



WOMEN IN ACADEMIC SCIENCE: THE CASE OF KAZAKHSTAN

One of the most important objectives of achieving gender symmetry is ensuring equitable representation of women and men in leadership positions in academic science. In order to understand the current state of progress in gender quality in Kazakhstan's academic science there is a need to overview the available statistical data. According to the National Report on the Status and Development of the Education System of Kazakhstan prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science's Information-Analytic Center in 2016, there is a stable tendency towards feminization of the teaching profession at all levels. In particular, in 2016, the share of female teachers in both higher and postgraduate education in the country amounted to 63% meaning that nearly two out of every three teachers are women. Moreover, in recent years, female students constitute the majority in both higher and postgraduate education. According to the report, in 2016, the share of female undergraduate students in the universities of Kazakhstan reached 55.9%, while the share of female MA and PhD students totaled 61.2% and 60.9%, respectively. However, this female predominance in the teaching staff and student population in higher education does not translate into similar results in academic science: the share of female full professors is only 34.5% as opposed to 65.5% of male full professors.

According to the UNESCO data, there is underrepresentation of women in the fields of academic science globally. However, Central Asia is a region with a high proportion of women researchers, namely, 44%. Kazakhstan has the closest to equal balance between women and men involved in academic research. However, the percentage of women with Doctor of Sciences or PhD degrees comprises only 30.6% leading to the lack of parity. In fact, only 15 women out of 175 academicians (8.5%) are full members of the National Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan. Moreover, there is still a significantly disproportionate number of male heads of universities in Kazakhstan, namely, 95 men (85.6%) as opposed to 16 women (14.4%). Furthermore, although the ratio of women's and men's earnings in higher education looks quite good and amounts to 92.4%, the same ratio in fundamental and

applied science is much lower equaling 59.5%.

It appears that while Kazakhstan offers relatively equal starting opportunities for women and men, the pace of women's career promotion slows down after the PhD thesis defense. The most traditional explanation for the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in academic science is the family-work conflict, which is the most important obstacle faced by women in their career development, especially in patriarchal societies. However, there is a number of other factors and implicit institutional constraints that hinder the academic career development of the female staff. For example, female teachers in higher education are much more likely than male teachers to carry out unpaid social or educational work to the detriment of their research activities. This imbalance aggravates gender inequality resulting in low wages and inadequate professional growth of women in academic science. Another reason is that, as a rule, family and social environment contribute to the women's decision to preferentially select specific fields, namely, social sciences, humanities, and medicine, classifying them as safe and appropriate. However, under these circumstances, the current national strategy, according to which the government provides more significant funding and support for the development of engineering, technical and agricultural sciences, creates a situation that is disadvantageous for women researchers. In fact, according to the results of the research grant funding competition for 2015-2017 announced by the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan, the lion's share of funding, or 32.6%, was allocated for research projects in such fields as the rational use of natural resources and the processing of raw materials and products, while the share of projects in energy, engineering, information and telecommunication technologies was 33.4%. On the other hand, only 22% of funding was provided to the projects in life sciences, as well as to the projects on improving the country's intellectual potential.

It is worth mentioning that the "female teacher" model is widespread in Kazakhstan's education system. Given the existing large-scale standardization in the education

system, teachers should firstly be conscientious and disciplined performers, and women are good in this role. Moreover, guided by the male leadership female teachers themselves accept low but stable salaries. On the other hand, the "female researcher" model is more prevalent in the fields of science with limited funding, and the number of women researchers in the priority sectors of research is much less than men, who occupy higher positions. Thus, women's ability to influence the decision-making process is limited.

In conclusion, the gender imbalance in the field of research and education in Kazakhstan cannot be denied. Although there are no formal obstacles for women to develop their academic careers, gender stereotypes that exist in the male-dominated society lead to the distribution of men and women into social roles that do not favor the latter. The gender inequality and asymmetry are the result of a lack of public confidence in women, their abilities and effectiveness. This dominant evaluation has not developed today. It is obvious that it has deep roots and is so firmly entrenched in the public consciousness that women themselves are subject to these social stereotypes, which leads to their low self-esteem and self-discrimination. In December 2016, 'the Concept of Family and Gender Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030' was adopted. It articulates the principles of ensuring equality in all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights regardless of gender; prevention of discrimination, gender asymmetry in state and public life; the formation of gender identity and the eradication of gender stereotypes in society. However, as practice shows it is hardly possible to quickly abandon habitual representations only under the influence of national concepts or other governmental documents. The transformation of individual and collective consciousness should occur at levels of an individual, an academic institution, and public opinion. The government must contribute to the acceptance and promotion of gender equality values through mass media and educational programs. If we have a chance to change the situation, it is only through long-term coordinated work, and joint concerted efforts.

Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed the decree on the creation of the Ministry of Finance and Economy, which was established through the merger of the Turkmen Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy and Development.
- During his official visit to Ashgabat, President of Russia Vladimir Putin discussed with his Turkmen counterpart Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov current issues of bilateral relations and signed the treaty on strategic partnership. The parties also signed the intergovernmental agreements on cooperation in combatting illicit trafficking of narcotics, psychotropic substances and their precursors; on the mutual establishment of migration agency offices; and on cooperation in industry, agriculture, sport, and tourism. In addition, the interagency documents were signed regarding cooperation in finance, healthcare and culture.
- During his official visit to Moscow, King of Saudi Arabia Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud discussed with President of Russia Vladimir Putin the current situation on the global oil market and military technical cooperation between the two countries. In particular, Saudi Arabia agreed a deal to purchase of the S-400 missile system from Russia.
- During his official visit to Minsk, the Defense Minister of Azerbaijan, Colonel General Zakir Hasanov, discussed with his Belarusian counterpart, Lieutenant-General Andrei Ravkov, prospects for the development and expansion of bilateral relations in the spheres of military education and military technical cooperation, as well as security and other issues of mutual interest.
- During his official visit to Baku, the Air Force Commander of Kazakhstan, Major General Nurlan Karbenov, exchanged views with the Deputy Minister of Defense of Azerbaijan, Air Force Commander Lieutenant-General Ramiz Tahirov, on the current state and prospects of cooperation between the two countries' air forces.
- During his official visit to Tashkent, President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek

Atambayev discussed with his Uzbek counterpart Shavkat Mirziyoyev further prospects for boosting economic and political relations. As a result of the meeting, the parties signed the agreement on confidence-building measures in the border areas, the agreement on the transnational use of the Orto-Tokoy (Kasansay) reservoir in the Jalal-Abad region of Kyrgyzstan, the memorandum of understanding between Uzbekgidroenergo and the National Energy Holding Company of Kyrgyzstan to construct the Kambarata-1 HPP, as well as the contract for the supply of electricity in 2017-2018 from Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan.

- According to the Uzbek Defense Ministry, Uzbekistan and Russia held tactical exercises at the Forish mountain training field in the Jizzakh region. Under the exercise scenario, the servicemen of the two countries conducted an anti-terrorist operation to destroy illegal armed groups in hard-to-reach mountain areas.

Economy, Finance and Energy

- According to the Ministry of Taxes of Azerbaijan, the country's tax revenues transferred to the state budget exceeded 5.22 billion manats (\$3.09 billion) in January-September 2017, which is 0.1% more than the forecasted figure. It was also noted that the Ministry of Taxes is expected to transfer 7.645 billion manats (\$4.53 billion), or 45.6% of total budget revenues, to the state budget in 2017.
- According to the Central Bank of Azerbaijan, the currency reserves of the country increased by approximately \$1.03 billion, or 25%, in January-September 2017, as compared to same period of 2016, and amounted to \$5.16 billion. It was also noted that in September 2017 the currency reserves increased by \$66.3 million, or 1.3%.
- According to the Ministry of Finance and the State Customs Committee of Kyrgyzstan, in January-September 2017 the state budget increased by 97.8 billion soms (\$1.43 billion), which is 2.2% more than planned and 11.6%, or 10.142 billion soms (\$150 million), more in comparison with the same period of 2016.
- According to the Federal Statistic Service of Russia, in September 2017 the country experienced deflation of

0.1%, while in annual terms the consumer price growth was 3%. It was also noted that the decline in food prices was 0.7% (excluding fruits and vegetables), while the prices for non-food products and services increased by 0.3% and 0.1%, respectively.

- According to Vice Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan Tolkunbek Abdygulov, a program to support exporters has been developed within the framework of the project of the Cabinet of Ministers "Jany Doorgo Kyrk Kadam" (40 Steps towards a New Era). Under the program, the government will allocate 2.6 billion soms (\$38.1 million) from the budget by the end of the year to subsidize interest rates for supporting domestic producers.
- According to Foreign Minister of Russia Sergey Lavrov, the country's assistance to Central Asia has exceeded \$6 billion over the past 25 years. It is also noted that during the reporting period the volume of Russian investments totaled about \$20 billion, and more than 7,500 Russian and joint ventures successfully work in Central Asia.

Society and Culture

- Archaeologist Viktor Novozhenov from the Saryarka Archaeological Institute of the Karagandy State University reported that the reconstruction of the 3,000-year-old Saryarka pyramid was completed. Archaeologists discovered the Bronze Age pyramid in August 2016.
- According to the Uzbek national air company, Uzbekistan Airways, new flights on the Samarkand-Istanbul-Samarkand route is to be launched on October 30, 2017.
- According to Director of the National Center for Physiology of Kyrgyzstan Abdullaat Kadyrov, over the past 16 years, the tuberculosis mortality rate in the country has reduced five-fold. It was noted that the highest number of incidence was recorded in 2001 amounting to 168 cases per 100,000 population, while the death rate reached 27 cases per 100,000. In 2016, the incidence has decreased by half down to 93 cases per 100,000 population, while the death rate was reduced five-fold to down to 5.6 cases per 100,000 people.