

## THE 1<sup>st</sup> YEAR PhD STUDENTS' CAREER EXPECTATIONS AND REASONS TO CHOOSE NUGSE

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**Introduction.** The Graduate School of Education was launched in 2012. Its PhD program is designed for students, who "are committed to taking a leadership role in educational reform and management in Kazakhstan" (NU website). In 2014 eleven students were selected and offered a state scholarship. Within the course on Advanced Methods of Educational Research, the 1<sup>st</sup> year PhD students conducted a small scale research to address two research questions, namely to understand the reasons behind PhD students' desire to pursue post-graduate education at Nazarbayev University, Graduate School of Education (NUGSE), and their career expectations upon the completion of the program.

**Materials and methods.** To explore the PhD students' reason to study at NUGSE and their career expectations, we employed a qualitative research design. We also applied purposeful sampling and conducted semi-structured interviews. The data was analyzed using NVivo-10, computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software.

**Results and discussion.** All of the participants are female, aged from 24 to 40 (80% in the group of 24-30, 20% in the group of 31-40). Over half of the participants (55%) hold their degree in Education, while the remaining 45% do not (however, their prior major relates to social and human sciences). Almost all students (91%) have international experience. As for the work experience, prior to current PhD program, 55% of participants had experience in teaching and research, 36% worked in the field of education management.

According to the findings of the study, the main reasons to choose NUGSE are facilities, status of the university, professional development opportunities as well as personal motives such as ambition, family reasons, desire to be heard and finally desire to contribute to educational system. As for career perspectives NUGSE 1<sup>st</sup> year PhD students see themselves as educators in secondary and higher education, researchers, consultants and policy makers.

**Conclusions.** The research revealed that the main reasons to enter the PhD program were availability, international standard and background experience. Other less significant reasons were desire to enhance knowledge, desire for doing research, personal ambitions, and contribution to the society and formal recognition.

The study has several limitations and its findings cannot be generalized to the whole population. Firstly, due to time constraints, relatively scarce amount of data was collected. Interviews were conducted during the mid-term break, and consequently in rush ups, not allowing sufficient time for follow up questions. Secondly, second year PhD students did not participate in the study. Thirdly, the use of limited number of research instruments did not allow conducting the methodological triangulation.

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