

DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN KAZAKHSTAN

GuLshara Abdykalikova

Dear Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to welcome you to the Eurasian Higher Education Leaders'Forum. Symbolically, the tradition of holding a forum was born at Nazarbayev University settings, which is envisioned to be a flagship of higher education in Kazakhstan. When creating Nazarbayev University, an in-depth analysis of top universities'achievements around the world was studied; many of these institutions have now become partners of the University and for the past four years since its foundation, the University set an example of collaboration and partnership of outstanding scholars in the country.

In the Strategy "Kazakhstan - 2050" the Head of the State set a task to enter top 30 most developed countries of the world. Human capital development will definitely be a condition for achieving that goal. Only with high human potential, alternative ways of economic and socially oriented growth will be developed. With the present challenges a highly educated person is capable to cope with necessary knowledge and skills. Universities, as generators of knowledge, play an important role in building human capital and sustainable development of the country. Nowadays universities are assigned a primary role to develop a healthy competition for top tiers in different ranking systems by attracting best professors and professional managers of the academic process. However, it is worth-noting that it takes many years to develop a successful university's image. The credit of building a successful university goes to all the parties involved including top management, faculty members, students and graduates. The most important element of the whole teaching-and-learning process is surely the quality of education. Today, in this brief speech, I would like to highlight three important aspects of the development of Kazakhstan's higher education.

Firstaspect is based on the preparation of competitive human resources. Knowledge is usually regarded as a global productive force. However, in the world we are living today acquiring knowledge will not suffice. Throughout the world, the emphasis is placed on improving not only knowledge, but also some practical skills. Skilled workforce of new generation should be able to think creatively, generate ideas independently, able to work in a team and use advanced information and communication technologies, as well as be ready for new challenges. In Kazakhstan's case, such a platform in the country is meant to be Nazarbayev University, a major national project to establish the first research university in Kazakhstan at the international level.

The second priority is the creation and development of an intellectual and innovative cluster. This aspiration led us to realize practical integration of education, science and innovation. The cluster shall provide favorable conditions for researchers and entrepreneurs. Also, the cluster will contribute to the market dissemination of research findings. Nazarbayev University is working on the development of a science park which will be in turn a high-tech industrial area; it is planned to be created in the near future. The park will provide formation for corporate centres, research institutes and large high-tech companies that will work closely with research centers and schools of Nazarbayev University.

Today at Nazarbayev University 45 research projects are implemented in the following areas: renewable energy, environment, computer technology, biochemistry, robotics and physics. We will be able to save and further accelerate the pace of development if a strong link is set between science and business in local academic institutions of the nation. This will allow us to implement effectively innovations in enterprises and to produce new products of service.

Institutional accountability is surely important as universities serve for the purpose of developing knowledge. As Harvard President Faust noted in her presidential commencement speech of 2014,"the essence of a university [is] that among society's institutions, it is uniquely

accountable to the past and to the future" (Faust, 2014). Academic institutions are accountable for the past as they keep knowledge that is accumulated over the years here. Universities are accountable for the future as they develop research and pave the way for new discoveries that have an impact on the future's development.

Today we see that the improvement of living standards does not depend on the accumulation of capital and technological development of the country. It is obvious that what causes the gap between the developed and less developed countries is not only a lack of available resources, but also knowledge production. Growth of national economy depends on how fast this gap is reduced. These findings are explained in Joseph Stiglitz's book "*Creating a Learning Society*". Therefore, the success of our well-being in the long run depends on the extent we are ready to be flexible to master new knowledge and to improve our performance. This is a great responsibility of our universities. Therefore, nowadays universities need to be prepared for the challenges of our time and quickly adapt to external factors that can be considered both as a threat and opportunity for further development. Universities need to be more active in research activities in partnership with international peers than ever before.

Dear guests and participants of the Forum, This event is meant to be a dialogic platform for leaders of higher education. I believe that today both international and local experts will have a good opportunity to express their opinions on all tricky questions that are the focus of higher education community and society at large. I hope that holding this Forum in the capital of Kazakhstan will continue to remain our good tradition. I wish all participants a fruitful and pleasant stay in our capital of Astana. Thank you for your attention.

References

Faust, D. (2014). Commencement Speech. Office of the President, Harvard University. Retrieved from: <http://www.harvard.edu/president/speech/2014/2014-commencement-spe>

National Address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2014). Kazakhstan's Way - 2050: common aim, common interests, common future. Retrieved from: http://strategy2050.kz/en/page/message_text20141//

Stiglitz, J. E. (2012). Creating a learning society. *The London School of Economics and Political Science. The Amartya Sen Lecture.*