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ANALYSIS OF THE PHD PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT IN KAZAKHSTAN

Since 1993, the higher and postgraduate education management system in Kazakhstan has gone through systemic modernization that was determined by the economic and political development of the sovereign state, its accession into the global market, and growth of competitiveness of its human capital. For a quarter of the century, a new methodological approach to education has been formulated and is being introduced – lifelong learning –, that reflects the fundamental principles of the Bologna Convention. The Republic of Kazakhstan was one of the first countries in the former Soviet Union to introduce a credit system of education and moved to a three-level system of personnel training: higher graduate education – bachelor’s degree, post-graduate education – master’s degree, doctorate – Doctor of Philosophy. In this regard, fundamental changes were made, and a new model of doctors of philosophy (PhD) training was created. A key element in the framework of a three-stage training system is a PhD program, because of their status is intended to develop scientific schools, set the trend of science and innovation, advance scientific ideas and hypotheses, and generally ensure the development of a national model of the country’s innovation economy. This analytical review is devoted to topical issues of doctors of philosophy (PhD) training and to identify ways of improving postgraduate education in Kazakhstan.

Key words: doctor of philosophy (PhD), academic degree, doctoral programme in Kazakhstan.

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Қазақстандағы философия докторларын дайындау бағдарламасының дамуын талдау

1993 жылдан бастап Қазақстанда жоғары және жоғары оқу орнынан кейінгі білім берудің басқару жүйесі егеменді елдің экономикалық және саяси дамуымен, оның жаһандық нарыққа енуімен, өзінің адами капиталының бәсекеге қабілеттілігін арттырумен айқындалған жүйелі жаңғыртудан өтті. Ширек ғасыр ішінде Болон конвенциясының негіз қалаушы принциптерін көрсететін білім берудің жаңа әдіснамалық тәсілі – өмір бойы білім беру тұжырымдалды және енгізілді. Қазақстан Республикасы бұрынғы Кеңес Одағы аумағында алғашқылардың бірі болып кредиттік жүйесін енгізді және үш деңгейлі оқыту жүйесіне (жоғары базалық білім – бакалавриат), жоғары ғылыми-педагогикалық білім беру – МА), докторантура – PhD) ауысты. Осыған байланысты түбегейлі өзгерістер жасалып, философия докторларын дайындаудың жаңа үлгісі құрылды. Кадрларды дайындаудың үш сатылы жүйесінің негізгі буыны PhD дайындау бағдарламасы болып табылады, өйткені өзінің мәртебесі бойынша ғылыми мектептерді дамытуға, ғылым мен инновацияларды дамыту трендін қалыптастыруға, ғылыми идеялар мен гипотезаларды ұсынуға және тұтастай алғанда елдің инновациялық экономика үлгісін дамытуды қамтамасыз етуге арналған. Бұл аналитикалық шолу Қазақстандағы философия докторларын (PhD) дайындаудың өзекті мәселелеріне және жоғары оқу орнынан кейінгі білім беруді жетілдіру жолдарын анықтауға арналған.

Түйін сөздер: философия докторы (PhD), ғылыми дәреже, Қазақстандағы докторантура бағдарламасы.

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к.б.н., доцент, Алматы Менеджмент Университет,
Казахстан, г. Алматы, e-mail: daniya.asanova@gmail.com**Анализ развития программы подготовки
докторов философии в Казахстане**

Система управления высшим и постдипломным образованием в Казахстане, начиная с 1993 года, прошла системную модернизацию, которая определялась экономическим и политическим развитием суверенной страны, ее вхождением в глобальный рынок, повышением конкурентоспособности человеческого капитала. За четверть века был сформулирован и внедряется новый методологический подход к образованию – образование на протяжении всей жизни – отражающий основополагающие принципы Болонской конвенции. Республика Казахстан одной из первых на постсоветском пространстве ввела кредитную систему обучения и перешла на трехуровневую систему подготовки кадров (высшее базовое образование – бакалавриат), высшее научно-педагогическое образование – магистратура), докторантура – PhD). В соответствии с этим были произведены кардинальные перемены и создана новая модель подготовки докторов философии (PhD). Ключевым звеном в рамках трехступенчатой системы подготовки кадров является программа подготовки PhD, поскольку по своему статусу предназначено развивать научные школы, задавать тренд развитию науки и инноваций, выдвигать научные идеи и гипотезы и в целом обеспечивать развитие модели инновационной экономики страны. Данный аналитический обзор посвящен актуальным проблемам подготовки докторов философии (PhD) в Казахстане и определению путей совершенствования послевузовского образования.

Ключевые слова: доктор философии (PhD), ученая степень, программа докторантуры в Казахстане.

Introduction

Kazakhstan was one of the first states in the post-Soviet space that introduced a three-level education system (Bachelor's – Master's – Doctoral Studies) and credit system. The mechanism of awarding a PhD degree takes a special place in the entire system of training of highly qualified specialists. Since 1993, the higher and postgraduate education management system in Kazakhstan has gone through systemic modernization that was determined by the economic and political development of the sovereign state, its accession into the global market, and growth of competitiveness of its human capital. For a quarter of the century, a new methodological approach to education has been formulated and is being introduced – lifelong learning –, that reflects the fundamental principles of the Bologna Declaration. According to the Bologna principles, dramatic changes were made, and a new model of doctors of philosophy (PhD) training was created. New doctors of philosophy were meant to become a driver of scientific development, promote innovative ideas and make an essential contribution to economic modernization of the country.

Results and discussion

Now of introduction of three-level education, quality of research training in Kazakhstan was determined by the following factors:

– the existing system of training of scientific staff brought discredit upon itself, and there were no important scientific research activities that would have an impact on development of the society at large;

– academic degrees were awarded to people not involved into the real scientific research process – officials and businessmen, awarding of academic degrees became a profitable commercial project, which caused the development of mass corruption in the sphere of science;

– a symbolic elitism of research workers was lost, and an increasing outflow of specialists from the sphere of science occurred;

– no development of scientific schools building upon internal assessment of a scientist's input was observed in social and humanitarian sciences, and evaluation criteria of scientific achievements started to be quite formal in nature.

Thus, there was a need in developing a new conceptual approach and reforming the research training system.

The doctors of philosophy training programme was introduced in Kazakhstan on a pilot basis in 2004 in some areas of the country's two leading universities: the Kazakh National University named after Al-Farabi in Almaty and the Eurasian National University named after L. Gumilyov in Astana. In 2005, the first admission to PhD programme was made. From 2005 to 2011, a PhD candidate who successfully finished studies and defended a thesis

was awarded an academic degree of PhD – doctor of philosophy. Universities that carried out a relevant educational activity were granted the right to award this degree.

Upon completion of the experiment, since 2011 Kazakhstan has enacted a number of regulatory documents according to which doctoral students who learnt the educational programme

and defended a thesis started to be awarded an academic degree of doctor of philosophy (PhD) [1, 2]. A key difference was that the academic degree is awarded by the competent government authority in education – the Control Committee in Education and Science (CCES) under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan [3, 4, 5].

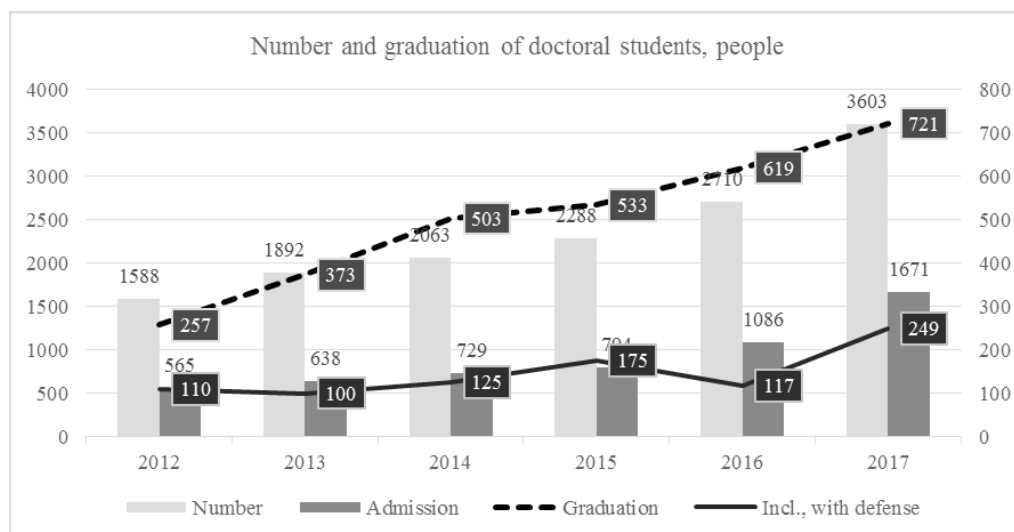


Figure 1 – Trends of change in the number and graduation of PhD candidates

As the chart shows, it is observed a growth trend of the number of doctoral students by year and increase in admission to all areas of specialization. According to the Statistics Committee, as of the end of 2017, a total number of doctoral students in Kazakhstan was 3,603 people as compared with 2012 – 1,588 people. A number of admitted doctoral students was 1,671 people in 2017, which by three times more than was an admission in 2012 [6].

Graduation of PhD candidates was 721 people, of them 249 people, or 34.5% with defense of a doctoral thesis. This indicator is weak even if compared with the year of 2012, when graduation included 257 people, of them 110 people with thesis defense, or 42.8% [6, 8]. Thus, the main indicator of postgraduate studies effectiveness is quite small, and a share of those who defended a thesis during postgraduate studies by year is as follows: in 2012 – 42.8%, 2013 – 26.8%, 2014 – 24.9%, 2015 – 32.8%, 2016 – 18.9%, 2017 – 34.5% [6, 7, 8].

The concept of PhD candidates training provoked discussions already at the initial stage of its implementation. First, a matter of argument was an idea of three-level educational system in itself, how

expedient and effective it was, and how better than the former training system of candidates and doctors of sciences. During discussions, there came up requirements for a minimum content of education, courses duration at each stage of study, format of training arrangement, mechanism of continuity and correlation of stages of education within the framework of various systems. Notwithstanding active discussion of these issues, there have been disputes on some of them until now. Thus, in spite of the enacted regulatory documents, a ratio of academic degrees «candidate of sciences», «doctor of sciences» and «doctor of philosophy (PhD)» remains uncertain defacto. Indeed, doctors of sciences whose training does not take place in Kazakhstan any longer, have the highest status, which is much higher than PhD holders' status. It is reflected in the regulatory documents that regulate a different amount of an extra pay for an academic degree. Thereby a group has been formed in the scientific hierarchy that cannot be replenished and transformed, but can only reduce for natural reasons.

Lack of clear correlation between academic degrees has until now given rise to difficulties in rec-

ognition of degrees acquired abroad. Thus, a person who acquired an academic degree abroad (basically in the post-Soviet countries) for its recognition in Kazakhstan encounters a need to publish articles in Kazakhstani journals recommended by the Control Committee in Education and Science of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union signed in Astana on 29 May 2014 guarantees de jure citizens of EAEU member states direct recognition of educational documents but it does not resolve this problem in practice [9]. It specifically stipulates a procedure of recognition of diplomas of specialists pretending to carry out an activity in such sectors as teaching, legal and medical. To have access to these activities in another EAEU member state, it is necessary to go through a procedure of recognition of educational documents as established by the national legislation. The same practice covers confirmation of academic degrees and academic titles [10].

In spite of a short period of formation, the PhD training programme in Kazakhstan is a today's reality. Currently, a key factor remains an issue of quality of scientists training and development of evaluation criteria of postgraduate programme effectiveness. Although Kazakhstan adopted an experience of American and European higher educational institutions and created, own model of postgraduate training, the quality of training of doctors themselves and their theses arouses definite doubts [11, 12, 13].

The Kazakhstani model of postgraduate programme is built based on two different approaches that affect it this or that way:

1. «Old-style school», or conventionally «Soviet» approach that supposed consecutive defense of two theses – candidate of science and doctor of science theses and regulation on the part of the state;

2. «A new approach», or conventionally «Western» approach that was formed in the United States and at the end of the 20th century was spread in Europe and Asia, differing by academic freedom of universities but simple enough criteria of scientific activity evaluation.

The created model has a number of advantages. First, state financing of overseas business trips of PhD candidates, inviting foreign specialists to deliver lectures, supervising theses by foreign professors. To positive moments can be referred raising requirements for quality of theses fixed in the form of an article in top-rated cited scientific journals. In addition, it is noted that bureaucracy in working with thesis committees has reduced, and

control has been in place over awarding an academic degree by the government body.

At the same time, there are substantial problems of PhD training programme in Kazakhstan. Upon completion of the doctoral programme, a postgraduate receives an academic degree of «doctor of philosophy (PhD)» which is awarded by the competent government authority – the Control Committee in Education and Science. A basis of awarding the degree is acquisition by a PhD student of a required number of credits, doctoral thesis and certain number of articles published in publications defined by the Control Committee in Education and Science [14]. A higher educational institution, that develops a theoretical part of education on its own, bears responsibility for the educational component. At the same time, the fundamental formation of a postgraduate as a scientist, i.e. formation of a young scientist as a personality who has own views of science and is capable of developing concepts independently, setting scientific goals remains beyond the programme and is assessed in no way from the perspective of such postgraduate's readiness for independent 'adult' life of a researcher and academic adviser.

In addition, there are also other problems in the doctoral training system; such problems are of an external nature. This is lack of a practical constituent of scientific research, mainly in social and humanitarian sciences, complexity of commercialization of research findings, therefore, a welfare mentality in financing science. An issue of professional development of research advisers of postgraduate students remains problematic, too. Only a scientist who is actively involved in scientific research activity can supervise a thesis research. However, it is hard to be done in practice for scientists whose core activity is teaching in a higher educational institution because of a heavy teaching workload.

A common problem of social and humanitarian sciences in Kazakhstan is lack of scientific schools here as an association of people working within a common theoretical and conceptual approach, common methodology. This results in the fact that the level of theoretical comprehension and methodological rationale of postgraduate students' research remains insufficient in order to meet the criteria set to a thesis for the PhD degree.

Research findings are usually presented as descriptive texts where the conclusions declared are not supported by a theoretical and methodological basis and, accordingly, can be neither verified, nor falsified as required by the scientific research standards.

When comparing the new Kazakhstani model with western ones, of great importance is the fact that social and humanitarian research studies in Kazakhstan have local nature and cannot pretend to taking leading positions in the world science [15]. At the same time, the evaluation criteria of research quality are as accepted worldwide (Hirsch index, etc.). It is necessary to take into consideration the fact that over the years, the Kazakhstan block of social and humanitarian sciences was behind the curve of world science, and Kazakhstan's scientific schools have so far remained unrecognized. Such position imposes serious constraints on an opportunity for Kazakhstani scientists to be published in top-rated journals.

Conclusions

Thus, the introduction of the three-level system of education in Kazakhstan «bachelor – master – PhD (PhD)» was a necessity, but so far, the postgraduate doctoral program in Kazakhstan is in transit mode. The young Kazakhstani model of research staff training should set a series of tasks that have to be addressed in a systemic and consistent manner.

It is obvious that in the first place, it is necessary to purposefully build and develop real scientific school in the field of social sciences and humanities based on unified theoretical and methodological

approaches. This will lead to the fact that the level of conceptual and methodological justification for the research of doctoral candidates will meet the criteria for a thesis for a scientific degree.

Specificity of the postgraduate education management system in countries with advanced economies consists of decentralization, a balanced distribution of functions, powers and responsibilities between public administration organizations, professional associations and universities. This approach is based on modern management concepts, such as «New Public Management» and «Network Governance». The introduction of the principles of these concepts into the system of managing postgraduate education in Kazakhstan will improve the effectiveness of doctoral programs.

The management system for postgraduate education needs to modernize the legislative framework. Today, there is a need for amendments to the Law on Education, the Law on Science, the state standard of postgraduate education in the part of PhD, focusing on applied innovation.

In addition, the important is to enable universities to establish requirements for the minimum content of educational programs, including the procedure for admission to the program, course of study, admission requirements, taking into account the specifics of the program, the awarding of a degree, autonomously.

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