

EDUCATIONAL POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS IN KAZAKHSTAN

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Kazakhstan is an increasingly important and visible player on the world stage. Its economic and political successes are recognised, and its international stature continues to grow. We can see this in a variety of ways: as an international political leader, Kazakhstan was chosen to serve as the Chair at both the OSCE and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation; in sports, the country was extremely successful in hosting the Asian Winter Games in 2011, and more recently, the performance of our athletes in the 2012 Olympic Games in London was a breathtaking source of pride for all of us.

Such things do not, of course, simply happen. They are the result of specific actions and ideas. In the years since independence, under the visionary leadership of Nursultan A. Nazarbayev, the First President of Kazakhstan, we have sought to carry out fundamental reforms of virtually every sphere of life in our country. A strong and open economy has been built; a new political system has been created. The country has moved forward into the 21st century with a strong commitment to modern science and education, to the on-going improvement of our society, to the integration of traditional values with the needs of the modern age, and to the idea of the mutually beneficial outcomes of cultural enrichment of all peoples.

As early as 1994, speaking at Moscow State University, President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed the idea of Eurasian integration. This profound and far-seeing proposal was met with caution; for many, it seemed an unlikely possibility. And yet, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan was correct: today this ideal is embodied in a Single Economic Space with a population of over 170 million people, and a total GDP of over \$3 trillion US dollars. There are ever-greater opportunities for the free movement of goods, services, resources and personnel throughout this Single Economic Space, increasing its economic efficiency as well as the social development of the peoples living in it.

Eurasian integration, our President recognised, meant far more than merely economic integration, as important as that was. In 2009, at the 2009 Eurasian Association of Universities Congress, President Nazarbayev identified the need for a comparable single Eurasian Educational Space. This ideal has already been implemented, and is manifested in the CIS Network University and the University of the SCO countries. These institutions have been established, and are successfully operating, providing invaluable academic opportunities and mobility throughout Eurasia. Finally, in October, 2011, the Eurasian Forum on Academic Mobility of Students and Teachers of the CIS countries was held in Astana, an important event which involved the participation of the Ministers of Education. We also initiated the creation of the Bureau of the Bologna process in the Central Asian region. In short, the vision of President Nursultan Nazarbayev with respect to the present and future of Eurasian integration has been both invaluable and incomparable.

The capacity of Kazakhstan - politically, economically, and certainly educationally - ensure, I believe, that it will serve as an integrating link throughout the region, and between the educational systems of Europe and Asia. The presence of this Forum here in Astana is

no random event; it is visible proof of the strategic goals of Kazakhstan and of its leader, President Nursultan A. Nazarbayev.

The rapid development and reform of higher education and science in Kazakhstan are fully in keeping with global and international trends, which of course is precisely what our goals in the government with respect to these matters need to be. The development of science and higher education in Kazakhstan is tied closely to the need for further integration globally in these areas. The higher educational system of Kazakhstan has already become an important part of both the European and CIS higher education arenas, and today we are working to develop an additional, overlapping but nevertheless distinctive, Central Asian Higher Education Area. Toward this end, Kazakhstan has already successfully put into place 124 bilateral intergovernmental agreements and memoranda.

I would be remiss if I did not explicitly mention that some of Kazakhstan's most valuable and productive scientific and educational ties are with countries whose representatives are gathered here for this Forum. Let me provide you with just a few illustrative examples.

In 1994, nearly twenty years ago, the governments of Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom signed an Agreement on Cultural, Scientific and Educational Cooperation, and since 2001, the Kazakh-British Technical University has been successfully operating here in Kazakhstan. Nor are the linkages between our two countries merely institutional ones; they are also personal ones. A bright example of the role of interpersonal cooperation and collaboration between Kazakhstan and Britain was the meeting of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan with faculty members at Cambridge University, at which many of the problems and challenges of the modern world were explored and discussed.

Perhaps one of the most effective ways in which we have sought to integrate Kazakhstan into the global academic, scholarly and scientific community has been the 'Bolashak' programme. The Bolashak programme, which was begun in 1994 under the direct initiation of President Nazarbayev, was and remains a unique programme that allows thousands of the most talented young people of Kazakhstan to study at top, world-class universities around the world. This programme has resulted in a synergistic effect to increase the number of Kazakhstani self-funded students studying abroad. Since 1994, more than 50,000 young people have received their higher education abroad.

Many Bolashak students have studied in the United States, of course, but an even more significant example of our work to collaborate with the US educational system can be seen right around us, here at Nazarbayev University. Nazarbayev University is a unique university, and has been designed to serve as a guide for the future development of the entire higher education sector of the country. It was created by an initiative of our President and from the beginning was grounded in a commitment to the highest standards of academic and scientific performance. It seeks to create a systematic synthesis of education, science and innovation.

In order to accomplish its mission, Nazarbayev University, from its founding, has been assisted by international partners from a variety of countries - the UK (Cambridge University and University College, London), Singapore (National University of Singapore), and the US. From the United States, the partner institutions include Carnegie Mellon University, Duke University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Pittsburg Medical Center, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Nazarbayev University is by no means an American

university, though, any more than it is a British university - it is a distinctly, and deliberately, Kazakhstani institution, designed to learn from the world's best universities to create a uniquely outstanding institution for the 21st century.

The national educational priority of integration with the global scholarly community is manifested quite clearly in Kazakhstan's official acceptance of the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process is intended to facilitate the evaluation and transfer of university credits and programmes across national borders, to ensure that there are common understandings from one country to another of specific educational degrees, diplomas, credits, grades, and so on. By accepting and implementing the Bologna Process, Kazakhstan ensures that its specialists have recognised credentials that are understood throughout the world. In addition, Kazakhstan has implemented a full transition to the three-tier system of education (Bachelor's - Master's - Doctorate) commonly used elsewhere. We have sought to replace older approaches to scientific training through graduate school. This allowed us to collaborate with leading universities of the world in the creation of doctoral programs, which will become a key pillar of our integration into the global scientific world. We are also working on the formulation of a National Qualifications Framework, a necessary condition for the implementation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

With respect to university governance, Kazakhstan is now moving toward a more internationally-recognised model. We have commenced the transition of to the provision of autonomy to universities, and to changes in their governance systems. Our leading university, Nazarbayev University, is already completely autonomous - which shall ultimately become the basic norm for all university's in Kazakhstan.

In four of our national universities, Supervisory Boards have already been established and given legally-binding substantial power to operate the universities that they represent. We are reviewing the powers of Boards of Trustees that function already in 64 sixty-four universities in Kazakhstan, and expect to make changes in their powers and authority in the future. In accordance with global practice, we are forming a system of independent accreditation.

For the first time we have established the National Register of Accreditation Agencies, which includes two Kazakh and four foreign agencies from the United States, Germany and Austria. What all of this demonstrates, I believe, is that the role, the place, and the nature of universities in Kazakhstan is all undergoing serious review and revision at the present time, as higher education in the country becomes increasing like that in other parts of the world.

The quality of universities is noteasyto measure, butan important element of determining the overall quality of any institution of higher education are the world rankings. Although they are not perfect, such rankings play an immensely important role in helping us to improve to competitiveness of universities, their quality, and how their programmes, facilities, faculty and students compare to those of other universities. In the case of Kazakhstan, according to the OS World University Rankings (2011), Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and LN.Gumilyov Eurasian National University were among the 450 best universities of the world.

Three additional universities (Kazakh National Technical University, Kazakh National Pedagogical University and South Kazakhstan National University) are in the top 601-700. This year, a total of twenty Kazakh universities have taken part in the international rankings. These are important steps to a new level of competitiveness in higher education.

We are also concerned with the issue of the mobility of students, teachers, knowledge and innovation. Kazakhstan has taken a series of measures to the effective stimulation of this process; the State provides financial support for mobility. Since last year, students and undergraduates have an opportunity to study for one semester at top, world-class universities. This approach is quite unusual, as in most countries, academic mobility is carried out by students themselves. The international mobility of our students is organised similar to the way, how students from other countries move. They are oriented to the countries that established themselves in the educational market long ago: the USA, UK, France, Germany and other countries of the European space, as well as the new leaders of attracting foreign students - Malaysia, Indonesia, China, and South Korea.

Kazakhstan supports different types of mobility: credit mobility for the academic period, degree mobility, the mobility of researchers, and the long-term academic mobility. An additional impulse to this process is given by international programmes as Erasmus Mundus, TEMPUS, DAAD.

Rectors and universities throughout Kazakhstan are dedicated to of the country focus on improving the quality of educational services provided to all of our students, and to the promotion of research of the highest quality. This will be one of the main factors of increasing the attractiveness of Kazakhstan for international students. I think that achievement of this goal is realistic within our region and the Eurasian Area, and we will continue to work in this direction.

Another factor that has important impacts on higher education in Kazakhstan, as well as on other educational systems around the world, is the international mobility of professorial corps. I can see here many international experts who are among the most active builders of the modern system of world education. Today we have the opportunity to invite to our country more than 1,000 world-class professors a year, and we are anxious to benefit from their expertise, experience, and willingness to assist us. At the same time, we are developing a system of international internships for our teachers and scholars, including the Bolashak program, to ensure that we will soon have even more world-class Kazakh scholars and professors in our own institutions.

Underlying the reform of higher education in Kazakhstan, and indeed in much of the world, is the phenomenon of the synthesis of science, education, and innovation. I remember the words of a great science devotee, Professor Sergey Kapitsa: «Today the economy of knowledge defines the development of a society... and challenges the habitual concept of the market. Knowledge has the ability to be multiplied and extend uncontrollably - as an exchange of ideas leads to knowledge augmentation of each individual. Finally the education system also forms the economy of knowledge)). It is at institutions such as Nazarbayev University that we see all of these elements coming together; indeed, Nazarbayev University sets the benchmark for such synergy. In order to disseminate this experience to higher education institutions, the creation of research universities has been legislatively established. We turned to target the promotion of science and innovations to HEI which should become the base generators of new knowledge and new technologies in economy and education. We already have ten innovative higher education institutions. The State supports these higher education institutions in development of science and innovations, commercialization of researches, attraction of talented young people. This synergy and its potential is something that I would suggest should be a topic of consideration at this Forum.

The twenty-first century has already begun seeing massive changes in the ways in which we think about education. The phrase 'lifelong learning' is a reflection of many of the changes that are taking place around us. It used to be the case that doing well at University pretty much guaranteed a good life and secure retirement. Now, the knowledge that one acquires at University is quickly out-of-date, and one must constantly upgrade both skills and knowledge. One of the areas in which we can see a radical change from the past is in the spread of IT in education. The spread of IT-technology has led to the fact that today it is difficult to estimate the number of students participating in distance and on-line learning. In Kazakhstan we have already launched a pilot e-learning project, and by 2020 it will capture 90 % of our educational organisations. But university authorities must understand that they should not stop there. The goal of universities is to pick up and expand the given methodology, to become the main base of development of the LLL system. There is a big integration potential, the discussion of which can be rather useful at our Forum.

We all know that the world is becoming increasingly global and international in nature, and that there is a dramatically increasing trend toward the globalisation of education. In my comments here, I would like to go beyond this, though, and emphasise that this process of globalisation and internationalization also means that we must address the issue of multilingualism and multilingual staff training. This is extremely important for Kazakhstan, which is rapidly expanding its open economy and social sphere. As world experience shows, those countries whose citizens speak several languages achieve success more quickly. In this regard, the President has set a clear goal. He has stressed that Kazakhstan must be perceived in the world as a highly educated country, whose population speaks three languages: Kazakh as the state language, Russian and English as the languages of successful integration into the global economy. So we put language training on very important place at all levels of education. We have already made definite steps for multilingual professional training. Today, all universities have introduced the level model of foreign language learning, following the example of European universities. Starting from next year, the realization of Study Programs designed in three languages will be launched in 32 higher education institutions. More than 5,5 thousand students in teacher training, natural-scientific, technical specialties will be trained according to them. It becomes a good basis for mobility and competitiveness of specialists.

The world is changing rapidly; the 21st century offers us many new challenges. Not only do we have time to react to them, but to be proactive. These trends are in many ways a kind of academic revolution, as they are unprecedented in their scale, diversity and dynamics. I strongly believe that the answers to these key challenges will be found at such international and inter-state discussion venues like this Forum. I wish you fruitful work, success, good progress in the development of the relationship of our scientific and educational systems!