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## Educational development in a period of transition: the case of Kazakhstan

The development of education in the post-socialist space is one of the most interesting objects for comparative research. Countries that had similar or even identical education systems before the fall of the socialist regime can today serve as a research platform for testing modern theories of social development. According to modernization theory, the “underdeveloped” post-socialist countries had to catch up with their more “advanced” Western counterparts. Due to the fact that in all countries the goals of the reforms were similar, the expected result should have been more or less the same.

However, despite the recommended reforms of Western consultants, different trajectories are observed in the educational system. Obviously, the prevailing tendencies in the educational system are divergence instead of convergence. According to the theory of dependence, the world is a single economic system, and countries, in turn, perform different roles and functions.

On the example of Kazakhstan, we see that over 30 years of independence, the education system of independent Kazakhstan has received a worthy international recognition.

During the years of Independence, a national model of education has been formed, aimed at improving the quality of training of human resources, meeting the needs of the individual, society and the state. A regulatory legal framework has been formed. The laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On education”, “On higher education”, “On science”, “On the rights of the child in the Republic of Kazakhstan”, “On the state educational accumulative system”, “On the commercialization of the results of scientific and (or) scientific and technical activities “,” On the status of a teacher “and others.

**Key words:** Post-socialism, educational transformations, transitory period, theories of modernization and dependency.

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## Ауыспалы кезеңдегі білім беру жүйесінің дамуы: Қазақстан жағдайы

Постсоциалистік кеңістіктегі білім беруді дамыту салыстырмалы зерттеудің ең қызықты нысандарының бірі болып табылады. Социалистік режим құлағанға дейін өте ұқсас немесе тіпті бірдей білім беру жүйелері болған елдер қазіргі заманғы элеуметтік даму теорияларын тексеру үшін зерттеу алаңы бола алады. Модернизация теориясына сәйкес, “дамымаған” постсоциалистік елдер өздерінің “дамыған” батыстық әріптестерін қуып жетуі керек еді. Барлық елдерде реформалардың мақсаттары ұқсас болғандықтан, күтілетін нәтиже көп немесе аз болуы керек еді. Алайда, Батыс кеңесшілерінің ұсынылған реформаларына қарамастан, білім беру жүйесінде әртүрлі траекториялар байқалады. Әлбетте, білім беру жүйесінде конвергенцияның орнына дивергенция басым тенденцияларға ие. Тәуелділік теориясына сәйкес әлем біртұтас экономикалық жүйе болып табылады, ал елдер өз кезегінде әртүрлі рөлдер мен функцияларды орындайды.

Қазақстанның үлгісінде біз Тәуелсіздіктің 30 жылы ішінде Тәуелсіз Қазақстанның білім беру жүйесі лайықты халықаралық мойындауға ие болғанын көріп отырмыз.

Тәуелсіздік жылдарында адами ресурстарды даярлау сапасын арттыруға, жеке адамның, қоғам мен мемлекеттің қажеттіліктерін қанағаттандыруға бағытталған білім берудің ұлттық моделі мен нормативтік құқықтық база қалыптастырылды. Қазақстан Республикасының “Білім туралы”, “Жоғары білім туралы”, “Ғылым туралы”, “Қазақстан Республикасындағы баланың құқықтары туралы”, “Мемлекеттік білім беру жинақтау жүйесі туралы”, “Ғылыми және (немесе) ғылыми-техникалық қызмет нәтижелерін коммерцияландыру туралы”, “Педагог мәртебесі туралы” және басқа да Заңдары қабылданды.

Тәуелсіздіктің отыз жылында 67 жоғары оқу орны жұмыс істей бастады. ЖОО-дағы ПОҚ дәрежелілігі 24,3%-ға ұлғайды. Интернационализация деңгейі 18708 шетелдік студенттерге артты. 2011 жылмен салыстырғанда 2020 жылы 950 студент академиялық ұтқырлық бағдарламасы бойынша білім алды. 2014

жылмен салыстырғанда, 2020 жылы гранттар саны 4057-ге артты. 1993 жылмен салыстырғанда бүгінгі күні 1030 адамға артық Президенттік стипендия алады. 2018 жылмен салыстырғанда ақылы оқуға дайындық бейіні бойынша ҰБТ-дан босатылған ТжКБ түлектерінің контингенті 23478 адамға артты.

**Түйін сөздер:** постсоциализм, білім беру жүйесінің өзгеруі, ауыспалы кезең, модернизация және тәуелділік теориясы.

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### Развитие образования в переходном периоде: случай Казахстана

Развитие образования в постсоциалистическом пространстве является одним из самых интересных объектов для сравнительного исследования. Страны, в которых до падения социалистического режима были довольно похожие или даже идентичные системы образования, на сегодняшний день могут служить исследовательской площадкой для проверки современных теорий социального развития. Согласно теории модернизации, «слаборазвитые» постсоциалистические страны должны были догнать своих более «продвинутых» западных коллег. В связи с тем, что во всех странах цели реформ были похожи, то и ожидаемый результат должен был быть более или менее одинаковым. Однако, несмотря на рекомендованные реформы западных консультантов, в образовательной системе наблюдаются разные траектории. Очевидно, что в образовательной системе преобладающие тенденции имеют дивергенция вместо конвергенции. Согласно теории зависимости мир представляет собой единую экономическую систему, а страны, в свою очередь, осуществляют разные роли и функции.

На примере Казахстана мы видим, что за 30 лет независимости система образования независимого Казахстана получила достойное международное признание.

За годы независимости сформирована национальная модель образования, направленная на повышение качества подготовки человеческих ресурсов, удовлетворение потребностей личности, общества и государства. Сформирована нормативная правовая база. Приняты законы Республики Казахстан «Об образовании», «О высшем образовании», «О науке», «О правах ребенка в Республике Казахстан», «О государственной образовательной накопительной системе», «О коммерциализации результатов научной и (или) научно-технической деятельности», «О статусе педагога» и другие.

За тридцать лет независимости стало функционировать на 67 вузов больше. Остепененность ППС вузов увеличилась на 24,3 %. Степень интернационализации увеличилась на 18708 иностранных студентов. По сравнению с 2011 годом в 2020 на 950 студентов больше прошли обучение по программе академической мобильности. По сравнению с 2014 годом, в 2020 году количество грантов увеличилось на 4057. По сравнению с 1993 годом на сегодняшний день получают Президентскую стипендию на 1030 человек больше. По сравнению с 2018 годом контингент освобожденных от ЕНТ выпускников ТиПО по профилю подготовки на платное обучение увеличился на 23478 человек.

**Ключевые слова:** постсоциализм, образовательные трансформации, переходный период, теории модернизации и зависимости.

## Introduction

The development of education in the post-socialist period is one of the most interesting objects in the field of comparative research, since the study reveals the main trends in the development of educational systems in the context of globalization, ways to overcome the crisis in the field of education.

Post-socialist countries, which had fairly similar or even identical education systems before the fall of socialist regimes, can serve as a serious testing ground for modern theories of social development. However, the peculiarities of the post-socialist transition did

not become the main subject of interest of Western sociologists, at least in the field of education.

**The purpose** of the article is to investigate how Kazakhstani education has developed over thirty years of independence and its compliance with world trends.

## Research methods

The study used a comparative method. The information base was the results of research by domestic and foreign scientists on the development of education in the transition period on the example of Kazakhstan.

## Literature review

From the standpoint of comparative studies, the world educational space unites national educational systems of different types and levels, significantly differing in philosophical and cultural traditions, the level of goals and objectives, and their qualitative state. At present, it is customary to talk about the modern world educational space as an emerging single organism in the presence of global trends in each educational system and the preservation of diversity (Ivanova S., 2021).

As a result of the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1991, a unified education system with its own regulatory and legal framework common to all republics, a single language of communication and education was destroyed. The countries of the post-Soviet space began to develop their own national educational systems, some of them, based on the Soviet educational system, others, focusing on Western educational norms and rules (Mirosyan T., Elkina I. 2018.).

The initial transition period after the revolutionary changes of 1989-1991. It was greeted by researchers with a certain interest; however, most developments in post-socialist education were viewed from the point of view of modernization theory. In their opinion, the “underdeveloped” post-socialist countries had to catch up with their more “advanced” Western counterparts. The researchers based their opinion on the assumption that “there is one Western educational model that needs to be replicated in post-socialist countries, and that there is only one way to implement this model” (Bain, 2010). Reform recipes for countries were similar, so the outcome was expected to be more or less the same.

The term “post-socialism” was quite neutral and therefore suitable for describing the ambiguous present and unclear future – and not only post-socialist countries, but rather the world as a whole. It emerged immediately after the collapse in the role of a conventional concept from attempts to comprehend the emerging situation, the direction of development of which could not be predicted. And it blended well with other popular “post-” models at the time, such as postmodernism (Jameson, 1991) and postcolonialism (Spivak, 1990), all of which expressed a sense of a break with what came before and of change opening a new era.

Post-socialist countries have been termed “countries in transition,” implying the temporary nature of the post-socialist period (Rado, 2001). Almost three decades have passed, and the transition is far from over. Post-socialism is still alive and well

(Silova, 2010), and many vestiges of the socialist past can still be observed in the educational structures of the former socialist countries. Despite the similar nature of the reforms advocated by Western consultants, different trajectories of change in education can be observed. Divergence instead of convergence seems to be the dominant development trend. The divergence approach argues that, despite economic transformation and modernization processes, countries not only maintain their cultural differences, but there is also a return to roots movement and a struggle for local culture, values and character traits (Waitzberg, 2007).

At the beginning of the transition, researchers observed two competing trends – “borrowing from the West” and “returning to the roots” (Anweiler, 1992). It appears that in at least some countries in the region, the latter trend has become predominant over time. This can be explained not only by the cultural choice of peoples: such a turn can also be due to the economic context. Some countries began to develop their economic potential in accordance with the needs of the world market, while others decided to rely mainly on the export of their natural resources, because the “shock therapy” of the transformation of the planned economy into a market economy turned out to be too radical. Weizberg (2007) notes that the main object of modernization theory is the theory of dependence, which assumes that the world is a single capitalist economic system in which different countries perform different roles and functions. “Core” or “developed” countries produce industrialized products with high added value and sell them to “peripheral” or “developing” countries, which supply cheap raw materials to the main countries. Consequently, not all countries have the same opportunities to achieve the same economic development, and their education systems have different development opportunities. Dependency theory seems to be better suited to explain the differences that are now evident when comparing former socialist countries.

As a result of different strategic choices, the countries of the region can be divided into at least three relatively different groups: the new EU member states; geographically and politically divided countries with a distant and vague prospect of EU membership (for example, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine); and countries that did not necessarily rely on Western recommendations to reform their education and are looking for their own ways (Silova, 2009). Although the new EU member states seem to be more advanced in reform implementation and manage to achieve better results in education (OECD, 2016), the third

group, consisting of post-socialist countries seeking to build their educational systems on their own, seems to be probably the most interesting object. for a case study. The countries that are outside the zone of direct influence of the EU education policy are Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the republics of Central Asia. The Republic of Kazakhstan, which is a typical representative of the third group of countries, can serve as an interesting example of a country seeking its own way of developing education.

## Results and discussion

A typical example of a country that is under pressure from global forces and at the same time is trying to find its own path of development is the Republic of Kazakhstan.

By historical standards, 30 years of Independence is a short period. But, for a quarter of a century, a lot has changed. A new generation has grown up. Almost 50% of the population) were born in independent Kazakhstan.

How did Kazakhstani education develop against this background and does it correspond to world trends? To what extent does modern Kazakhstani education contribute to the country's sustainable development?

Thanks to the close attention of the Head of State to the education system, painstaking and creative work of hundreds of thousands of teachers, the education system has achieved serious results.

Hundreds of Kazakhstani schoolchildren win gold medals at international subject Olympiads and competitions. More than twelve thousand of the most talented students studied at the best universities in the world under the President's program "Bolashak". For 30 years of independence, about 140 thousand of our citizens have received higher education in foreign universities. In TIMSS-2015, our schoolchildren showed impressive results, which turned out to be higher than the international average and the indicators of their peers from the USA, England, Germany, Canada, Australia, Israel, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Poland, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Malaysia, Turkey and others. countries.

For 2021, the number of countries in which Kazakhstanis can study for free within the framework of intergovernmental agreements concluded at the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science has increased.

To date, grants to Kazakhstanis are allocated by Slovakia, Azerbaijan and Vietnam.

Also, Kazakhstani students will be able to receive a diploma from the prestigious US university

– the University of Arizona, while continuing their studies in the republic. We are talking about students of the North Kazakhstan University named after M. Kozybayev. This will become possible within the framework of the achieved strategic partnership with this university.

To date, fourteen Kazakhstani universities have entered the international academic ranking QuacquarelliSymondsWorldUniversityRankings, which is one of the most authoritative rankings of universities in the world. Moreover, this year some universities have strengthened their positions, moving up several ranks.

Over the years of independence, 6 state programs have been implemented aimed at developing the education system.

For our study, the system of higher education for the years of independence seems to be relevant.

Let us compare the results of the higher education system at the time of gaining independence in Kazakhstan and today (table 1).

**Table 1**

At the time of gaining independence	Today
Functioned 61 higher educational institutions	128 higher educational institutions and over 30 years of independence 3.2 million personnel with higher education were trained
The graduation of specialists with higher education amounted to 42.2 thousand people	176.4 thousand people

As can be seen from the table, over the 30 years of independence, 67 more universities began to function. This is a significant result.

Since 1999, the universities of Kazakhstan have switched to a new model of forming the student contingent of higher educational institutions on the basis of the state educational order (table 2).

**Table 2 – Qualitative composition of the teaching staff (PPP)**

Years	Graduation of teaching staff of universities
1999	24%
2021	48,3%

As you can see, the degree of teaching staff in universities increased by 24.3%.

A law was also adopted to expand the academic and managerial independence of universities.

Since 2010, Kazakhstan has been a member of the Bologna Process. The transition to a three-stage model of personnel training has been carried out: bachelor's – master's – doctoral studies.

An important indicator of the quality and attractiveness of the Kazakh system of higher education is the degree of its internationalization (table 3).

**Table 3** – Degree of internationalization over the years of independence

Years	Number of foreign students
2010	10 361
2016	12 837
2019	39 558
2020	29 069

As you can see, since 2010, the degree of internationalization has increased by 18708 foreign students. This is a fairly high figure.

The number of Kazakhstani universities in the QS international ranking of the best universities in the world has grown from 5 to 10 (for 2011, 2020, respectively).

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University entered the top 200 best universities in the world according to the QS rating.

Since 2011, a program of academic mobility of students has been implemented. About 18 thousand students were trained in the best foreign universities (table 4).

**Table 4** – Academic mobility program

Years	Number of students
2011	350 человек
2019	603
2020	1 300 человек

Compared to 2011, in 2020, 950 more students were trained under the academic mobility program.

Since 2005, annually 200 best university teachers have been awarded the «Best University Teacher» grant for scientific research (3 thousand people).

In 2020, for the first time, the «Best University Teacher» competition was held in electronic format.

Since 2019, repeated UNT has been introduced (4 times a year).

More than 6 thousand people were admitted to universities (in 2019 – 3 thousand people). For the first time since 2020, persons who have international certificates (IELTS, TOEFL) have been exempted from taking the UNT block of a foreign language.

Exempt from UNT TVE graduates upon admission to the training profile for paid education. The contingent of admission of such students in 2020 amounted to 35,297 people, in 2018 – people.

**Table 5** – Training profile for paid education

Years	Number of students
2018	11 819
2020	35 297

Compared to 2018, the contingent of TVE graduates exempted from the UNT in the training profile for paid education increased by 23,478 people.

An electronic UNT certificate and an electronic certificate of awarding an educational grant have been introduced.

Since 2014, the social project «Mangilik el zhastary – industry!»

Educational grants are allocated annually (Table 6).

**Table 6** – Educational grants

Years	Number of grants
2014 год	1 050
2020 год	5 107

Compared to 2014, in 2020 the number of grants increased by 4057.

Since 1993, the scholarship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been awarded for academic success (table 7).

**Table 7** – Scholarship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Years	Number of people
1993	58
2020	1 088

Compared to 1993, today, 1030 more people receive the President's scholarship.

The State educational accumulative system is functioning.

Since 2011, a world-class higher educational institution – Nazarbayev University has been operating in the country. 62 universities (64.8%) are implementing the experience of Nazarbayev University. In 11 universities with a special status, 168 doctoral students were awarded PhD degrees, and they received their own corresponding diplomas.

The international scholarship «Bolashak» was established by the decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 5, 1993 No. 1394. Since 2016, more than 100 foreign top managers and 861 foreign scientists have been attracted.

Measures for training personnel in colleges and universities for specialties in demand have been strengthened, the material base of educational institutions has been updated.

Work has been intensified to stop the activities of higher educational institutions that provide low-quality education.

The salaries of the teaching staff were increased by increasing the cost of the state educational grant. In 2011, the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan «On Science» was adopted, which regulates public relations in the field of science and scientific and technical activities and defines the basic principles and mechanisms of the functioning and development of the national scientific system of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Since 2015, work has been underway to stimulate scientific activity by commercializing its results. Funding for science has been increased, and an additional 3 billion tenge is allocated annually for scientific research of young scientists.

Today Kazakhstani science is open for collaboration with foreign scientists. Significant scientific achievements were obtained in scientific projects and programs.

As the comparison results show, significant achievements were obtained in the higher education system during the years of independence.

## Conclusion

The modern direction of the development of education systems in the post-Soviet countries is integration into the world educational space, the transition to a new educational paradigm, as a result of which it is necessary to rethink the historical heritage of national and foreign pedagogy, search for new effective ways of interaction between research and practical activities.

On the example of Kazakhstan, we saw that over 30 years of independence, the education system of independent Kazakhstan has received a worthy international recognition.

During the years of Independence, a national model of education has been formed, aimed at improving the quality of training of human resources, meeting the needs of the individual, society and the state. A regulatory legal framework has been formed. The laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On education”, “On higher education”, “On science”, “On the rights of the child in the Republic of Kazakhstan”, “On the state educational accumulative system”, “On the commercialization of the results of scientific and (or) scientific and technical activities “,” On the status of a teacher “and others.

For thirty years of independence, 67 more universities began to function. The degree of the teaching staff of universities increased by 24.3%. The degree of internationalization has increased by 18,708 foreign students. Compared to 2011, in 2020, 950 more students were trained under the academic mobility program. Compared to 2014, in 2020, the number of grants increased by 4057. Compared to 1993, today, 1030 more people receive the President's scholarship. Compared to 2018, the contingent of TVE graduates exempted from the UNT in the training profile for paid education increased by 23,478 people.

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