

**INDEPENDENT KAZAKH AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN  
EDUCATION**



**THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

**“HIGHER EDUCATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN”**



**ASTANA 2016**

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**“Higher education and quality assurance of higher education in the Republic of Kazakhstan”**

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## **1. An overview of higher education system of Kazakhstan**

The Republic of Kazakhstan is one of the fastest growing states, located in the center of the Eurasian continent. Most of the country's territory is located in Asia, least is in Europe. In February 2016, the population of Kazakhstan was 17.6 million, of which the ethnic composition is as follows – 66.01% are Kazakhs, 21.05% are Russians, 3.07% are Uzbeks, 1.7% are Ukrainians, 8.17% are representatives of more than 100 nationalities of the country. The country's population is characterized by a high proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 years, which amounts to 4.6 million. That is 27% (data of the Committee on Statistics, the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan).

According to Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan (RK) the state language is Kazakh, the official language is Russian.

The education system in Kazakhstan is regulated by the Education Act of the RK 2007 with amendments and additions, adopted in 2011 and 2015.

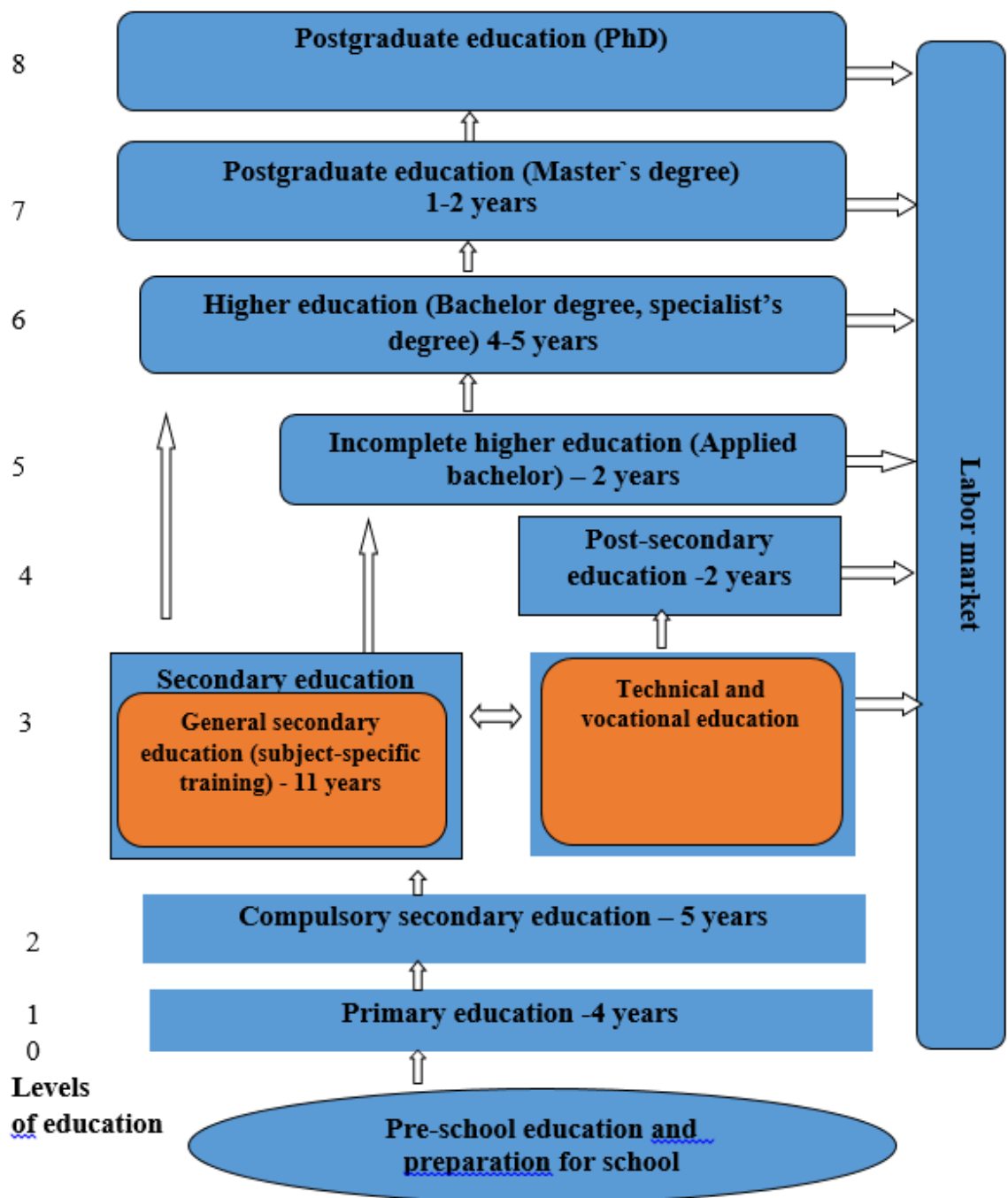
The fundamental basis of the public policy in education is in state programs, in which the basic principles of education, program objectives and related key performance indicators are set.

In the last 15 years, four State programs have been adopted in Kazakhstan: 1) the state Education program 2000, the Kazakhstan President's decree dated 30.09.2000, №448; 2) the state Education program of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2005-2010, the Presidential Decree dated 11.10.2004, №1459; 3) the state Education development programme 2011-2020, at the Presidential Decree dated 07.12.2010, №1118; 4) the State Program for Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2016-2019, the Presidential Decree dated 01.03.2016, №205.

The development of intellectual potential of youth by improving the quality of education is one of the main priorities of the state policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Since independence, the national education system has consistently been modernized through the introduction of the International Standards Classification of Education.

The key priorities of Kazakhstani education system development to 2020 contain an assurance of equal access to quality education, improving the system of professional competencies of students and strengthening the relationship of education and science.

The education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan is multi-level and continuous.



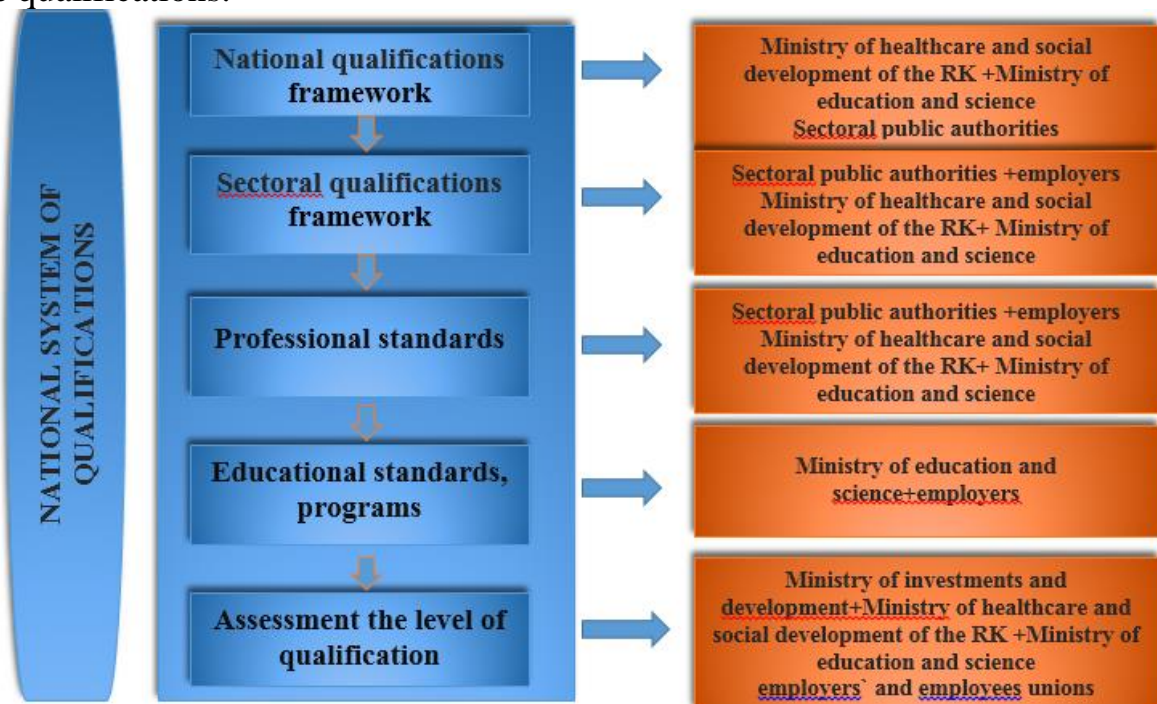
**Figure 1. The structure of the system of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan**

The education system in the Republic of Kazakhstan includes the following levels of education:

0. Pre-school education and training - 1/6 years
1. Primary education (4 years); enrollment - 6/7 years.
2. Compulsory secondary education; enrollment - 10/11 years.
3. Secondary education; enrollment - 15/16 years.
  - General secondary education
  - Technical and vocational education: qualification of workers and mid-level specialists, enrollment - 15/16 years

4. Post-secondary education: the skill of middle management and applied bachelor's degree; enrollment - 17/18 years.
5. Higher education: qualification of bachelor, specialist in medical programs; enrollment - 17/18 years.
6. Postgraduate education: Master`s qualification and PhD.

A vital step in the modernization of the education system was the development and implementation of the National classification system (NCS), which was legislated in 2012 in the Labor Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The introduction of the NQS aimed to solve the problem of skills shortage of HEIs` graduates. The NCS structure includes a national qualifications framework, sectoral qualifications frameworks, professional standards, assessment and certification of the quality of the qualifications.



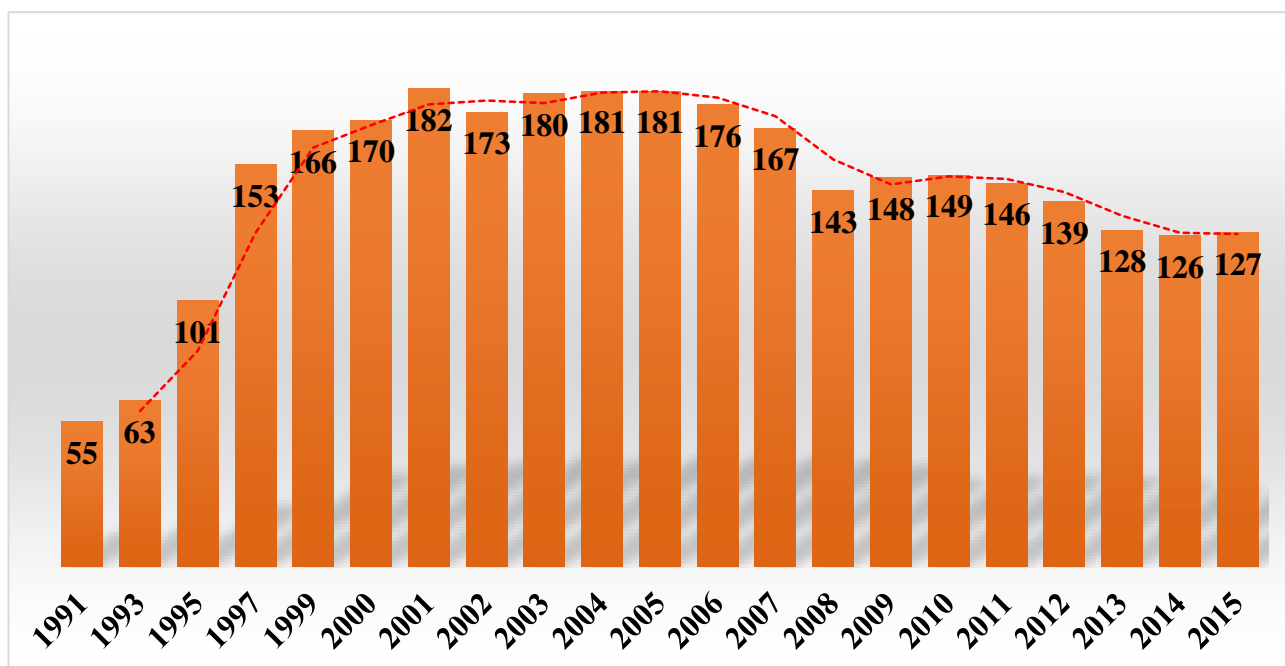
**Figure 2. The structure of the system of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan**

NSC is based on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), harmonized with the European Qualifications Framework through 8 levels of education. Currently, on the basis of the NQF more than 20 sectoral qualifications frameworks, 345 professional standards were developed. The professional standards are being improved in conjunction with the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, the work on the creation of independent centers of assigning qualifications is on.

The further improvement of all elements of the National system will undoubtedly improve the quality of training and the effectiveness of the education system and the labor market.

## 2. Higher education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan

According to the Committee of Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Department of higher and postgraduate education of the Ministry of education and science of the Republic of Kazakhstan on October, 2015, there are 127 HEIs in Kazakhstan, including 9 national, 31 public, 13 - non-civil, 16 - joint stock companies, 60 – private, 1 international and 1 autonomous educational institution “Nazarbayev University”.



*Figure 3. Dynamics of the network of HEIs in the Republic of Kazakhstan (1991-2015).*

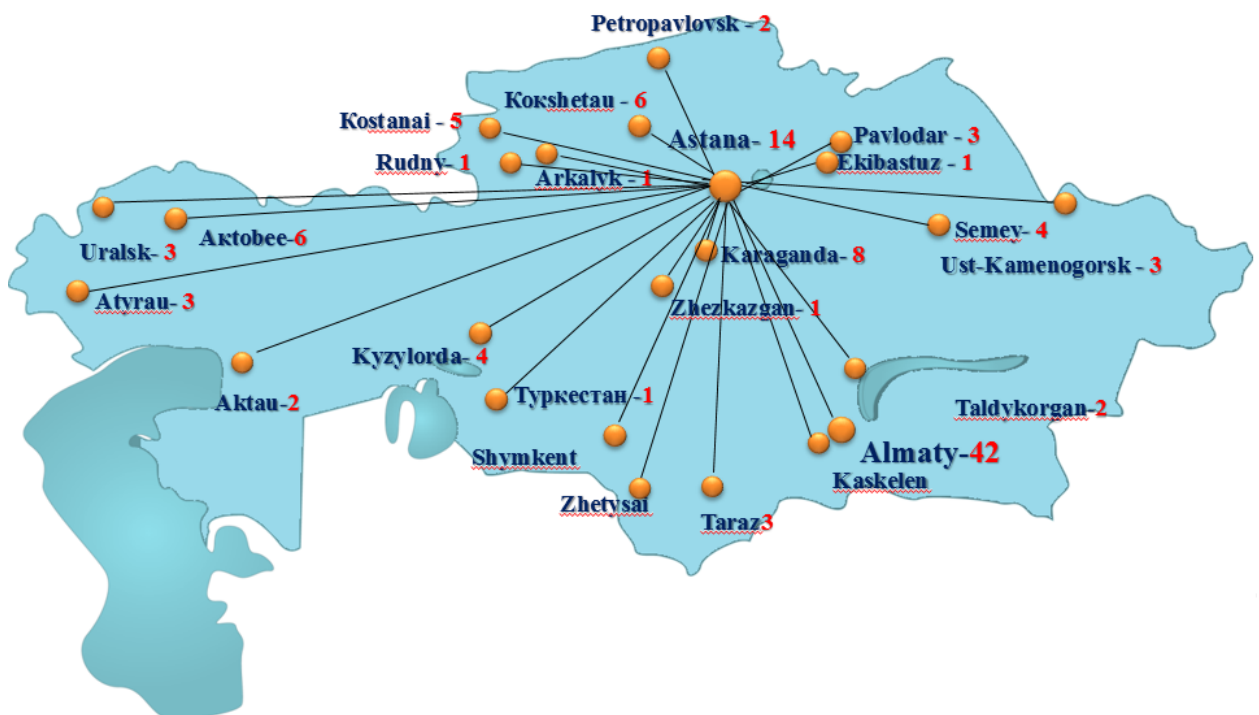
By the time of acquisition of independence by Kazakhstan in 1991, there were 55 public HEIs, regulated by the Ministry of Education of the Republic. With the introduction of private education the total number of HEIs has increased dramatically, reaching by 2001 to its maximum value - 182.

In recent years, to improve the quality of higher education, the Government cut the number of HEIs and tightened the requirements for HEIs licensing. In addition, in 2010 the legislation banned the activities of HEIs' branches. As a result, the number of HEIs has decreased due to their merger, consolidation and transformation into technical and vocational education institutions.

There are various types of HEIs in higher education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan: national research university, a national university, research university, university, academy, institute (implements the undergraduate programs only) and related HEIs (conservatory, higher school, higher college). The main stage in the development of Kazakhstan's system of higher education was the creation of a new HEI in Astana, working on the basis of the modern achievements and technologies in higher education. The idea and initiative to create this HEI belongs to the President of the country in recognition of his achievements the university, opened in 2010, was named after him – Nazarbayev University.

The educational process at the university is conducted in English and is based on international educational standards, with the involvement of foreign professors. Nazarbayev University became the first university in Kazakhstan, which was granted autonomy in governance, funding, and academic standards. Therefore, a separate law on Nazarbayev University was adopted. Currently, the best practices of the university are actively transmitted to the leading universities of the country.

HEIs are located in all regional centers of Kazakhstan and cities to provide physical access to higher education and meet regional needs in higher education specialists.



**Figure 4. Network of HEIs of the Republic of Kazakhstan by region, 2015.**

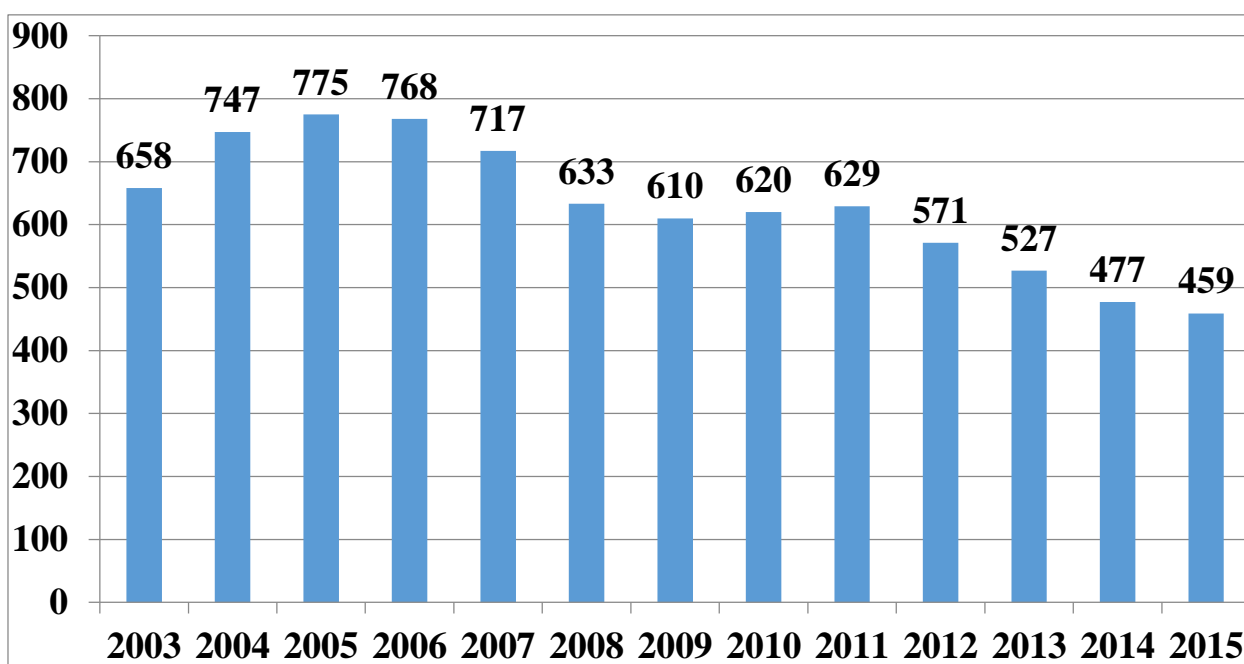
The students` enrollment at Kazakhstani HEIs is based on the results of the Unified National Test (UNT) of high school graduates and centralized entrance exams in the form of complex testing for graduates of technical and vocational education institutions. According to the results of these examinations admissions to HEIs and grants (in other words, which is free tuition) allocation to students is carried out. This model was introduced in 1999, to reduce corruption in the admission of young people to HEIs.

The Kazakhstani experience of admission to HEIs on the basis of the UNT showcased the positive results, broad layer of the population has received access to free tuition. However, a significant drawback of the UNT is that for more than 15 years the form of test tasks remains unchanged - closed tests with the need to select one correct answer from several options, which has a negative impact on the



students, since they more emphasize memorization rather than the development of their abilities. Currently the format of the centralized testing and the quality of test items is being improved.

Currently, 459,369 people enrolled in HEIs of Kazakhstan. Since 2003, the number of students has decreased by 30.2%. As seen in Figure 5, the enrollment of HEIs tends to decrease, while in 2003, the number of students rose from 658 106 up to 775,762 in 2005, then declined to 459 369 in 2015.



**Figure 5. The enrollment statistics in HEIs of the RK in 2003-2015, thousand, number of people.**

Reduction of enrollment is, primarily, due to demographic processes, low fertility, crises in the period of Kazakhstan's sovereignty, as well as increased government grants to vocational and technical educational institutions to implement programs of industrial-innovative development of the country.

According to Education Act of the Republic of Kazakhstan the educational services are provided in the form of full-time, part-time and evening study. In higher education, full-time enrollment is 75.4%-4.4%, evening, part-time is 20.2% of the total enrollment in higher education.

Currently, the enrollment in public higher education is 48.3 % of the total student population, private higher education's enrollment is 50.3%, in the affiliates of foreign HEIs the enrollment is 1.3%.

The tuition fee in Kazakhstani HEIs is the State and the self - funded.

In 2015, the share of the students, received the state funded grants is 139 330 (29.3%), the self-funded enrollment is 335 511 (70.7%).

The State annually allocates about 37 000 higher education grants out of which the ratio of the undergraduate programs is 80%, the postgraduate (Master`s) taught programs are 18% and the postgraduate (PhD) research programs are 2%.



In grants` allocation the priority is given to technical programs, thus, the number of grants by programs is following: technical programs -12 060, pedagogical programs - 5 364, agricultural and veterinary sciences programs - 2 670. As to social support, there are grants for disabled people - 929, orphans-2366, rural youth-70 278 and Kazakh diaspora-2735. If in the first decade the grant holders chose HEIs themselves, lately this principle was changed. The State-funded grants are tied to accreditation.

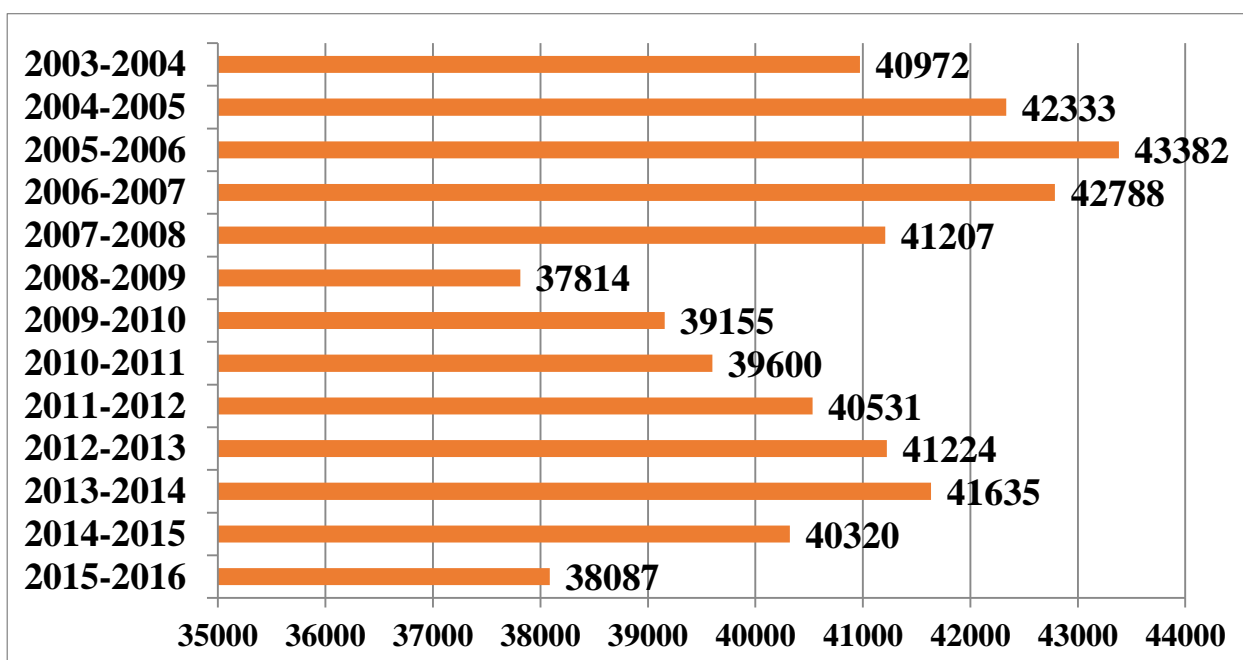
At present, the Ministry of education and science of RK, according to the plan of measures on realization of the fourth State program for 2016-2019, plans to introduce the vouchers instead of grants, as a result the students can be enrolled in any accredited HEI.

In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, education in higher educational institutions is delivered in Kazakh and Russian, at the request of the students. In addition, within the framework of introduction of multi - language models of education, individual HEIs conducts training in English and German.

In total students` population, the share of enrollment by the language, in which the programs delivered, is: Kazakh - 60.5%, Russian - 37.0% and English - 2.5%.

In 42 (6 national, 1 international, 26 state, 7 joint stocks, 2 private) HEIs, the educational programs in engineering and technology, science and education are conducted in three languages. To improve the quality of education, particular attention is paid to the preparation of the relevant teaching staff and the development of effective methods of teaching foreign languages.

In 2015, the number of professors of HEIs in Kazakhstan is 38 087, which is lower than in 2003 to 7%.



*Figure 6. The number of teaching staff of HEIs of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2003-2015*

The reduction in the number of the teaching staff is connected to optimization of HEIs, taken place since 2011, and the decrease in enrollment. The proportion of the teaching staff with a research degree and title is 49.1%, the proportion of specialists with research title is 23% (data from National report, 2014). In the gender dimension there are predominantly women among the teaching staff of HEIs (63.9%).

In the system of higher and postgraduate education the teaching staff-student average ratio at national level is 1:12. There is a differentiation of this indicator in terms of private and public HEIs (1:14 and 1:10 respectively).

An important problem of capacity development of higher education is to increase the average age of HEIs` academics with research degrees and titles. In General, the proportion of the teaching staff over 40 is 57%. The closure of dissertational councils on review of the candidate and doctoral theses, lack of State funding for PhD programs (500 places annually in the entire country) a shortage of academic staff, the reduction of research schools and, ultimately, to a decline in the quality of education.

Nevertheless, the State pays great attention to the improvement of professional skills of the academics. In 2014, state funded professional development courses were delivered to 7000 teaching staff of HEIs (17.5%). The share of research and pedagogical staff, who studied academic programs, is 87% of the trainee program in foreign HEIs and research centers-13%. However, core funding is provided to the public HEIs. Private HEIs, only a few has the opportunity to use public resources.

In the context of the new requirements to the quality of education increase of a professional level of the teaching staff is becoming particularly urgent in providing training for future educators. For these academics since 2012 a three-tier training program has been successfully implemented by the Autonomous Educational Institution “Nazarbayev intellectual schools” together with the Faculty of education of the University of Cambridge.

With the creation of JSC “National Centre for Professional Development” “Orleu” for the first time, a new direction in the system of professional development - pedagogical teaching staff development is being functioned. 2900 academics of HEIs including 544 those, studied abroad, were trained and issued two certificates of “Orleu” and foreign HEIs.

In the system of higher education in Kazakhstan an effective system of academics` motivation was formed to improve their performance. Annually 200 top teaching staff is awarded the grant “the best academic of HEI” with the allocation of 3-3,5 million tenge. The grant winners have the opportunity to undertake the internship in leading HEIs of the world. Within last 10 years, in 2005 - 2014 20 000 best academics of HEIs of Kazakhstan became the owners of before stated grant.

Analysis of the availability of Government grants for professional development of HEIs` academic staff shows that while private HEIs mostly do not have access to public funds.

### 3. The structure and the content of higher education

According to the Education Act of Kazakhstan the training is conducted on the basis of State obligatory standards of higher and postgraduate education that set requirements for the content of education, educational trajectory of students, the design of educational programs, their structure and assessment the level of preparedness of the students.

Kazakhstani HEIs are granted academic freedom, particularly in defining the following share of the educational programs` content: bachelor-55%, master`s-70%, doctoral studies (PhD) -90%. Thus, HEIs can offer a wide range of educational programs to enhance their competitiveness in the market of educational services. The realization of educational programs in Kazakhstani HEIs is carried out in accordance with the Classifier of specialties of higher and postgraduate education, which contains 13 groups of specialties and 518 educational programs, including 157 programs of bachelor degree, 4 programs of specialist, 179 programs of Master`s degree and 178 programs of PhD, presented in table 1.

**Table 1. Statistics on groups educational programs in Classifier of higher and postgraduate education.**

The title of the specialties	Levels			
	Bachelor	Specialist (5 years)	Master`s	PhD
Education	23		24	24
Humanities	12		14	14
Law	4		4	4
Art	22		22	22
Social sciences and business	16		19	19
Science	12		13	13
Technical sciences and technology	39		50	51
Agricultural sciences	12		12	12
Services	11		12	12
Military and security	2		2	2
Healthcare and social benefits (Medicine)	4		5	3
Veterinary science		2	2	2
Healthcare and social benefits (Medicine)		2		
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>178</b>

In the structure of higher and postgraduate education of Kazakhstan educational programs are delivered in the next levels:

- Bachelor's degree -duration is not less than 4 years;
- Specialist degree-duration is not less than 5 years;
- Master`s degree-duration-1-2 year (the program is available for the awardees of the Bachelor degree);
- PhD -duration-3 years (the program is available for the awardees of the Master`s degree).

The educational programs of higher education includes undergraduate and specialist degrees and aim to prepare highly qualified personnel in accordance with the needs of industries and include the basic fundamental training.

The duration of the study on Bachelor`s educational programs, awarding “Bachelor” academic degree, is not less than 4 years, in which the students gain at least 129 obliged credits of theoretical education and not less than 6 credits of professional practice;

The duration of training in the specialist degree with awarding “specialist” qualification is not less than 5 years and compulsory gaining 167 credits at least.

Postgraduate educational programs include master's and doctoral programs.

Educational program of Master`s degree have a theoretical basis, a substantial research component or an in-depth study of the professional activity. The duration of study in Master`s level with awarding Master`s degree in relevant area in research route is not less than 2 years and 55 credits are required to be earned, while in professional route the duration is 1 year with 24 credits, obliged to be gained by the candidates.

The PhD educational programs are focused on in-depth, independent research and training to prepare staff for research, educational and professional activities. The duration of the doctoral programs, awarding research degree of doctor of philosophy (PhD) or doctor in professional route is not less than 3 years, with compulsory earn of at least 75 credits, submission of a doctoral thesis, in which the theoretical findings that could be qualified as latest research achievement or problem solution.

The total duration of the academic year in Kazakhstani HEIs shall not be less than 36 weeks. Academic period represents a semester for a period of 15 weeks, according to the classifier of specialties, there are only four such programmes (see table 1).

#### **4. Integrating the education system of Kazakhstan in the European higher education area**

In March 2010, Kazakhstan officially acceded to the Bologna Declaration and became 47 member of the European higher education area and the first State of Central Asia, recognized a full member of the European higher education area.

To join the Bologna process, Kazakhstan held a number of major transformations in higher education to meet the principles of the Bologna Declaration:

1. More than 60 HEIs of Kazakhstan signed the great Charter of universities.
2. The three-tier model of study was implemented: Bachelor-Master`s-PhD, based on the principles of the Bologna Declaration.
3. Advanced teaching technologies were introduced in the educational process of Kazakhstani HEIs: all HEIs implemented the credit system of training.
4. To insure the mobility of students and academics, the State funding was allocated to public HEIs.
5. The system of quality assurance in education was adopted in HEIs.

The transition to a three-tiered model of study was fully completed. According to the national report on the status and development of education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2014 results) Master`s educational programs are delivered 118 HEIs, the enrollment of which is 32 527, 16220 of them hold a State-funded grants. 92% of the graduates defeated their dissertations.

The doctoral education programs, run in 16 leading HEIs, are State-funded. In 2014, the PhD programs` enrollment is 2063, 38 HEIs offer double diploma education and 42 supply distance learning. Currently, there is the academic discussions on the need to improve the quality of educational programs, Master's and doctoral degree programs from the view of strengthening their research component, the orientation of research on concrete problems of innovational development requirements to prospective students.

Since 2013 the educational programs have been delivered via module-based approach, drawn on competences and learning outcomes (learning outcomes) in line with Dublin descriptors.

Currently the Kazakhstani system of higher education, in which the credit system, based on the USA module, was introduced and being changed, since European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, Europe – wide accounting study load of the students in the development of the educational programs or the course, is being implemented. The ECTS Users` Guide, approved by the Conference of European countries` Ministers of education in Yerevan in May 14-15, 2015, is being implemented. The ECTS is applied in transfer of the students from one institution to another throughout the European Union and other European countries, adopted this system.

In recent years, the academic mobility of teaching staff and students has been actively developed. Exchange programs are funded by the State and the HEIs.

There is a positive dynamics in attracting foreign professors to deliver lectures and supervise the doctoral candidates. According to official figures in 2014, 1726 foreign scholars were invited to 52 HEIs (in 2013 -1533, in 2012-1 349, in 2011 - 1717, in 2010-418, in 2009-389).

785 academics were attracted from Europe, 85 were from East Asia, 32 were from Southeast Asia, 140 were from the USA, 498 were from the Russian

Federation, 498-28 were from Republic of Belarus and 158 were from other countries. The expenses of these scholars` recruitment were covered by the State and HEIs.

Total in 2009-2014, 6927 foreign academics and consultants were invited.

In 2014, to develop the academic mobility the HEIs sent 805 students to study abroad for a period not less than a term, 740 out of them were in Europe, 52 were in the USA, 12 were in East Asia, 1 was in the Russian Federation. In 2014, 616 bachelor and 189 Master`s program students studied by the State funds.

The academic mobility of students and faculty has been developed. In 2011-2015, 4913 students of HEIs were trained at leading universities around the world. Although more students study at various foreign HEIs via the Exchange programs, the overall enrollment of the exchange programs (about 1%) is still quite small in comparison to the case of European countries. However, the internal mobility is overlooked in Kazakhstan. The number of students to study abroad than visiting students in 9 times.

In recent years, in leading HEIs of Kazakhstan launched a joint double diploma programs with the top world universities. The share of the students, in such programs is small (0.1%), however, this trend is becoming increasingly popular.

Kazakhstani HEIs are the members of European associations in education, in particular 15 of them have associate membership in the European University Association (EUA), 16 in the European Association of universities (EURASHE).

International experience shows that modern management, strategic planning in higher education is one of the factors, contributing to the success of the University. Collegial management bodies, which include stakeholders, are the tool for ensuring transparency, accountability, fairness and responsibility. In this regard, 10 major HEIs established supervisory boards (L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Al Farabi Kazakh National University, Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, K.I. Satpayev Kazakh National Technical University, Kazakh National Agrarian University, Buketov Karaganda State University, Zulkarnai Aldamzhar Kostanay Social-technical University, M.O. Auezov South-Kazakhstan State University, Dulaty Taraz State university, Zhubanov Aktobe Regional State University).

This issue was also highlighted in a new State program 2016. The principles of corporate governance is planned to be implemented through gradual extension of academic, administrative and financial autonomy of HEIs, as well as development of Endowment mechanism in HEIs.

## **5. Kazakhstani system of quality assurance in education**

Quality assurance in education is one of the most topical and significant issue in Kazakhstani system of higher education. The formation of the national system of quality assurance started in the beginning of 2000s and it was affected by two important factors. First is serious heritage of centralized state control over quality of

training specialists, while second is emergence of a big number of private universities and introducing of paid education, which increased access to higher education institutions but negatively affected the quality of education.

The history of accreditation procedure can be described by two stages.

### **Stage 1**

**1999-2009** - legislative consolidation of the term of accreditation. The legal basis of transfer to the procedure of quality assessment of educational activity at Kazakhstani universities were initially laid down in the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Education” of 1999, which in addition to state attestation introduced the notion of accreditation.

In 2001 the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Education” introduced the procedure of state accreditation, which mainly was based on assessment of quantitative indicators. Data on quantitative indicators was gathered and processed by the Department of State Inspection, which submitted information to the Accreditation Council. As a result of three meetings of the Accreditation Council held under the chairmanship of the Minister of Education and Science, 59 (47 public and 12 private) out of 182 higher education institutions were accredited within a week. Such unreasoned procedure of the Ministry, which did not meet the process of accreditation, was highly criticized both by the public in general and private universities. Consequently, the state accreditation had been suspended almost for 10 years.

In 2005 the National Accreditation Center was established under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education and Science of RK with the aim of developing standards and procedures and conducting institutional and specialized accreditation. The National Accreditation Center launched the work on design of the methodology of accreditation procedure.

Democratization of social and economic processes in the state, growing demands of the public in obtaining quality higher education, studying of international tendencies in quality assurance led to the new edition of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Education” in 2007. This Law, in line with changes in different levels of education, regulated the procedure of accreditation for higher education institutions in a separate article. As such, accreditation was a voluntary procedure, but did not implicate any consequences for universities. Therefore, the state control in a form of state attestation remained a main source of external assessment.

### **Stage 2**

**2010-2016** – establishment of the independent (public) system of quality assurance through development of independent accreditation.

At that time speeches and orders of the President of RK N.Nazarbayev, governmental documents, public discussions devoted more and more attention to



state-private partnership in different fields of economy of Kazakhstan and partial transfer of controlling functions in the field of education to non-governmental organizations. In March 2010 the Republic of Kazakhstan signed the Bologna Declaration, which specified quality assurance through accreditation as one of its main principles. The European standards and guidelines have made a powerful impact on the improvement of the national quality assurance system and changing focuses in the policy document of the state.

That is why, not surprisingly, the State Programme on Education Development for 2011-2020 included the notion of independent accreditation, which was mainly based on ESG and international practice. The third adopted State Programme for 2011-2020 was a strong impetus in the development of first Independent Kazakh Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, established in 2008.

In 2011 due to amendments of the standing Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Education” the role of accreditation was significantly strengthened. While state attestation remained, the amendments legislated allocation of state grants only in the universities that passed institutional and specialized accreditation. In the same year Kazakhstan saw emergence of the second accreditation agency. Modernization of the accreditation institute and its focus on the European standards and guidelines, including establishment of internal quality assurance systems in educational organizations, learning outcomes, openness and transparency of decisions on accreditation encouraged the universities.

In the end of 2011 the Minister of Education and Science of RK signed the Order on the National Register. In May 2012 the Republican Accreditation Council at its meeting formed the National Register of accreditation bodies, which at that time included six agencies. The National Register appeared on the basis of and due to the *European Quality Assurance Register* for Higher Education (EQAR), because its formation was preceded by study of European documents and consultations with ENQA representatives, who visited Astana in 2011. Director of EQAR Secretariat Mr Colin Tück was invited to the meeting of the Republican Accreditation Council.

At present the National Register includes two Kazakh and eight foreign quality assurance agencies:

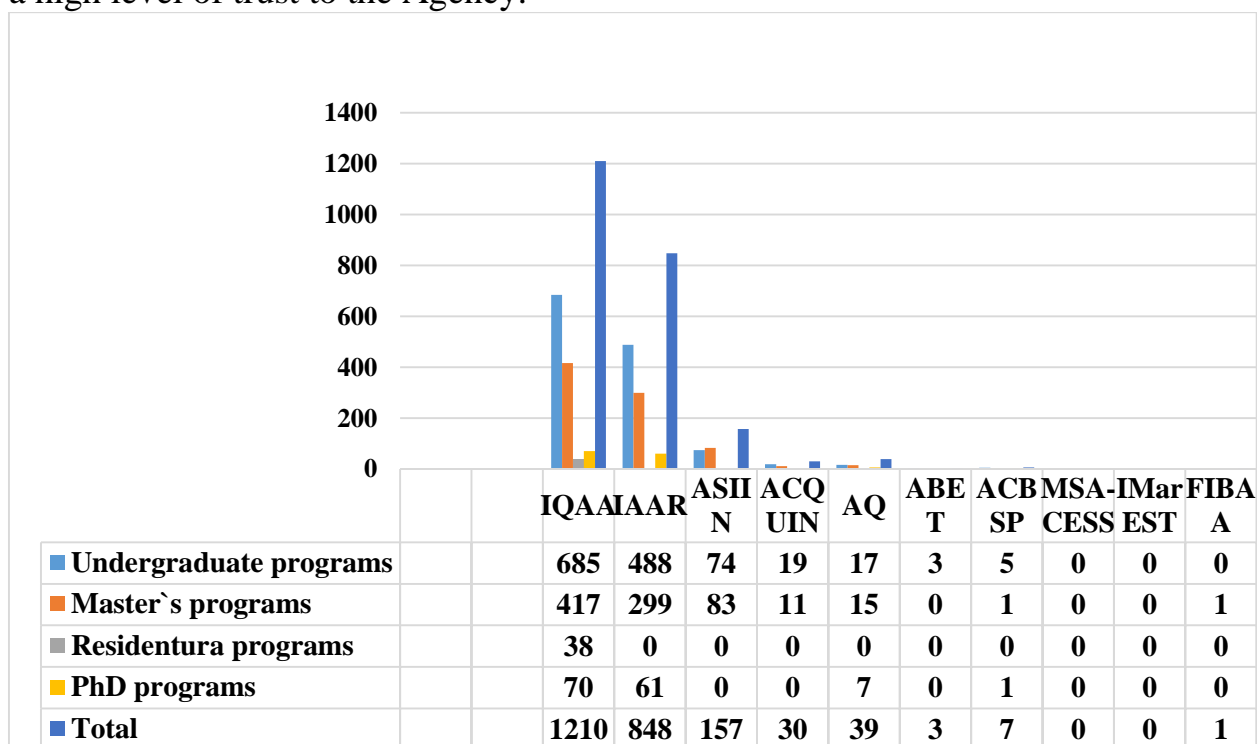
1. Independent Kazakh Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA, Republic of Kazakhstan);
2. **Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating** (IAAR, Republic of Kazakhstan);
3. Accreditation Agency Specialised in Accrediting Degree Programmes in Engineering (ASIIN, Germany);
4. Accreditation, Certification and Quality assurance Institute (AQCUIIN, Germany);
5. Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ, Austria);
6. *Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology* (ABET, USA);
7. Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP, USA);
8. Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology (IMarEST, UK);

9. Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools – Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CESS, USA);
10. Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA, Germany).

The agencies-members of the National Register have a certificate of the Ministry of Education and Science of RK for five year period. Every five years agencies are bound to certification. The European agencies listed in EQAR are recognized by the Ministry of Education and Science of RK, however they should register in Kazakhstan.

It should be noted that in recent years a stable tendency to increase interest to undergoing accreditation is forming in the higher education system of Kazakhstan. Higher education institutions are absolutely free to choose an accreditation agency from the National Register of Accreditation Bodies. If institutional accreditation is conducted only by two national agencies, programme accreditation is carried out by both national and foreign agencies.

As for today, 80 universities passed institutional accreditation, which makes 63% out of all higher education institutions. The total number of accredited study programmes is 2295. Herewith, 51 higher education institutions (64%) and 1210 (53%) study programmes underwent accreditation with IQAA, which demonstrates a high level of trust to the Agency.



*Figure 7. The number of accredited study programmes of Kazakhstani higher education institutions (2009-2016).*

In the future, the number of universities and study programmes, participating in the accreditation procedure, will be growing, because a quality culture is gradually

being formed in Kazakhstan. It is a base for aspirations of higher education institutions to increase their competitiveness.

Moreover, the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On introducing amendments to some legislative acts in the field of education” No.398-V from 13 November 2015 introduced additional impetus for the development of accreditation.

Firstly, it is exemption of study programmes that passed both institutional and specialized accreditation from state attestation. From 1 January 2017 documents on education of state format will be given to learners, who successfully finish study programmes in higher education institutions that have passed international accreditation in foreign or national accreditation agencies listed in the National Register. As a result, private universities began to show more interest in accreditation to obtain a possibility of issuing a diploma of state format.

However, from 2021 all higher education institutions, regardless of their form of ownership, will issue diplomas of their own format.

At present, the national quality assurance system of higher education consists of two parts: procedures conducted by the Committee of Control in the Fields of Education and Science of the Ministry of Education and Science of RK and procedures conducted by independent non-governmental organizations.

***Table 2. Distribution of powers to conduct quality assurance procedures of higher and postgraduate education in Kazakhstan.***

<b>Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan</b>	<b>Independent Accreditation Agencies</b>
Licensing	Institutional and programme accreditation
Control over educational organizations’ compliance with the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan	
External assessment of students’ learning outcomes (tests for final year students)	
State attestation for military and specialized higher education institutions	

Thus, at the current stage the Republic of Kazakhstan has a complete multilevel national system of quality assessment in education, which is represented by a complex system of state control and independent quality assessment of education. Incentive mechanisms to support accreditation have been created and legislated. With this in line, taking into account that integration of the state to the

European Higher Education Area sets tasks for accreditation agencies to enter European structures, such as ENQA and EQAR, the national system of quality assurance should be improving to be in compliance with the ESG.