustment difficulties with relatives and friends. Similarly, Gama and Pedersen (1977) found that changes in personal values with regard to interpersonal relationships with family as problematic. In this study, some of the participants acknowledged the fact that they have already acquired novel worldviews, attitudes, habits, and adopted different approaches to accomplishing certain duties and/or goals after an international sojourn. It was challenging and time consuming for them to reestablish former relationships with family, especially where conservative views dominate and local traditions are still honored. One respondent did not even get enough parental support with a work-based situation, while others faced misunderstandings while communicating with their old friends when returnees explicitly expressed their new points of views. Some had learned to be more direct while they were overseas, and thus, within the more conservative atmosphere of Kazakhstan, often enter into disputes with relatives and employers. These respondents meant no disrespect in their outspokenness, and were upset and perplexed that their directness caused interpersonal challenges with their family as well as with people outside the home. However, these findings do not support Pritchard's (2011) study where he stated that neither Taiwanese

nor Sri Lankan returnees have experienced any re-entry trauma in adapting back to family and friends upon return. This discrepancy between the findings of the present study and that of Pritchard's (2011) study, may be that while the respondents of this study underwent certain socio-cultural changes during their time abroad, those of Pritchard's may have maintained most aspects of their culture intact within themselves. Therefore, for the latter group, who might have remained the same as before, no adjustment was required.

While psychological and social issues of the re-entry process were the focus of many previous studies, the results of this investigation demonstrate that most of the difficulties that emerged upon return were related to returnees' professional lives. It was found to be a more complex and problematic process for the participants to readjust to their former and/or new workplace environment after their overseas experiences. The challenges that emerged were mostly associated with adapting to the administrative system existing at their work place, which also means the necessity of building relationships with senior management and colleagues. Some respondents had difficulties adjusting to the formal rules, bureaucracy, which hindered actions and decision-making.

Another challenge that was experienced was adapting to inadequate workplace conditions, struggling with the lack of materials for conducting experiments, a lack of technical equipment in the laboratory, and insufficient office supplies and facilities which were problematic. These findings confirm the previous study of Gama and Pedersen (1977), who revealed that most of the problems returnees encountered were related to the professional side of the re-entry. Similarly, LASPAU scholarship graduates were challenged when re-adapting to the educational system at home. They complained about the lack of time, opportunity, equipment and materials necessary for doing research, organizational red tape, and colleagues who were envious of the returnees' achievements and success. Contrary to this study, Pritchard (2011) did not reveal any job-related

problems. Moreover, this author highlights the fact that all study participants were coping well with their professional life which even contributed to their successful reintegration.

**5.2.2 Factors influencing the re-entry adjustment.** The study revealed that demographic characteristics, such as the gender and age of returnees and external factors, like previous experience living abroad (before the latest sojourn), cultural distance to the home country, frequent communication with home country individuals, and the amount of time spent abroad influenced the level of ease involved in the respondents' re-entry. These variables have been mentioned in the reviewed literature and the research findings of many authors (Cox, 2004; Szkudlarek, 2009; Gregersen and Stroh, 1997; Galchenko et al., 2007; Rohrlich and Martin's, 1991; Gama and Pedersen, 1977; Brabant et al., 1990).

*5.2.2.1. Gender.* This study contradicts the empirical findings of Rohrlich and Martin (1991), who outlined the fact that women were more satisfied with their life after return than men. However, the current study supports the findings of Gama and Pedersen (1977) and Brabant et al. (1990) who argue that men and women experienced the re-entry period to the home country differently in that women face more adjustment difficulties. In this study six out of ten participants reported that they had a conflict with the relatives and misunderstandings with friends. And all these respondents turned out to be female participants. However, the male respondents never even mentioned such difficulties at all. However, these results refute Sussman's (2001) and Cox's (2004) findings who did not reveal that sex might play any significant role in the readjustment process.

These differences between the experiences of men and women mentioned above could be a factor of the culture to which they were returning. According to the interviews, females who returned after studying in the U.S. and the UK faced difficulties due to the obvious changes in their own behaviors. They became more outspoken, they could clearly express their thoughts, and they could enter into an argument and discussions with all their relatives and other individuals, even their elders. It turned out that fathers especially could

not accept such behavior from their daughters. It must be said that the Kazakh family is more conservative in its views and still honors traditions where the girl is a subject of modesty, and is not emancipated.

*5.2.2.3. Age.* The age of participants in this study ranged from 25-35. According to the findings, it is difficult to state that age played a huge role in readjusting to life upon returning to the home country. However, this study may concur with the assumption of Gama and Pedersen (1990), who, despite the results of their study, state that those who had sufficient work experience before their international sojourn have fewer difficulties upon re-entry. In this study, a 32-year-old female participant stressed that it was her previous work experience and her mature age which motivated her to study abroad. She easily re-adapted to her home country and did not experience any professional or social difficulties, while most other participants complained about several issues upon re-entry. The previous work experience of the 32-year-old respondent had already exposed her to work conditions in Kazakhstan, and this meant that she already knew what to expect upon her return. This result cannot be generalized to the returnee students in general. This is because the age group of this study includes young adults with similar general characteristics. Furthermore, all had previous work experience, which were the requirements of the Bolashak Scholarship Program.

*5.2.2.4. Marital Status.* Since nine out of ten participants are single, we cannot claim that married couples experienced fewer or more re-entry problems than unmarried respondents. We can assume and partially support Cox's (2004) findings that single status individuals had many challenges upon arrival from overseas, as in the current study, more than 50% of single respondents reported having re-entry difficulties, however, the married participant, also faced enormous disappointments with his professional life.

*5.2.2.5. Cultural distance.* In the process of the recruiting research participants for this study, it was important to attract graduates from different countries, such as the U.S,

UK, Japan and Russia. As a consequence, the results of this study revealed that, indeed, the graduate of the Russian University did not experience any difficulties after returning home. She explained that there was no reverse culture shock. She noted that the food, mentality, lifestyle, education system are all very similar to Kazakhstani conditions. Hence, she felt that she had not gone anywhere, but had only traveled to a neighboring city in the north of Kazakhstan, while the other returnees from the other countries encountered re-entry problems. This points to the fact that Russia and Kazakhstan have similar cultural attributes, which shorten the cultural distance between them. Thus, this study partially supports the findings of Galchenko et al. (2007), wherein international students from former USSR countries smoothly adapted to the host country (Russia). This means that regardless of the direction of travel, whether to the host or home country, the similarity of the culture and a lack of cultural distance, either physical or social, would make any adjustment much easier. However, it is important to note that in the current study, no measuring instrument like the cultural distance scale proposed by Babiker et al. (1980) was used to measure the degree of similarity of cultures, which would include the social aspects.

*5.2.2.6. Expectations.* For the respondents of this study, meeting and overcoming societal and family expectations were problematic. Butcher (2002) also suggests this in his study. Some of the study participants confessed that their family expected them to behave in a manner inherent to a person with an overseas education, and that returnees deserve to work in only the highest-paying positions, to look smart and fancy. This shows the degree to which, overall, local society expects so much from this particular group of population – the Bolashak scholars. These findings suggest that it was harder to cope with such high family expectations for returnees, rather than their own re-entry expectations.

Despite the fact that many respondents did not expect anything extraordinary upon their return, and were aware of the difficulties they might encounter. They were not prepared for the fact that challenges might occur with their interpersonal relationships.

Moreover, such increased attention paid to Bolashak scholars also put pressure on the returnees. They were expected to do more than they could offer society.

*5.2.2.7. Time spent abroad.* This study confirms earlier research by Gregersen and Stroh (1997) that the length of time spent abroad impacts the re-entry adjustment at work and in their daily life. Yet, Uehara (1986) did not find any correlation between the time spent abroad and adaptation difficulties after returning to the home environment. However, the authors did not explain the reasons why the length of time spent abroad might or might not be a predictor of readjustment difficulties.

According to the results of this study, it can be assumed that the time spent in the host country affects the ease of re-adaptation. How qualitative and dynamic the experience of an international sojourn has been is significant. For example, three female and one male participants had the opportunity to study, work, practice sports, be engaged in social activities, and even to have enough time to acquire new hobbies, such as photography, salsa and bachata dancing, work in a burger bar, or as an assistant to an English instructor. Those who had been active overseas and undergone all these experiences have reported more difficulties in re-adapting to the workplace system and daily life in the home country.

*5.2.2.8. Contact with home-country individuals.* The findings showed that frequent communication with representatives of the home country while living abroad has a positive effect on re-adaptation as a whole. Almost all of the returnees had the opportunity to communicate with their parents, and friends via the Internet and various social platforms, like WhatsApp and Instagram every day; moreover, they were able to come home twice a year for summer and winter holidays. The results of this study confirm the findings of Cox (2004), who studied the impact of communication technologies on readjustment.

*5.2.2.9. Previous sojourn experience.* Two study respondents stressed on their previous cross-cultural transition experience. One visited for the short-term period the U.S. before applying and being awarded scholarship and had an opportunity to work and travel



there. Another female respondent also traveled to the UK and later it was the reason why she has opted for this country as her future academic destination. The results of the study confirm the literature on the subject that those who had previously experienced several intercultural moves from host to home country have fewer difficulties upon their subsequent cross-cultural transition, compared to those who had not previously travelled as such (Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Cox, 2004).

### **5.3 Findings Related to RQ 2. Re-entry Coping Strategies**

When the returnees were asked about how they coped with the challenges and what kind of actions they follow to facilitate their re-entry adjustment, most answered that they have been attempting to be engaged in different activities such as being in contact with the friends they had met in the host country, who were both local to the host country and international, watching TV programs, and performing the physical activities they used to do in the host country. When they can, they continue to visit the host country. However, there were respondents who did not want to admit the difficulty of their situation and believed that the time would help them to re-adapt.

### **5.4 Summary**

Perhaps the major findings of this study are not those which were previously mentioned in the literature, but those that were specific to Kazakhstan and this particular group of returnees. It is telling that eight out of ten study participants would like to return to the host country they had studied and lived in, whether for short or long-term period, as they accomplish their Bolashak scholarship program obligations. It is surprising that despite the fact that almost all of them confessed that they are all finally completely re-adapted in their home country; they still expressed the willingness to repeat their international experience. Most of them realized that they are seeking an opportunity for better career advancement, and that they are still in search of professional growth. These

findings bring us to the idea that the qualifications and experience of returning students could possibly cause them to have expectations that far exceed the available positions in the labour force of the home country. They believe that the environment of the host country is the most appropriate place for them to demonstrate their full potential that represents the skills, knowledge and experience gained while living abroad.

## CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

### 6.1 Conclusion

The findings of this study are to some extent consistent with studies showing that, upon returning home after a long stay abroad, the process of re-adaptation might be a challenging period for returnee students. The alumni who were recruited for this study, faced emotional, social and professional difficulties, but they were able to cope with them all. Yet, a number of factors that influenced their readjustment back to the home country realities were identified; some of these impeded the smooth re-entry transition process, while a few others actually contributed, somewhat, to a smoother process. Moreover, many respondents found some techniques and coping strategies that accelerated and facilitated their re-entry adaptation process.

The female participants of the study face more challenges than their male counterparts when re-adapting to their home country. These are the consequences of ways that the relative independence they had experienced and their enhanced outspokenness whereby they had become accustomed to expressing their thoughts and ideas more openly. This is in contrast to the way they had previously interacted with members of their family, colleagues, and some of their friends. This sometimes results in misunderstandings and occasional arguments with those who have other, more traditional, expectations of them. This could make these returnees feel out of place in their own culture.

The emotional well-being of the returning student is an important component in the re-adaptation process. However, it should be noted that any emotional problems that arise are usually temporary and can be dealt with. For example, the feeling of nostalgia among returning graduates cannot be considered a weighty problem in re-adaptation. Such feelings are fairly “normal” for any individual that has to be separated from an enjoyable lifestyle, or from people with whom they have had positive relations.

Initially, Bolashak scholars go overseas for academic reasons, which later allow them to achieve professional and career growth upon returning to Kazakhstan. Upon returning, many respondents focus on applying their skills and knowledge in their professions. They are enthusiastic about sharing their overseas experiences with their colleagues, friends, and family, but when the response on the part of others does not meet their expectations, this leads to disappointment and create challenges in their professional life.

A significant issue for all returnees is job-related. They have returned to Kazakhstan with higher qualifications than before, and thus, expect to find, not only recognition of their academic achievements, but also employment in higher positions. However, when promotion possibilities are non-existent, and their experience is disregarded, they feel unsatisfied. This finding explains why most returnees in this study have expressed their willingness to return abroad to continue their professional development and perhaps even to find permanent employment.

## **6.2 Limitations and Practical Recommendations for of the current study**

This study has limitations which need to be taken into consideration for further relevant research on the topic as well as some recommendations. Some of the limitations are as follows:

1. The phenomenological approach to qualitative data collection is very time consuming, and the analysis and interpretation of the data was quite complicated. There is still no way to ensure that researchers are unbiased when interpreting and gathering data, even if bracketing takes place (Creswell, 2013). In addition, it is debatable whether the experiences of a small number of participants, in this case ten, can be generalized or are completely true to what has been felt by the other approximately 12,000 Bolashak alumni who have returned. Thus, this research would probably benefit more from a mixed method

or a quantitative analysis to provide a better and clearer picture of a large sample of Bolashak returnees.

2. The participants of the present study are the graduates of only the master's degree program, so the outcomes may not be valid for other returning student populations. In particular, in future research, it would be better, at least, to include bachelor, and PhD degree program Bolashak program returnees.
3. In the data analysis, there is the possibility of this researcher becoming biased since some of the participants are my friends. However, this did facilitate the recruitment process and helped me to obtain more in-depth answers to the questions, through these respondents' agreement and readiness to take part in the study, even though this familiarity between researcher and respondents enabled the latter to be more informative. In order to avoid this type of limitation, participants for future studies should be selected from beyond that narrow circle.
4. Majority of research participants are the residents of Nur-Sultan, Karaganda and Almaty, so it would be more representative to recruit respondents who have returned to the rural areas of Kazakhstan, rather than its large cities.
5. The current study has disregarded the positive aspects of the re-entry experience of the returnees.

According to the results of the study, we consider it expedient to inaugurate a process as a part of the administrative structure of the Bolashak scholarship program to provide socio-psychological support to returnees. Such a service could more effectively prevent or help returnees prepare for possible external challenges that they might encounter after re-entry. As a part of the Bolashak program an advisor or social worker working on the team and with similar experiences to the returnees', who is perhaps a former Bolashak graduate, would be needed to provide individual or group sessions to the current and/or

upcoming graduates. This kind of formal support, might contribute to a smoother re-entry process for both the returnee and for the people surrounding him or her and facilitate their re-introduction into their professional life, and the familial and social environment, as well as any the effects of any re-adaptation obstacles.

In addition, as previously proposed in the literature, not only pre-departure briefings, which are regularly practiced in Bolashak, but also post-return briefings, seminars and re-entry training sessions should be organized for graduates. It is necessary to warn returnees that difficulties are inevitable but surmountable and eventually diminish after a certain period of time.

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## Appendix A

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

#### International Scholarship Program Returnees' Re-entry Adaptation Process:

#### Exploring Experiences of Bolashak Scholarship Alumni

**DESCRIPTION:** You are invited to participate in a research study on examining the experiences of Bolashak scholarship alumni who studied and lived abroad for an extended period of time and explore the process of their re-entry adaptation in their home countries: to identify factors influencing their re-entry adjustment and as well as strategies they use in order to re-adapt after a sojourn abroad. You are selected as a significant subject of the study and will be asked to participate in an interview. Your participation in this research is voluntary and all the data collected will be kept private and confidential. Once you agree to take part in this study, the following procedure will be carried out. You will first be required to sign consent form which confirms your participation. You will be interviewed individually and the interview will be conducted in Russian or Kazakh languages, English is welcomed as well. The interview will be audio recorded on a cell phone voice recording app or any dedicated voice recorder device. The audio materials will be used for further data processing and analysis. As all data is processed and findings discussed the recording will be destroyed and deleted. The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only.

**TIME INVOLVEMENT:** Your participation will take approximately 60 minutes.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:** The risks associated with this study are minimal. The feeling of discomfort may occur during discussion of some topics related to re-entry experience. The benefits which may reasonably be expected to result from this study are that it may be of a great value to the research and can lead to positive changes in policy making. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your career progression or a personal life negatively.

**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. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer any question that causes discomfort.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**Questions:** If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work.

**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 at [gse\\_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz](mailto:gse_researchcommittee@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).**

## **ФОРМА ИНФОРМАЦИОННОГО СОГЛАСИЯ**

### **Процесс реадaptации студентов международной стипендиальной программы: изучение опыта выпускников стипендиальной программы «Болашак»**

**ОПИСАНИЕ:** Вы приглашены принять участие в исследовании по изучению опыта реадaptации выпускников стипендиальной программы «Болашак», выявлению факторов, влияющих на их адаптацию после возвращения на родину, и какие стратегии они используют для реадaptации после пребывания за границей. Вы выбраны в качестве наиболее важной части данного исследования. Ваше участие в данном исследовании является добровольным, и все собранные данные будут оставаться конфиденциальными. Как только вы согласитесь принять участие в этом исследовании, будет проведена следующая процедура. Сначала вам необходимо будет подписать форму информационного согласия, подтверждающую ваше участие. Интервью будет проводиться с каждым индивидуально на русском или казахском языках, английский язык, также, приветствуется. Интервью будет записываться на любой аудионоситель либо диктофон. Аудиоматериалы будут использованы для дальнейшей обработки и анализа данных. Как только все данные будут обработаны, и результаты выявлены, запись будет уничтожена и удалена. Результаты исследования будут использованы только в академических целях.

**ВРЕМЯ УЧАСТИЯ:** Ваше участие займет около 60 минут.

### **РИСКИ И ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА:**

Риски, связанные с данным исследованием, минимальны. Чувство дискомфорта может возникнуть при обсуждении некоторых тем, связанных с опытом, который Вы испытали во процессе реадaptации после возвращения на родину. В качестве ожидаемых преимуществ в результате исследования, заключаются в том, что оно может иметь большое значение для исследования и привести к позитивным изменениям в разработке политики касательно данного феномена. Ваше решение, участвовать или не участие в этом исследовании, не повлияет отрицательно на Ваш карьерный рост и личную жизнь.

**ПРАВА УЧАСТНИКОВ:**

Если Вы прочитали данную форму и решили принять участие в данном исследовании, Вы должны понимать, что Ваше участие является добровольным и что у Вас есть право отозвать свое согласие или прекратить участие в любое время. В качестве альтернативы можно не участвовать в исследовании. Также Вы имеете право не отвечать на какие-либо вопросы. Результаты данного исследования могут быть представлены или опубликованы в научных или профессиональных целях.

**КОНТАКТНАЯ ИНФОРМАЦИЯ:**

**Вопросы:** Если у Вас есть вопросы, замечания или жалобы по поводу данного исследования, процедуры его проведения, рисков и преимуществ, Вы можете связаться с исследователем.

**Независимые контакты:** Если Вы не удовлетворены проведением данного исследования, если у Вас возникли какие-либо проблемы, жалобы или вопросы, Вы можете связаться с Комитетом Исследований Высшей Школы Образования

Назарбаев Университета, отправив письмо на электронный адрес

[gse\\_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz](mailto:gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz).

Пожалуйста, подпишите данную форму, если Вы согласны участвовать в исследовании.

- Я внимательно изучил представленную информацию;
- Мне предоставили полную информацию о целях и процедуре исследования;
- Я понимаю, как будут использованы собранные данные, и что доступ к любой конфиденциальной информации будет иметь только исследователь;
- Я понимаю, что вправе в любой момент отказаться от участия в данном исследовании без объяснения причин;
- С полным осознанием всего вышеизложенного я согласен принять участие в исследовании по собственной воле.

Подпись: \_\_\_\_\_

Дата: \_\_\_\_\_

**ЗЕРТТЕУ ЖҰМЫСЫ КЕЛІСІМІНІҢ АҚПАРАТТЫҚ ФОРМАСЫ**

Халықаралық стипендиялық бағдарламасы бойынша шет елдерде білім алып отанына қайтып оралған тұлғалардың реадaptациялық үрдісі: «Болашақ» стипендиясы түлектерінің тәжірибесін зерттеу

**СИПАТТАМА:** Сіз «Болашақ» стипендиясы түлектерінің шет елде оқып, туған еліне оралғаннан кейін олардың бейімделуіне әсер ететін факторларды анықтауға, сондай-ақ олардың елге оралғаннан соң бейімделу үрдісін жеңілдету үшін қандай стратегияларды қолданғандары туралы тәжірибесін зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға шақырылып отырсыз. Сіз осы зерттеу жұмысының ең маңызды бөлігі болып табылатыныңды ескеріңіз. Осы зерттеуге қатысуға келіссеңіз, келесі рәсім орындалады. Сізден алдымен қатысуыңызды растайтын зерттеу жұмысы келісімінің ақпараттық формасына қол қоюыңыз талап етіледі. Сұхбат орыс немесе қазақ тілдерінде өткізіледі, ағылшын тілі де қолданылуы мүмкін. Сіздің рұқсатыңызбен сұхбат диктофонға жазылады. Аудио деректер әрі қарай өңдеу және талдау үшін пайдаланылады. Ешкімнің есімі аталмайды, сондықтан құпиялылық қорғалады. Зерттеудің нәтижелері академиялық мақсаттар үшін ғана пайдаланылады.

**ӨТКІЗІЛЕТІН УАҚЫТЫ:** Сіздің қатысуыңыз шамамен 60 минут уақытыңызды алады.

**ЗЕРТТЕУ ЖҰМЫСЫНА ҚАТЫСУДЫҢ ҚАУШТЕРІ МЕН АРТЫҚШЫЛЫҚТАРЫ:**

Зерттеу жұмысына қатысудың қауіптері минималды. Еліне қайта оралу тәжірибесіне қатысты кейбір тақырыптарды талқылау кезінде ыңғайсыздық сезімі болуы мүмкін. Зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға келісім беруіңіз немесе бас тартуыңыз Сіздің жұмысыңызға еш әсерін тигізбейді. Зерттеу нәтижесінде пайда болатын артықшылықтар - бұл зерттеу үшін үлкен құндылық әкелуі мүмкін және бұл феноменге қатысты саясатты қалыптастырудағы оң өзгерістерге әкелуі ықтимал.

**ҚАТЫСУШЫ ҚҰҚЫҚТАРЫ:** Егер Сіз берілген формамен танысып, зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға шешім қабылдасаңыз, Сіздің қатысуыңыз ерікті түрде екенін хабарлаймыз. Сонымен қатар, қалаған уақытта айыппұл төлемей және сіздің әлеуметтік жеңілдіктеріңізге еш кесірін тигізбей зерттеу жұмысына қатысу туралы келісіміңізді кері қайтаруға немесе тоқтатуға құқығыңыз бар. Зерттеу жұмысына мүлдем қатыспауыңызға да толық құқығыңыз бар. Сондай-ақ, қандай да бір сұрақтарға жауап бермеуіңізге де әбден болады. Бұл зерттеу жұмысының нәтижелері тек академиялық немесе кәсіби мақсаттарда ұсынылуы мүмкін.

**БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТЫ:**

**Сұрақтарыңыз:** Егер жүргізіліп отырған зерттеу жұмысының процесі, қауіп мен артықшылықтары туралы сұрағыңыз немесе шағымыңыз болса, келесі байланыс құралдары арқылы зерттеушімен хабарласуыңызға болады.

**ДЕРБЕС БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТТАРЫ:** Егер берілген зерттеу жұмысының жүргізілуімен қанағаттанбасаңыз немесе сұрақтарыңыз бен шағымдарыңыз болса, Назарбаев Университеті Жоғары Білім беру мектебінің Зерттеу көрсетілген байланыс құралдары арқылы хабарласуыңызға болады: электрондық поштамен [gse\\_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz](mailto:gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz).



Зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға келісіміңізді берсеңіз, берілген формаға қол қоюыңызды сұраймыз.

- Мен берілген формамен мұқият таныстым;
- Маған зерттеу жұмысының мақсаты мен оның процедурасы жайында толық ақпарат берілді;
- Жинақталған ақпарат пен құпия мәліметтерге тек зерттеушінің өзіне қолжетімді және мәлім болатынын толық түсінемін;
- Мен кез келген уақытта ешқандай түсініктемесіз зерттеу жұмысына қатысудан бас тартуыма болатынын түсінемін;
- Мен жоғарыда аталып өткен ақпаратты саналы түрде қабылдап, осы зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға өз келісімімді беремін.

Қолы: \_\_\_\_\_

Күні: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Interview Protocol

*Project: International Scholarship Program Returnees' Re-entry Adaptation Process: Exploring Experiences of Bolashak Scholarship Alumni*

Dear Participants,

You have been invited to participate in an interview, as a most significant part of this inquiry. This study is about is to examine the experiences of Bolashak scholarship alumni who studied and lived abroad for an extended period of time and explore the process of their re-entry adaptation in their home countries: to identify any factors influencing re-entry adjustment and as well as their strategies they use in order to re-adapt after a sojourn abroad. I will ask you some open-ended questions about your experience after your returning to home country from studying and living abroad. If it is possible the interviews will be audio recorded with your permission. The audio materials will be used for further data processing and analysis. No one will mention or use your name in reports, so your privacy will be protected. The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes but still with no strict time limits. Keep in mind please that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time.

Please read and sign the informed consent form.

#### Pre-interview Information

**Age:**

**Gender:** male    female

**Marital Status:** single    married    divorced    in a relationship

**Host country** \_\_\_\_\_

**Program of study:** PhD          Master    Bachelor

**Months studied and lived abroad** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time since return to home country** \_\_\_\_\_

#### Interview Questions

1. How do you describe your experience in a host country? Please, explain why by giving some examples
2. Your host country is \_\_\_\_\_. Why did you opt for this particular country to study in?
3. Tell me please about your experience returning to Kazakhstan after your extended time living abroad?
4. Can you think of or recall any aspects that you think is the most difficult to adjust to after your return to Kazakhstan? (family, friends, daily life, job, weather, lifestyle)
  - How often did you come home for holidays?
  - Have seen any changes in your daily life since your return?
  - How much time did it take you to find job upon re-entry? Does this job meet your expectations? (e.g. salary, position, activities) Can you apply the skill and knowledge in your job?
  - Do you have much to talk about with your friends? Do you find them different? (for example)

- Are your friends interested in your experience studying abroad?
- 5. And how long does it take to recover or return to your normal condition? (If applicable)
- 6. How do you cope with these difficulties or challenges? What do you do to facilitate your re-entry adjustment? (If applicable)
- 7. Would you like to immigrate to host country if you had a choice to do so? Can you explain the reasons why/why not?
- 8. Is there any information you think will be useful for me to know to understand the experience of people who returned their once familiar environment after study abroad? Or do you have any recommendations for Bolashak scholarship administrator?

Thank the respondents for participating in this interview.

## Протокол интервью

*Проект:* Процесс реадaptации выпускников Международной стипендиальной программы: изучение опыта выпускников программы «Болашак»

Уважаемые участники!

Вас пригласили принять участие в собеседовании в качестве наиболее важной части данного исследования. Это исследование посвящено изучению опыта реадaptации выпускников программы «Болашак» и выявлению факторов, влияющих на их адаптацию после возвращения на родину, и какие стратегии они используют для реадaptации после пребывания за границей. Я задам вам ряд открытых вопросов о вашем опыте после вашего возвращения на родину из учебы и проживания за границей. С Вашего разрешения, интервью будут записываться на аудионоситель. Аудиоматериалы, исключительно, будут использованы для дальнейшей обработки и анализа данных. Никто не будет упоминать либо использовать Ваше имя в отчетах, поэтому ваша конфиденциальность будет защищена. Результаты исследования будут использованы только в академических целях. Интервью займет около 60 минут, но все же без строгих временных ограничений. Имейте в виду, что Ваше участие является добровольным, и Вы имеете право отозвать свое согласие или прекратить участие в любое время.

Прошу прочтите и подпишите форму информированного согласия.

### Информация перед собеседованием

**Возраст:**

**Пол:** мужской            женский

**Семейное положение:** холост    замужем            разведен            в отношениях

**Принимающая страна** \_\_\_\_\_

**Программа обучения:** докторантура    магистратура

**Срок пребывания за границей** \_\_\_\_\_

**Дата возвращения на родину** \_\_\_\_\_

### Интервью

1. Прошу, вкратце расскажите о своем опыте в стране обучения (за границей)? Почему Вы выбрали, именно, эту страну для обучения?
2. Расскажите, пожалуйста, в целом, о своем опыте возвращения в Казахстан после вашего длительного пребывания за границей?
3. Вы вспомнить любые аспекты, которые, по Вашему мнению, создали трудности в приспособлении к ранее знакомой среде, после вашего возвращения в Казахстан?
  - Вы часто приезжали на каникулы домой?
  - Долго ли заняло время найти работу? Устраивает ли вас ваша зарплата, позиция? Можете ли вы применить знания, навыки, которые приобрели во время учебы на работе?
4. Сколько времени потребовалось для восстановления или возврата в нормальное состояние после возвращения домой?
5. Как вы справляетесь с трудностями или проблемами? Что вы делаете для того, чтобы облегчить процесс адаптации?

6. Хотели бы вы иммигрировать в принимающую страну, если бы у вас был выбор? Можете ли вы объяснить причины, почему / почему нет?
8. Будут ли у Вас какие-либо рекомендации для администратора стипендии «Болашак»?

Поблагодарю за участие в данном интервью!

### Сұхбат хаттамасы

**Зерттеу тақырыбы:** халықаралық стипендиялық бағдарламасы бойынша шет елдерде білім алып отанына қайтып оралған тұлғалардың реадaptациялық үрдісі: «Болашақ» стипендиясы түлектерінің тәжірибесін зерттеу

#### Құрметті қатысушылар!

Сіз «Болашақ» стипендиясы түлектерінің шет елде оқып, туған еліне оралғаннан кейін олардың бейімделуіне әсер ететін факторларды анықтауға, сондай-ақ олардың елге оралғаннан соң бейімделу үрдісін жеңілдету үшін қандай стратегияларды қолданғандары туралы тәжірибесін зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға шақырылып отырсыз. Сіз осы зерттеу жұмысының ең маңызды бөлігі болып табылатыныңды ескеріңіз. Сіздің рұқсатыңызбен сұхбаттасаңыз диктофонға жазылады. Аудио деректер әрі қарай өңдеу және талдау үшін пайдаланылады. Ешкімнің есімі аталмайды, сондықтан құпиялылық қорғалады. Зерттеу нәтижелері академиялық мақсаттарда ғана қолданылады. Сұхбат шамамен 60 минутқа созылады, алайда уақыт шектеусіз. Сіздің қатысуыңыз ерікті болып табылатындығын немесе кез-келген уақытта қатысуыңызды тоқтатуға құқығыңыз бар екенін есте сақтаңыз.

#### Маңызды ақпарат

**Жасы:**

**Жынысы:** ер                      әйел

**Отбасы жағдайы:** тұрмыс құрмаған   ажырасқан   үйленген

**Қабылдаушы ел** \_\_\_\_\_

**Оқу бағдарламасы:** докторантура                      магистратура

**Шетелде өткізген уақыт мерзімі** \_\_\_\_\_

**Отанына қайтып келеген уақыт** \_\_\_\_\_

#### Сұхбат

1. Оқу еліңізде (шетелде) тәжірибеңіз туралы айтып беріңізші?
2. Неліктен бұл елді оқу елі ретінде таңдадыңыз?
3. Сіздің шетелге ұзақ сапарыңыздан кейін Қазақстанға қайту тәжірибеңіз туралы айтып беріңізші?
4. Қазақстанға оралғаннан кейін бұрын таныс ортаға бейімделудегі қиындықтар туындырған қандай да бір аспектілерді айтып бере аласыз ба?
5. Сіз осы қиындықтарды немесе проблемаларды қалай шештіңіз? Сіз туған еліңізге қайтіп оралғаннан кейін, бейімделу үдерісін жеңілдету үшін не істеп жатырсыз?
6. Сіз қай мезгілде қайтып келгеннен кейін ең үлкен ыңғайсыздықты сезіндіңіз? Сіз бұл сезімдерді түсіндіре аласыз ба? Қалыпты қалпыңызға қайта келу үшін қанша уақыт қажет?
7. Шетелде оқып жүргенде сіз үшін ең құнды немесе пайдалы және пайдасыз не деп ойлайсыз?
8. Шетелде ұзақ уақыттан кейін отанына қайтып оралған тұлғалар үшін, осы зерттеу жұмысы үшін әлі де маңызды деп нені санайсыз? Сізде «Болашақ» бағдарламасы стипендиясының әкімшісіне ұсынысыңыз бар ма?

Осы сұхбатқа қатысқаныңыз үшін рахмет!