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State and non-state mechanisms for regulating the quality of higher education for promoting it to the European level: The example of Kazakhstan

Alina Zhumagulova*

Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating

010010, 2 B. Momysuly Ave., Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan

Bekbosun Borubashov

Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University

720000, 42 Chui Ave., Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

Abstract

Relevance. This exploration is crucial for understanding how developing countries can enhance their educational frameworks to meet global benchmarks, which in turn contributes to their competitiveness on the world stage.

Purpose. The goal of the article is to analyse the most important state and non-state instruments for regulating the domain of tertiary education in the developing country, endeavouring to advance the standard of education to the degree of the developed countries.

Methodology. Employing functional and comparative analysis, the study examines 11 key mechanisms for regulating, ensuring, and improving higher education quality in Kazakhstan, juxtaposed with practices from developed countries, particularly those within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This methodological approach provides insights into the efficacy of these mechanisms in fostering a high-quality educational landscape.

Results. Findings reveal two significant waves of increased state attention towards higher education quality, with legislative support being paramount. Kazakhstan has adopted a multifaceted approach involving legislative frameworks, licensing, and accreditation to bolster educational standards. Additionally, the inclusion of non-state mechanisms, such as stakeholder engagement and international accreditation, alongside collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors, has been instrumental. These efforts align with global trends and EHEA guidelines, demonstrating Kazakhstan's commitment to enhancing its educational quality and competitiveness.

Conclusions. The analysis underscores the complexity and significance of both state and non-state mechanisms in shaping the quality of higher education in Kazakhstan. By aligning its practices with international standards, particularly those of the EHEA, Kazakhstan is making strides towards integrating its higher education system into the global framework. This integration not only enhances the country's educational standards but also its overall competitiveness, highlighting the critical role of quality assurance mechanisms in achieving educational excellence and global integration.

Keywords: quality of tertiary education; educational law; quality verification mechanisms; formation of student contingent; licensing of higher education; accreditation.

Introduction

Transition to a modern realizing of the value and significance of education quality, which started in the 60-

80s of the XX century, can be considered with good reason as the most important "turning point" in the advancement of the holistic educational infrastructure in the world. At

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*Corresponding author



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the same time this transition has become one of the key moments in changing the trajectory of development of all mankind. In our opinion, the start of this transition was the economic discovery that the level of the economy of the world's countries turned out to be significantly correlated with the education level of their population. This discovery was made in the United States in the 1960s [1; 2]. It opened up new prospects for re-assessment and development of education, making systematic expansion of the access to the upper levels of education and raising the educational attainment across the entire populace as the extremely urgent task. Accordingly, attention was drawn to the possibility of receiving an education of exemplary quality, which is guaranteed for all students. The government agencies hold a crucial significance in this endeavour. Relevant provisions have been incorporated into the key acts of international human rights law, including the Convention against Discrimination in Education [3] and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [4]. In 1990, the World Conference "Education for Everyone" (Jomtien, Thailand) called for provision of the high-quality education for everyone. However, the governments of states are primarily responsible for this [5]. It is unequivocal that the matter of tertiary education quality is intrinsically linked to state governance, economic dynamics, and the labour market. The high quality of personnel training shall meet the requirements of numerous stakeholders – the employers, society, the state and the students themselves. At the same time, as we can see from the above-mentioned documents, the key role is played by the state. The main requirement here is to clearly establish the educational relations in the broadest sense. And this, first of all, means choosing the right course for education development in accordance with it and with the actual needs of citizens and stakeholders, to form and continuously improve civil legal regulations within the educational domain. The prospective trajectory of both the educational sector and the nation at large directly depends on validity of this legislation effectiveness.

This issue is being studied quite intensively – for example, in such papers by M. Friedman [6], K. Marek [7], H. Horta [8], JD Ward & WG Tierney [9] and others. Specifically, discussions encompass the influence of globalisation dynamics on tertiary education, underscore the government's accountability in this realm, the state's involvement in the internationalisation efforts of higher education, and augmenting the competitiveness of academic institutions and the calibre of graduates they produce, developing the research and innovation capabilities in the university sphere, state funding and support from the universities and other aspects.

Legislative support of education and its quality

In the world practice of the XX and early XXI centuries, two waves of a sharp growth can be distinguished in the states' interest to the quality of tertiary education. The initial wave occurred in the 1960s and primarily affected the United States. At this stage, education unexpectedly, very quickly and successfully penetrated into a previously completely unexplored area, turned into a particularly significant military and economic category [10-12]. The serious discovery was noted above that confirmed the strong correlation between the economy and education of

the population of the countries in the world. The key impulse for such scientific research was the growing confrontation between the United States and the USSR, primarily in the military sphere (nuclear weapons) and in space (delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons, artificial Earth satellites, manned space flights). The Soviet Union was the leader in the space race at that moment, which was defined to the great extent by the level of education it achieved [13; 14]. The United States faced with the need to urgently raise the standard of its education, predominantly at the tertiary level, and the country coped with this difficult task. In 1960, the fundamental reforms of higher education were initiated, leading to such fundamental changes as establishment of a new system of advanced training and re-training of personnel at the universities, multi-stage process, individualization and intensification of education, formation of the research universities [15-18].

The advancement of tertiary education in the United States has become a task for the federal government, which solution has acquired the price of conquering and retaining leadership in the world. The school curriculum was also revised, the number of the exact science teachers was increased, and the unprecedented support was provided to the students of science and mathematics in the universities [19]. It was a real revolution in education. The huge amounts of funds were invested in knowledge and education. Whereas previously the entire education system was funded primarily by the states, now there are generous grants provided for education from the federal budget, and huge investments were made in the military sector and research. The in-depth analysis and periodization of this process was presented in the book [20]. The author identified the following three periods: The first period (1960-1965) was characterized by the presence of a challenge to the US the US tertiary education framework and to all of humanity, which caused a certain fear. Concurrently, the tertiary education system was preparing for a breakthrough to the fundamentally new stage of its development. The need was recognized to establish the new requirements for the level of specialists training and the new areas of such training, the construction of new colleges and universities. The second period (1965-1975) was characterized by active development of the system. There was a marked expansion in the quantity of tertiary educational institutions and the ensuing student populace. During this interval, the acceleration of the higher education infrastructure outpaced labour market requisites, leading, for a temporal duration, to the societal phenomenon known as "overeducated Americans". The third period (1975-1980) was characterized by stabilization at a new level and a time for results summing-up.

Today, the states of the world, including the Republic of Kazakhstan, possess the developed tools to influence the assurance and improvement of this quality. The following state mechanisms can be distinguished among those used for this purpose. Among the state mechanisms the most important and systemic is the legislative support of education and its quality, including the processes of international standards implementation into the national legal system – this process is currently running very intensively in the world. It constitutes one of the

foundations of the leading trend in education development on the planet – its internationalization [21; 22]. Owing to this trajectory, contemporary higher education has integrally aligned with the globalization phenomena observed globally, serving as a foundation for the cross-border mobility of knowledge and individuals. Thus, it is no longer tenable to perceive higher education strictly within a confined national purview [23].

For the developing countries it is important to introduce the modern progressive approaches both in national legislation and in practical activities and compare them with the corresponding approaches of the developed countries taking into account the national, mental, historical characteristics of a particular country. The process of national legislation enrichment with the international legal standards should currently be extended not only to classical international law, but also to the so-called “soft law” [24], exemplified by the actions of diverse international entities. This approach is now becoming more and more popular.

This approach is especially widespread in the European countries. The Bologna Process – the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has been founded and is successfully developing as a result of a carefully thought-out policy of the European countries. The Republic of Kazakhstan has officially joined it in 2010. The EHEA policy is authoritative and strategically built-up; it extends even to the CIS countries and Central Asia. To a degree, it is postulated that this process broadens the European boundaries and propagates the notion of a unified European identity within such confines [25; 26]. The system of Kazakhstan's education legislation, being improved by the state, is the important factor for provision of promotion effectiveness in this area. Over the past decade, this system has been consistently checked against the guidelines of the European Higher Education Area. This serves as a fundamental cornerstone for a deliberate and systematic strategy to elevate the quality of Kazakhstan's higher education to the standard of globally developed nations.

The basis of legislative support for education is the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan [27]. It specifies the basic rights of citizens for education. Pertaining to tertiary education, specifically, it encompasses the entitlement to access (contingent upon competition) complimentary education within a public higher education establishment. It also implies the receipt of paid education in the private educational institutions. There is no mention of the education quality in the country's Constitution.

Establishment of the tiers of tertiary and advanced academic studies and the types of organizations providing such education

In Kazakhstan three tiers of tertiary and postgraduate education are established both legislatively and institutionally: bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies (bachelor's study is considered as higher education, and master's and doctoral studies are classified as postgraduate education). This complies with the world practice and regulations of the Bologna Process – EHEA [28]. Our main conclusion is the following. The fundamental reforms of tertiary education in the United States have demonstrated

the enormous potential of the state in the systemic modernization of the educational space, in setting and successful achievement of the most serious goals. It made a strong impression on the whole world. Almost instantly, the attitude to education changed radically and everywhere. It has acquired a very special economic and political significance. And also, a very important consequence of this process was the full inclusion of education along with its quality into international law.

The second wave started in the final decade of the XX century and affected in particular the countries of Europe. In 1999, Mantz Yorke [29], the Director of the Centre for Higher Education Development (Liverpool, UK), posited that over the preceding decade, there had been an escalating apprehension among global governments to ascertain that tertiary education garners due esteem within their jurisdictions. This trajectory has subsequently led to an augmented focus on the quality of higher education in global practices. For this purpose, the various mechanisms have been developed, tested and used: international law, state and non-state. There is some information provided above about the mechanisms of international law, its further detailing is beyond the scope of this article. This study focuses on the results of our analysis of public and private mechanisms used in the Republic of Kazakhstan, and their comparison with the modern mechanisms, adopted in the world practice.

At the moment, the following types of organizations providing higher and postgraduate education have been legally established: university, academy and institute. The presence of various higher education institutions in Kazakhstan, beyond just universities, is documented in reports concerning the Bologna process [30; 31]. The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 319-III “On Education” [32] provides an intricate legislative framework for education. The legal dimension of education in Kazakhstan has witnessed rapid development, with frequent amendments to this law, which often cascade to other national laws. This foundational law encapsulates core principles and regulations pivotal for the educational trajectory as a critical facet of the nation's progress. Key principles underscored within this legal framework encompass the equal right to superior education, the prioritisation of educational advancement, accessibility, and the introduction of a “national system for assessing the quality of education”. Notably, the quality of education is referenced in over 30 provisions of the Law. The characteristics of state regulation in education, the issues related to the education quality management have been specified. The system of legal support has been supplemented and detailed by other basic and derivative regulation legal acts (codes, laws and by-laws). Legislative support among the mechanisms of state quality assurance is substantially supplemented by a whole range of specific areas and functions performed by the state bodies, including:

The licensing of educational institutions' operations stands as a globally recognised legal mechanism pivotal to ensuring higher education quality. Distinctively, its essence lies in its preemptive legal intervention executed by the state, aiming for proficient oversight of the forthcoming educational undertakings within each academic entity. First of all, in the form of providing the

required conditions for high-quality education – availability of the required assets (campus, classrooms, dormitories), the material and technical resources (educational and IT equipment, networks, libraries, etc.), the human resources (faculty and support personnel) and other conditions established by the license (qualification) requirements. Only availability of the license enables a university to officially open as a legal entity – the educational organization and conduct its main activity – to provide educational services, higher and postgraduate education. The license indicates that the organization, that received the license, has the necessary conditions for provision of high-quality education. The educational and legal instrument of licensing can be considered one of the keys and rather rigid mechanisms for pursuing state policy related to the sphere of higher and postgraduate education, with direct adjustment by legal means to the level of each specific tertiary educational institution [33-35]. In the countries worldwide, licensing of the educational activities is de facto a fairly widespread mechanism, although not universal, but it has considerably different forms.

Licensing of university activities is used extensively in the United States – in the states such as Connecticut, Illinois, Kentucky, Minnesota, North Carolina, Virginia, and others [36; 37]. And the US Council for Higher Education Accreditation draws a distinct line between licensing and accreditation of the universities. Licensing (government authorization for operation) means that institutions meet certain minimum requirements established by the government. Accreditation means that an educational institution has attained a benchmark standard of academic excellence. In Europe, licensing of universities has also been used and is used quite widely, from the developed countries – for example, Germany [36; 38], to the developing countries – Montenegro [39], Malta [40], Latvia and Romania [41]. However, here the boundaries between licensing and accreditation are often not clear, these terms as interdependent or interchangeable.

State licensing in education is also used in other countries of the world – Japan, the Russian Federation, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Armenia, Ukraine and other countries. The review of the countries of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) showed that almost all member-countries have the licensing procedures for private higher education [42]. In APEC member-country Indonesia, licensing for the establishment of new universities can be facilitated digitally from August 2019 [43]. All this shows that this mechanism of state influence on the higher education quality is very widespread. In Kazakhstan, the legal basis for licensing is established by the Law "On Permits and Notifications" and is detailed in the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 319-III "On Education" [32] and the corresponding by-laws (derivative regulatory legal acts). So, we can conclude that the Republic of Kazakhstan is in line with the world and European practice.

It is quite clear from practical experience that the more capable and prepared the contingent of students comes to universities, the higher the quality of their mastering of university programs will be, and the more high-quality specialists will graduate from the universities. Globally, there exists another notion – broadening the accessibility

of higher education. Ideally, entry into higher education should not hinge on wealth, place of residence, national and religious affiliation of the citizens. This process has become a global trend and is called massification of higher education. It also creates very significant risks in addition to the undoubted advantages.

The first of them is the risk that the amount of people with tertiary education in the country will exceed the number of jobs that objectively require such education. This risk is especially relevant for the developing countries. There are three ways out: 1) accelerated creation of new jobs, which requires a significant modification of the country's economy; 2) artificial "devaluation" of higher education, when it becomes acceptable in jobs with lower requirements; 3) cross-border migration of skilled labor, which is steadily expanding in the modern world, especially towards more developed countries. This is facilitated by the objectively ongoing procedure of globalizing tertiary and advanced academic studies. The second is the risk of a decrease in total level of quality of personnel training. It is almost inevitable with the higher education scale growth. This risk requires a daily and hourly struggle. Therefore, in the world's countries, including the developing countries, the mechanisms for formation of a dynamically optimal student contingent in the universities should be objectively developed and used, capable to provide the effective balance of interests of the state, individual, economy and society, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Such mechanisms exist in the world and are extensively used in Germany, Great Britain, Japan, France, Finland and other countries.

In Kazakhstan, the state's influence in shaping of a part of the student contingent in the universities is played by implementation of the above-mentioned constitutional principle of receiving a free higher education competitively, augmented in alignment with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 319-III "On Education" [32], this is furthered by the endorsement and allocation of the state educational mandate for personnel training at the tertiary and advanced study levels, and by establishing guidelines for awarding educational grants to cover educational costs, conducting the tests established by the law for applicants for the corresponding grants. Naturally, this role of the state is partial, and does not interfere with the market mechanisms in the process of student contingent formation. This system is constantly being improved. Thus, in May 2020, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan K. Tokayev instructed to provide for a more significant social component in the allocation mechanism for state educational scholarships, that is, to focus not only on the academic achievements of the applicant, but also on the social-economic status and to consider increasing the number of grants for the socially vulnerable categories of citizens and youth from the low-income families.

On 21st April 2021, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan implemented supplementary quotas for educational grants targeting enrolment into institutions offering technical, post-secondary, and tertiary education. These quotas are specifically allocated for offspring from households with four or more underage children and those hailing from single-parent families, from the families with the children with disabilities from childhood, the invalids

of the groups 1 and 2. This practice, firstly, initially provides equal access to grants for the applicants regardless of their income, place of residence, nationality and confessional affiliation, and now it will even give some preference to socially vulnerable categories of citizens—thereby increasing the availability of higher education. Secondly, it ensures the receipt of state grants for higher education for the talented and more prepared applicants. On the other hand, the state sets the threshold requirements for the training quality for the admitted contingent for all universities (and therefore for private ones). For example, the threshold scores of the unified national testing. All this taken together contributes to improvement of the quality of the student contingent when entering universities, which undoubtedly exerts a positive influence on the eventual quality of education they received and the level of their qualifications.

A serious group of state regulation areas is represented by the mechanisms that legislatively regulate important components of the pedagogical procedure and oversight in tertiary education. Among them, we should note the personnel training system, which includes three levels (bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies), the credit technology of study, which are included into mandatory parameters of the EHEA, introduction of external assessment of educational achievements, scholarly movement of students and educators, the systematic invitation of the foreign professors, a course on ensuring the compatibility of educational programs with the leading foreign universities. This has proven to be a very good practice. For example, it is known that one of the main achievements of the EHEA is academic inter-university and inter-country mobility, which applies to both students and faculty. It is supported by the states that are members of the EHEA, both in legal and organizational aspects—it is a generally accepted fact. The same process is running in Kazakhstan. But there is also a remarkable feature – the state support extends not only to the aspects noted above, but also to the direct funding of the state for development of this process. This was especially highlighted at the international forum of the Bologna Process in Bucharest in 2012 as a rather unique phenomenon in the world practice. Academic mobility in Kazakhstan to foreign countries through the years after joining the Bologna Process has grown from 350 people in 2011 to 2694 in 2019 – the increase of almost 8 times [44].

Non-state and collaborative mechanisms of the influence on higher education quality

In the Republic of Kazakhstan, non-state mechanisms influencing the provisioning and enhancement of tertiary and advanced academic quality operate in alignment with contemporary societal demands and market economy dynamics. Several distinct non-state mechanisms are utilised for this intent.

The quality of higher education remains a consistent focus within EHEA member-nations. External accreditation of tertiary education institutions and their programmes is acknowledged as a paramount instrument for its assurance and refinement. The genesis of higher education accreditation can be traced to the United States. This subject has been extensively covered in specialized literature, elucidating its historical trajectory and current

status [45; 46]. It is pertinent to mention that in the United States from the very beginning (from 1885) to this day the accreditation organizations are exclusively non-governmental. As we could find out from the sources, the reason is that the accreditation organizations in the United States were originally established as the non-governmental organizations on a voluntary basis by the colleges and universities themselves, and in this form the voluntary accreditation received quite significant development [47]. The federal government didn't show any interest in this process until 1950-1960s. The push for accreditation to come to the attention of the US federal authorities was a sharp increase in attention to the economic and military-technological function of tertiary education and a concomitant augmentation in federal allocations towards higher educational endeavours (as discussed above).

The inaugural legislative enactment in this domain was the Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act [48]. It was ascertained that the United States necessitated a framework to guarantee a foundational standard of quality for tertiary institutions benefiting from federal funds. In response, the federal government leveraged the pre-existing accreditation mechanism, which was intrinsically private and elective. This hybrid state-private collaboration was codified in the Higher Education Act of 1965 [46]. Presently, accreditation serves as a cardinal instrument for international quality assurance in tertiary education. Multiple international consortia focused on higher education quality assurance exist, supplemented by a more expansive array of specialised accreditation entities.

For the Republic of Kazakhstan, as a formal participant of the EHEA, the protocols, norms, and structures established by the Bologna process are of considerable relevance. The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) was established in Europe in 2000. It was mandated to operationalize the Bologna Process strategies to bolster the calibre of higher education through defined accreditation pathways. The core aim was to expand and harmonise quality assurance methodologies via accreditation amongst Bologna Process member states. In 2004, this network transitioned into the ENQA Association (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), maintaining its acronym. The ENQA's 2005 articulation of the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – ESG" [49] is notably salient. This framework gained official recognition and was proposed for adoption at the Ministers' Conference in Bergen that same year. The 2009 Leuven Conference [50] accorded significant attention to these topics, culminating in the inception of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). Alongside, European quality assurance norms and guiding principles were formalized, aligning with the EHEA's qualification framework. The 2015 adaptation led to the ESG-2015 [51] guidelines, which presently act as the foundational reference for facilitating higher education accreditation, spanning both institutional and specialized categories, within the EHEA, including Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan, accreditation agencies maintain a defined legal independence, setting them apart from both university entities and state agencies, while adhering to national legislative standards.

The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 319-III "On Education" [32] introduced, in particular, such standards as follows:

- accreditation of the universities by the accreditation body in accordance with the standards and regulations independently developed by this body;
- a stipulation mandates that for a nation to recognise and enlist in the registry of acknowledged accreditation entities (orchestrated and preserved by the designated educational authority – the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan), said entities must already be included within the rosters and/or consortia of accreditation bodies of member states of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD);
- higher educational institutions retain autonomy in selecting their respective accreditation bodies, among other provisions;
- upon a comprehensive examination of the evolution of legal and institutional underpinnings for accreditation in the realm of tertiary and advanced studies in Kazakhstan, it is discerned by the authors that, within the second decade of the 21st century, a robust national accreditation infrastructure has crystallised in the nation. This system largely aligns with global best practices, international benchmarks, and the advisories of the European Higher Education Area.

Upon an intricate examination of the evolution of legal and institutional frameworks supporting accreditation in tertiary and advanced studies within Kazakhstan, it is discerned that during the second decade of the 21st century, a robust national accreditation mechanism has emerged in the nation. This system aligns closely with exemplary global practices, international benchmarks, and advisories propagated by the European Higher Education Area. Currently, the Kazakhstan Register of recognized accreditation entities lists 11 agencies: six domestic and five international [44]. As mandated by national legislation, these agencies are either full-fledged or associate members of internationally esteemed networks and registers such as ENQA, EQAR, CEENQA, INQAAHE, EQANIE, ENAEE, and others. To illustrate, the "Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating" (IAAR), one of Kazakhstan's seasoned accreditation entities, holds full membership in ENQA, CEENQA, and INQAAHE and is registered within the European EQAR. Prominent international entities operational in the accreditation realm for higher education in Kazakhstan encompass the likes of Germany's FIBAA, ASIIN, and ACQUIN; Belgium's MusiQuE; and the US-based ACBSP.

Upon a comprehensive assessment of international quality assurance networks, the authors discern a shared mission among these entities. Essentially, these international consortia, inclusive of their constituent accreditation agencies, function as consistent and dedicated vanguards for global best practices in higher education quality. They continually gather, disseminate, and implement global standards within national higher education frameworks. In effect, they epitomize a dynamic, self-evolving mechanism for the internationalization of higher education and the harmonization of overarching standards, encompassing higher education quality.

The Republic of Kazakhstan has progressively integrated itself into this global mechanism. This integration commenced in 2010 with the nation's accession to the Bologna process and has since evolved to a stage where several Kazakhstani accreditation bodies are globally recognized, aligning with the mandates of the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area–ESG". Moreover, the presence of esteemed European and US accreditation bodies within Kazakhstan signifies the genuine internationalization of the nation's higher education and the alignment of its quality assurance mechanisms with contemporary international standards. The foundational document of the Bologna Process, "Standards and Recommendations for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area–ESG", outlines four cardinal principles of quality assurance in the European Educational Sphere. The foremost principle posits: "Higher education institutions bear primary accountability for their quality and its assurance" [51].

The term "internal quality assurance" is introduced within this document, delineating the tertiary institution's overarching responsibility. This guideline, specifically in its "Standards and recommendations for internal quality assurance" section, enumerates ten standards with accompanying recommendations. To adhere to these quality assurance mandates, Kazakhstani universities institute their bespoke internal quality assurance protocols. These systems are principally anchored in the International Organization for Standardization's ISO 9000 series, especially ISO 9001:2015 "Quality management systems. Requirements" [52] and its corresponding ST RK ISO 9001-2016 iteration [53].

The compliance of the internal quality assurance framework of universities with the international and national standards is regularly monitored by the JSC "Kazakhstan National Centre for Expertise and Certification". This Company, operating in the area of standardization, metrology, certification of products, services, management systems and other services, has a recognized international level. The universities, that have passed control, are awarded with the certificate of conformity usually with a three-year validity period. The advantages of such certification are: improvement of the education quality, the university image, its position in the ratings and demand from the consumers (applicants and employers); within an academic context, the alignment of university pedagogical and administrative operations with international benchmarks, such as the "Standards and Recommendations for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area–ESG", confers several advantages [54]. These encompass competitive leverage in contests and procurement procedures, an augmented capability to secure governmental educational grants and commissions, and the assurance and augmentation of operational efficacy. Additionally, it facilitates judicious administration of not merely human and tangible assets, but also intellectual capital, affiliations, and networks, thereby amplifying the institution's overall developmental trajectory. A systematic review indicates that such an approach to enhancing quality within Kazakhstan's higher and postgraduate education aligns coherently with contemporary global and European paradigms [55]. It is a

progressively evolving trend, with numerous universities having already instituted such quality assurance frameworks. Currently, the work is in progress towards full coverage of the Kazakhstan universities with this quality mechanism.

Some other non-state and collaborative mechanisms (including those through the public-private partnerships) also influence the enhancement of educational standards, coupled with the increasing demand and competitiveness of graduates in Kazakhstan, is pivotal [56]. In our analysis, a notable contributor to this trajectory is the national qualifications system, which has been in place and evolving in the Republic since 2012, occupies a significant place. The impulse for its establishment was the success of the national qualifications system of South Korea in the rapid economic and technological development of the country [57]. The European qualifications system [58; 59] served as a specific reference point in the development process.

Such system in Kazakhstan is legally fixed and includes the national competency structure, the sector-specific competency frameworks, the professional standards and the specialists' qualifications certification system. The system is developed jointly by the state and business with the definitive participation of the employers and sectoral government bodies.

The main mission of this system, in our opinion, is that it serves as a systemic translator of the requirements and approaches of the employers for personnel training in the education system—professional, higher and postgraduate. Taking these requirements and approaches into account in the educational system provides improvement of education quality, a higher and more reliable demand for the specialists graduated from the educational organizations by the economy and society and increase of their competitiveness (both within the country and abroad). The next potential framework for enhancing the standard and availability of tertiary education is the relatively recently introduced capability for the educational organizations to create the endowment-funds into the national legislation. Within the legal framework of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as articulated in the "Law on Education," the endowment-fund of an institution engaged in higher and/or postgraduate education is delineated as an endowment constituted from philanthropic support, unsolicited allocations, endowments, grants, and contributions from the founders or members of educational establishments. The investment yields from this fund are allocated towards financing research, scientific-technical, and/or academic endeavours. As the world practice has shown, such funds (investment income) can be effectively used to raise the level of the educational process. So far, this mechanism has not yet received proper distribution in Kazakhstan.

An additional mechanism to incorporate employer stipulations within the higher and postgraduate education system is the integration of their representatives into the operations of accreditation agencies. Such a methodology has been recognized as an efficacious practice among accreditation entities functioning within the OECD and EHEA regions. It is directly recommended by such international associations (networks) as ENQA, it is included in the ESG standards and in Kazakhstan this mechanism has already received some development and has shown its effectiveness.

Conclusions

In the latter half of the 20th century, the pivot of higher education quality towards the epicentre of economic progression acted as a catalyst for establishing education quality as a principal, objective tool of globalisation. The emergent internationalisation processes influenced numerous nations, culminating in the genesis of a distinctively international apparatus for the assurance and enhancement of said quality. This phenomenon was particularly pronounced within the OECD nations and the Bologna process, evident through the development of novel standards and the proliferation of international networks dedicated to assuring higher education quality. Incorporating developing nations into this framework is of paramount significance. Post-independence, and markedly in the previous decade following its integration into the Bologna process, Kazakhstan has been afforded avenues for knowledge transfer and best practice adoption from economically advanced nations concerning higher and postgraduate education. This, in turn, has implications for the global competitiveness of Kazakhstan's professionals.

The analysis, presented in this article, has shown that today Kazakhstan has a whole range of modern mechanisms for influencing the quality of higher education (state, non-state and collaborative), which correlate well with similar mechanisms used in the developed countries, including the EHEA. The inclusion of the employers' representatives in the corporate governance bodies of universities has a similar effect of strengthening the concentration on the actual requirements of the labour market for the qualified specialists. This practice is also supported in Kazakhstan. This is the key to successful advancement of the country in the processes of internationalization and achievement of the international quality standards for higher education.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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Державні та недержавні механізми регулювання якості вищої освіти для просування її до європейського рівня: Приклад Казахстану

Аліна Жумагулова

Незалежне агентство з акредитації та рейтингування
010010, просп. Б. Момишули, 2, м. Астана, Республіка Казахстан

Бекбосун Борубашов

Киргизько-Російський слов'янський університет
720000, просп. Чуй, 42, м. Бішкек, Киргизстан

Анотація

Актуальність. Це дослідження має вирішальне значення для розуміння того, як країни, що розвиваються, можуть вдосконалити свої освітні системи, щоб відповідати світовим стандартам, що, своєю чергою, сприяє їхній конкурентоспроможності на світовій арені.

Мета. Мета статті – проаналізувати найважливіші державні та недержавні інструменти регулювання сфери вищої освіти в країні, що розвивається, з метою наближення стандартів освіти до рівня розвинених країн.

Методологія. Використовуючи функціональний і порівняльний аналіз, у дослідженні розглянуто 11 ключових механізмів регулювання, забезпечення та підвищення якості вищої освіти в Казахстані у порівнянні з практикою розвинених країн, зокрема тих, що входять до Європейського простору вищої освіти (ЄПВО). Цей методологічний підхід дає змогу зрозуміти ефективність цих механізмів у створенні високоякісного освітнього ландшафту.

Результати. Результати дослідження свідчать про дві значні хвилі посилення уваги держави до якості вищої освіти, причому законодавча підтримка має першочергове значення. Казахстан прийняв багатогранний підхід, що включає законодавчу базу, ліцензування та акредитацію для зміцнення освітніх стандартів. Крім того, важливу роль відіграло залучення недержавних механізмів, таких як залучення зацікавлених сторін і міжнародна акредитація, а також співпраця між державним і приватним секторами. Ці зусилля відповідають світовим тенденціям і керівним принципам ЄПВО, демонструючи прихильність Казахстану до підвищення якості освіти та конкурентоспроможності.

Висновки. Аналіз підкреслює складність і важливість як державних, так і недержавних механізмів у формуванні якості вищої освіти в Казахстані. Приводячи свою практику у відповідність до міжнародних стандартів, зокрема стандартів ЄПВО, Казахстан робить кроки до інтеграції своєї системи вищої освіти у світовий простір. Ця інтеграція не тільки підвищує освітні стандарти країни, а й її загальну конкурентоспроможність, підкреслюючи критичну роль механізмів забезпечення якості в досягненні освітньої досконалості та глобальної інтеграції.

Ключові слова: якість вищої освіти; освітнє право; механізми перевірки якості; формування контингенту студентів; ліцензування вищої освіти; акредитація.