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## **THE PROBLEM OF RESEARCH OF KAZAKHSTANI HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

The main purpose of the article is to determine the level of research on the problems of the higher education system in Kazakhstan. Higher education, or higher professional education, is the level of vocational education following the secondary or vocational education. The system of higher education is one of the factors playing into the level and prospects of economic and social development. Also as it is directly linked to the development strategy of the state, significance of this topic is evident. In studying this topic, we will conduct a historiographical analysis of research done by representatives of various science spheres who study the system of higher education. In the course of the historiographical analysis, focus features of domestic and foreign researchers in the study of higher education system and its problems were identified. A systematic analysis was made of studies conducted in various fields of science. Results suggest that studies conducted on the education system of Kazakhstan are more focused on reforms, their implementation and results. Very little attention has been paid to the policy of Kazakhstan's cooperation with other countries and organizations that are the main initiators of these transformations.

Article materials may be useful to every applicant who is interested in the higher education system.

**Key words:** Kazakhstan, higher education, Bologna process, reforms, internationalization.

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### **Қазақстанның жоғары білім беру жүйесінің зерттелу мәселесі**

Мақаланың басты мақсаты – Қазақстанның жоғары білім беру жүйесінде орын алып жатқан мәселелердің ғылыми тұрғыдан зерттелу деңгейін анықтау. Жоғары білім беру немесе жоғарғы кәсіби білім беру дегеніміз – орта және кәсіптік білім беруден кейінгі арнайы кәсіби білім беру деңгейі болып табылады. Жоғары білім беру жүйесі мемлекеттің экономикалық және әлеуметтік даму деңгейі мен жетістіктерін анықтайтын бірден бір фактор. Аталмыш жүйе мемлекеттің даму стратегиясымен тікелей байланысты болғандықтан, тақырыптың өзектілігі айқын көрініп тұр. Бұл тақырыпты зерттеу барысында, жоғары білім беру саласын ғылыми тұрғыдан зерделеген түрлі ғылым саласы өкілдерінің еңбектеріне тарихнамалық талдау жасалынды. Ғылыми еңбектерді талдау барысында отандық және шетелдік зерттеушілердің жоғары білім беру жүйесіне қатысты көтерген негізгі мәселелері мен ерекшеліктері айқындалды. Мәселеге қатысты әр ғылым саласында қарастырылған зерттеу жұмыстарына жүйелі талдау жасалынды. Талдау нәтижелері Қазақстанның білім беру жүйесінде жүргізілген зерттеулер негізінен реформаларға, олардың орындалуына және нәтижелеріне көбірек назар аударатынын көрсетеді. Алайда, осы өзгерістердің бастамасы болып табылатын, басқа елдермен және ұйымдармен ынтымақтастық саясатына өте аз көңіл бөлінетіндігі анықталды.

Мақала материалдары жоғары білім беру жүйесіне қызығушылық танытқан кез келген ізденушіге көмек құралы бола алады.

**Түйін сөздер:** Қазақстан, жоғары білім беру, Болон үрдісі, реформа, интернационализациялану.

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### Проблема исследования системы высшего образования Казахстана

Основной целью данной статьи является определение уровня изученности проблем системы высшего образования в Казахстане. Высшее образование, или высшее профессиональное образование, – это уровень профессионального образования после среднего или профессионального образования. Система высшего образования является одним из факторов, влияющих на уровень и перспективы экономического и социального развития. Также, поскольку это напрямую связано со стратегией развития государства, значимость этой темы очевидна. При изучении данной темы мы провели историографический анализ исследований, проведенных представителями различных сфер науки, изучающих систему высшего образования. В ходе исторического анализа были выявлены основные особенности отечественных и зарубежных исследователей в изучении системы высшего образования и ее проблем. Был сделан систематический анализ исследований, проведенных в различных областях науки. Результаты показывают, что исследования, проводимые о системе образования Казахстана, в большей степени ориентированы на реформы, их реализацию и результаты. Очень мало внимания уделяется политике сотрудничества Казахстана с другими странами и организациями, которые являются основными инициаторами этих преобразований.

Материалы статьи могут быть полезны каждому соискателю, который интересуется системой высшего образования.

**Ключевые слова:** Казахстан, высшее образование, Болонский процесс, реформы, интернационализация.

### Introduction

Education is a continuous process of upbringing and training, carried out for the purposes of moral, intellectual, cultural, physical development and the formation of professional competence (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan of July 27, 2007 No. 319-III “On Education” (with amendments and additions as of 01/01/2019)).

The educational system is one of the most complex systems – filled with scientific regularities, new teaching technologies, and depends on the political, economic and social state of the government (Tulebaev, 2006: 10).

The system of higher education is one of the factors determining the level and prospects of economic and social development of the Republic of Kazakhstan. As it is directly linked to the development strategy of the state, the relevance of this topic is evident. The main purpose of the article is to determine the level of research that has been conducted on the problems which exist within the higher education (HE) system in Kazakhstan. Thus we made an attempt to clarify the following points:

To determine and convey the level of previous studies on problems of the Kazakhstani HE system;

To classify them according to their research interests;

Identify the peculiarities of the issues raised.

The main hypothesis is that, in our opinion, studies conducted on the education system of Kazakhstan are more focused on reforms, their implementation and results. Very little attention has been paid to the policy of Kazakhstan’s cooperation with other countries and organizations that are the main initiators of these transformations.

### Methods of Research

During the study, the following methods were used: historical analysis, comparison, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

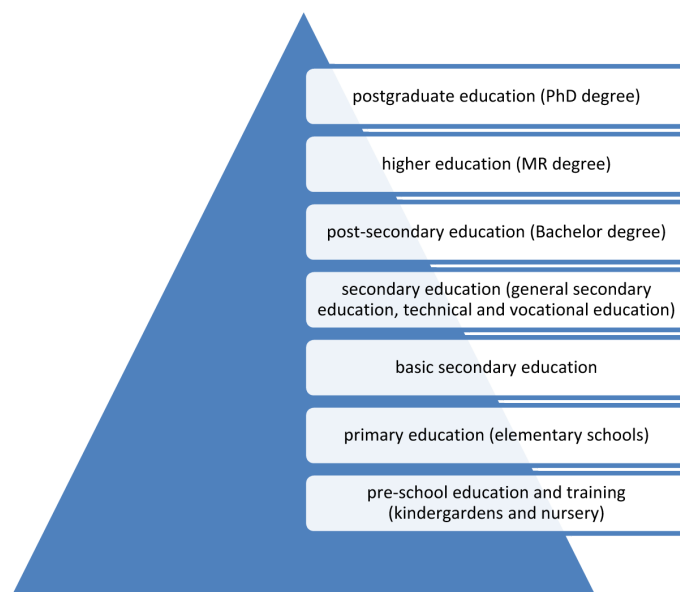
### Main body

The education system in Republic of Kazakhstan is based on the principle of non-participation and continuity of educational and training programs, which includes the following levels of education:

The policy of our state in the field of education, expressed in the contents of the Concept for the Development of Education, the State Program for the Development of Education has redefined the main purposes of education and formulated its main purpose as an opportunity for the full development of the individual. Modern education is designed to not only provide the necessary values, but also to protect and strengthen social values, and expand

the prospects of humanism and citizenship. Thus, as Bakisheva notes, education becomes such an important tool for organizing life activity – the basic idea of education is changing, instead of the idea of “education for life” that existed for a long time, the idea of “education throughout life” emerged (Bakhisheva, 2006: 139-140). The overall goal of educational reforms in Kazakhstan is to adapt the education system to a new socio-economic

environment (Amanzholov, 2011: 62). It can be said that during the years of independence, Kazakhstan has made a major breakthrough in reforming the system of HE and adjusting towards a market-oriented system. National policy has focused on international experience based on today’s competitive economy needs in reforming the HE system. To achieve this, the government has adopted several new agendas.



(Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan of July 27, 2007 No. 319-III “On Education” (with amendments and additions as of 01/01/2019).

Regarding the peculiarities of reforms conducted within the HE system of Kazakhstan, scholars consider it to be divided into four stages.

In 1991-1994, the following legal and regulatory frameworks were formed: the creation of higher education institutions and updating specialties, the formation of the multi-level higher education institution, the academic degree of bachelors and masters.

1995-1998 – modernization of the higher education system, updating its content: the first Kazakhstani educational standards in 310 specialties of HE were adopted, and a new edition of the Classifier (list) of higher education specialties of the Republic of Kazakhstan was approved – providing for 342 specialties. The non-state education sector was actively developing.

1999-2000 – decentralization of management and financing of education, expansion of academic freedom of educational organizations: the

management system of educational organizations was decentralized; fundamentally changed the principles of admission to HE institutions; transitioned to training specialists with HE based on the state general education order; by providing applicants with on-course basis of state educational grants and state educational loans a new model of forming a student contingent of higher educational institutions was introduced.

Since 2001, the strategic development of the higher education system: the main directions of the progressive development of higher education in the 21st century have been determined. (Myrzabekov, 2014:3-4)

It should be noted that the main trends in the development of higher education were the rejection of the state monopoly on education, the abolition of cruel centralized management of education and the strict regulation of the activities of higher educational institutions. As a result, the non-state

sector of higher education began to develop on equal terms, indicating the creation of a market for educational services, which, like any market, develops according to the law of competition. State higher education institutions received the right to enroll and train students on a fee basis, thereby diversifying the sources of funding for higher education (ibid: 15). Hence, the modern educational system of the Republic of Kazakhstan is aimed at increasing the level of education as a factor in the competitiveness of a nation (Aitkozhin, 2009: 50).

#### **Studies on Kazakhstani HE system.**

HE has been studied by various experts of different spheres in the frame of their fields – especially the formation of the higher education system of Kazakhstan, the changes and innovations in the system, and the role of the HE system in the society. We divide scientists who conducted scientific research on HE of Kazakhstan roughly into two groups. The first group is domestic researchers, and the second – foreign researchers. Here, we can look at several categories of domestic researchers. In particular, scholars who have raised the issues of the HE system of Kazakhstan in foreign scientific editions, and those who have performed research on the HE system reforms in different fields of science.

We conditionally divided foreign researchers studying the higher education system in Kazakhstan into two groups. The first group is the researchers who offered their specific conclusions as a result of scientific research, and the second group included the expert data of organizations that provide special funding and support for the study of higher education. Now let's talk about these issues individually.

#### **Research on Kazakhstani HE system by domestic scientists.**

Kenzhebayev suggested to conditionally divide historical works published in connection with the development of HE and science in the Republic, according to their content and ideas, into the following four categories:

- works on the study of cultural development and the structure of the country;
- works describing the history and destiny of the intelligentsia of Kazakhstan;
- research on the formation and development of the higher education and science system in the Republic;
- works identifying the policy and strategy of HE and scientific progress in today's social development (Kenzhebayev, 2009: 8).

He also analyzed the works that reviewed the state and trends of HE and science in the context of Kazakhstan's independence and globalization, as well as their social roles and values, content, organization, and financing. According to the author, these scientific works also can be considered as the basis for preparation of policies and strategies for the development of HE (ibid: 10-12).

Didactic issues of education in the higher education system of Kazakhstan, the problem of change in the education which is connected with the introduction of the higher education system in the global process are also discussed with scientists in the field of pedagogy. For example: Sarzhanova G.B., Hudieva S.R., Moshkalov A.K., Sapargaliyev D.B., Kozhamberdieva M.I., Bazhenov E.D. and so on. A group of authors lead by Abdygapparova S.B. and others has widely covered the credit education system, which is an important part of the reforms in the HE system and that have started with the entry of Kazakhstan into the Bologna process. Here, the authors highlighted the relevance and significance of international documents – the prerequisites for the introduction of a credit education system in HE institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan – and compared the changes (modernization) and peculiarities of credit technology in HE of Kazakhstan with the system of developed countries such as USA, France, Sweden, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Japan, and China. At the same time, explanations were given to the basic teaching and learning materials necessary for the implementation of the credit system in the educational process in Kazakhstan and the structures of the materials were defined.

Other scholars focused on the following issues of credit education in their research: the continuity of multi-level educational programs, their structure, content and improvement at the stage of introducing a credit system of education (Akhmetova 2007 (a): 186). As the authors note: “succession should be understood as the consistent deployment of educational programs and curriculum programs in the university and postgraduate educational system, in a dialectical relationship with the general education training content, with the goal of the holistic formation of a competitive specialist's personality.” (ibid: 4) Akhmetova G. considers the problems: “Trends and prospects for the training of teachers in Kazakhstan; Problems of higher pedagogical education in Kazakhstan; The history of the development of higher pedagogical education in Kazakhstan; Education of Kazakhstan in search of the ideal; 21st century education and culture;



Ethnocultural education in Kazakhstan; The credit system of education as a way to modernize higher education in Kazakhstan: from foreign experience to finding your own trajectory; From the qualifier of specialties to the standardization of higher education; The future of Kazakhstan's education system, etc." (Akhmetova, 2007 (b): 249).

The next group of scientists has examined and analyzed various issues in the higher education system of Kazakhstan from the point of view of their specialty. In particular, the issue of improvement of the education control system, ensuring that highly qualified professionals meet modern qualification requirements in the labor market. A.A. Yeleusov noted that "the process of Kazakhstan's accession to the WTO and the progress of HE explained by globalization give rise to necessity to improve the state control system of qualitative educational services and training of qualified specialists." (Yeleusov, 2015: 5).

An economical scientist A.Yu. Abinova considers higher education and its innovative trends in modern conditions of economic development of Kazakhstan. In her research, the scientist assesses the current state and cutting-edge trends in the development of higher education as a factor in improving the competitiveness of the economy of Kazakhstan and improving innovation processes in the system of HE in modern conditions of the Republic's economic development. N.V. Koftanyuk examines the improvement of the economic sustainability of HE institutions (based on materials from the Republic of Kazakhstan): analyzing and evaluating this sustainability, while developing directions for further improvement as part of the state program for the development of HE.

The next group of scientists performed research on the integration of independent Kazakhstan into international organizations, and their interconnection to the reforms in the HE system. In particular, political scientist M.K. Sydyknazarov conducted research on European Union policies and strategies to shape the European Higher Education Area: building a model for effective management of universities and human resources in the context of strengthening competitive positions in the regional and global dimension; while historian Tabynbaeva Z.S. reviewed the issues of cooperation between Kazakhstan and UNESCO in the field of education, UNESCO's educational programs in Kazakhstan, cooperation within the framework of the program "Education for all", as well as the UNESCO departments and the programs of the Associated Schools. Moreover the scientist K.Zh. Kondykerova

explained the concept of "internationalization" in the higher education system, emphasizing the role of international cooperation in the economic, legal, cultural and information spheres in the context of globalization process by revealing the meaning of international agreements.

Another topic discussed by scholars is the study of interstate cooperation in the field of education and science. It would be appropriate to note that Japan and the Republic of Korea are distinguished by the fact that these two countries provided various grants to the higher education system in Kazakhstan and supported the implementation of the academic mobility policy. The issue of cooperation of Kazakhstan with these countries in the field of education has been slightly studied. For example, a scientist F. Urazbeva who studied the history of political, trade, economic, ecological and cultural relations between Japan and Kazakhstan, made a review of the cultural grants of the Japanese government to Kazakhstan and analyzed the history of cultural ties between the two countries. Considering the peculiarities of development of cooperation between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Korea in the field of education and science, R. Kudaibergenova noted that Korean diasporas in Kazakhstan play an important role in the development of relations between the two nations.

#### **Research published in foreign editions.**

Now, we would like to focus on the works of domestic researchers who published their articles the Kazakhstani HE system in foreign editions. Here, the authors considered reforms in the field of higher education of independent Kazakhstan, in particular, the changes and issues that have occurred after the adoption of the Bologna process. For example, in a scientific article titled "Changes in the Higher Education System of Kazakhstan," the authors give an overview of the higher education system in the Republic of Kazakhstan, and indicate two weak points that need improvements. Firstly, Kazakh universities' management system does not allow them to realize their potential in ensuring accelerated economy development (R. Massyrova, 2015:51). Also, due to the low quality of educational services provided by universities, Kazakh youths choose studying abroad over domestic education. Secondly, owing to the high cost of education, sometimes citizens with average incomes are unable to pay this expenditure.

The next group of scientists considered the perspectives of higher education development in the post-Soviet countries as a subject of their research.

Here some of the key issues of reforms within the field of HE systems were discussed, namely: high cost of higher education, low salaries of teachers, financing, Bologna process and cooperation in the field of higher education of Central Asian countries with international organizations such as the European Foundation for Education and others, initiatives of new regional programs etc. Yergebekov M. and Temirbekova Zh. tried to emphasize the effect of globalization on higher education systems of countries newly establishing their nation states like Kazakhstan and, in particular, to research why Kazakhstan could not become a part of the process despite the inclusion of the Bologna Process of higher education (Yergebekov M., 2012: 1473). According to the authors, the leading hindrance is the fact that Kazakhstan's higher education system is still in continuity with the Soviet frame of mind. Therefore, the "novelties" included in Kazakhstan's higher education system thanks to the Process in question have become mere formalities without practical functions (ibid: 1477).

The next group of scholars who have considered the issues that arose from the integration of Kazakhstan to the Bologna process, focused on informatization of higher education system. The authors claim that the main mistake of the state informatization program in HE institutions is that every program focuses primarily on the support of leading universities and the development of technical infrastructure. The authors argue that the necessity to develop and train teachers beforehand has been ignored. Additionally the researchers note that regional universities are often forced to develop their own information communication technology (ICT) infrastructure without government support, and sometimes this is done without a real desire from university management. Almost all universities in Kazakhstan today are equipped with good quality technology, however human resources (teachers, assistants and technical specialists) cannot fully develop their own ICT education system and to justify the need to the use ICT in the learning process (Sapargaliyev D., Shulenbayeva K., 2013: 471). Scientists who have considered the issue of "Influence of mass consciousness on the quality of higher education in Kazakhstan" on the basis of social surveys point to the fact that at present there is a steady tendency to decrease the motivation of students of higher education institutions of Kazakhstan to possess a real education. Authors believe that in the first place, decreasing of students' motivation in learning is provoked by a number of the steady mythologems that have taken roots in

the mass consciousness in Kazakhstan. Mentioned mythologems were created during the transitional period from planned economy to the market one; thus observed crisis phenomenon may be considered as an example of post-transitional crisis. As a result of the survey authors have identified the following three main stereotypes:

Personal investments (both in terms of effort and funds spent) in the present technical education are not justified; the most effective is a career manager

For a manager's career, the actual education and the actual level of competence do not have a specific meaning. Decisive in a career are the tools of corruption and family-clan ties.

Personal status in the youth environment is fully determined by the level of income, but the level of education hardly affects them (Obukhova P.V., 2015:177).

Foreign scholars have also displayed interest in the system of higher education of Kazakhstan. If Kazakhstani scholars are primarily concerned with the ongoing reforms and the problems that have emerged in the process of globalization and joining the Bologna process, foreign scholars have focused on the key issues facing Kazakhstan's higher education system. Particular attention by foreign scientists is paid to the problem of corruption. For example, Stephen P. Heineman – on the basis of three universities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia – compares academic freedom, honesty and corruption in those countries. The author believes that the most important scope that affects social cohesion is how the universities solve the problem of corruption in education. In his article titled "Feed from the Service: Corruption and Coercion in the State-University Relations in Central Eurasia," one of the foremost scholars on the above-mentioned issue Ararat Osipian, considered corruption in Central Eurasia, especially bribery, extortion, nepotism, fraud and plagiarism. The author believes that bribery in higher education is the result of the interaction between the state and the science sector. Osipian claims that the education sector is not an oasis in the economy, but is instead exposed to a wide range of social diseases and reflects the socioeconomic situation in the country.

Elise S. Ahn, John Dixon, and Larissa Chekmareva, who have sought to make a scientific assessment of Kazakhstan's higher education reform and its results, discussed issues of horizontal diversification, vertical differentiation and inter-institutional relations among Kazakhstani higher education institutions, including government-led policies, adopted

legislative documents and modernization of the education system in the years of independence. The authors argue the lasting imprint of the Soviet legacy is more clearly evident, for example, the intra-institutional operational policies (e.g., student admissions) and the day-to-day practices within different HEIs (Ahn Elise S. et al., 2018: 222). Matthew Hartley and Alan Ruby not only focused on the higher education reform, but also their problems and described each of them as middle and long-term issues.

Kathryn H. Anderson and Stephen P. Heyneman discuss the challenges facing the transition to a market economy in the Central Asian countries (including Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), determine how changes in economies affect different levels of education, describe trends in educational institutions and draw attention to the question of how the demand in the society and education system coincide. At the same time, the academics consider the effectiveness of education in line with the new requirements and the impact of market forces on the management of educational institutions.

Natalia Rumyantseva and Timothy C. Caboni looked for answers to the questions as the presence of a normative structure which regulates faculty teaching behaviour in a Kazakhstani university in the context of undergraduate teaching and if it exists, then how does it compare to that of the US scholars.

Matthew Hartley, Bryan Gopaul, Aida Sagintayeva and Renata Apergenova focused on the desire and readiness level of academic leaders towards autonomy and its role in the modernization of the HE system. The researchers were guided by the following questions:

How are academic leaders making sense of reform efforts aimed at creating a system based on greater institutional autonomy?

What changes are occurring on campuses aimed at advancing reforms?

What structural, cultural, and environmental factors are influencing how universities and their leaders are seeking to implement reforms? (M. Hartley et al., 2016: 283)

One of the scientists who discussed the issues of Kazakhstan's higher education policy, legislative framework, statistical data, teacher-training reforms and the problems that emerged from them is K. Tastanbekova.

It is worth noting that international organizations have also contributed to the analysis of changes in the education system of Kazakhstan. We briefly describe the contribution of these organizations to the higher educational space of Kazakhstan:

The European Union Commission made expert analysis of the system of higher education and paid special attention to the factors such as the cycle of higher education programs, conditions for academic staff, management, internationalization of universities etc.

The OECD focuses on the internationalization of universities, the economic and political context, the impact of economic diversification on the higher education system, the quality and relevance of education, integration in education, and innovation.

## Conclusion

The experience of the academic studies make us suggest that the changes undergoing in the system of higher education are reforms being realized at the state level, based on globalization processes, derived from economic legitimacy and oriented to international educational space and modernization.

While making a historiographical review of the works of domestic and foreign researchers studying Kazakhstan's higher education system, we come to the following conclusion.

First of all, the research done by Kazakhstani scientists is mainly based on the reformation of the higher education system, the process of their implementation and the results from the point of view of the gaps in the educational process. Aitkozhin, Akhmetova, Parshina can be mentioned as the leading scientists in Kazakhstan's science, specifically focused on the problems of introducing credit technology into the educational process, the conditions for the development of credit technology curricula, comparing the credit system of developed countries in the world and the credit system introduced in Kazakhstan. That is, the problems raised by domestic scientists are often limited to detecting "symptoms of the disease". Moreover, among works conducted on cooperation between Kazakhstan and international organizations in the field of education, many researchers have noted the programs implemented and did not address the underlying policy pursued by different sides. This issue is discussed by Sydyknazarov who made analyses based on the European Union and Kazakhstan cooperation. According to the scholar, primarily promoted culture values implemented in the fields of education and science are one of the tools of soft power, and are aimed at the formulation of common European values, the formation of a "citizen of Europe". The author claims that through support in the field of education and science, EU aims to realize the policy of training highly-

qualified personnel and maintaining their economy on a regular basis. As one can see, Sydyknazarov well-illustrated the policy of internationalization in education of EU, however this subject of the developed Asian states' policy towards Kazakhstan has yet to be fully studied.

Secondly, in research published in foreign editions, the analysis of the reforms in the higher education system of Kazakhstan is mostly given in comparison with the reforms carried out in the higher education system of neighboring countries. Above that, attention is paid to the mainstream of the “disease” such issues as students' consciousness, corruption, plagiarism, the role of academic leaders in implementation of reforms etc. In this regard contribution done by P. Heyneman should be noted. Thirdly, very few research has been done

on cooperation in the field of higher education between Kazakhstan and other countries. Here we can note only works of Kudaibergenova, however she focused more on the role of Korean diaspora. As for Urazbekova, she analyzed the relation between Kazakhstan and Japan in general, and gave just rough review of educational programs. Therefore, we are seeing the importance to continue this research on higher education of Kazakhstan focusing on cooperation between Kazakhstan and a certain Asian country. Taking into account that Japan is one of the first countries which recognized our independence and remains as one of the leading partners of Kazakhstan among Eastern Asian countries, the significance of detailed research on cooperation in the education field between the two countries remains relevant.

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