



## THE RESULTS OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN KAZAKHSTAN

The social responsibility of education in Kazakhstan, and indeed throughout the world, is becoming increasingly clear and requires taking into account new conditions. The sooner the awareness of the need for transformations comes, the more chances the Kazakh education system will not stand aside from the global progress.

In 2018, the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan allocated 53,594 state educational grants for students. Looking at the distribution of the allocated grants it becomes obvious that the priority is given to the specialties of technical sciences. For instance, the lion's share of grants, or 20,439, were allocated for technical specialties, while medical specialties, natural sciences specialties, and teaching specialties received 8,167, 3,161 and 2,700 grants, respectively. Agricultural, social and human sciences also did not remain without the state support, but in a much smaller amount. This is understandable, since first and foremost the country needs engineers, teachers, and doctors. A number of special educational programs, such as "Serpin-2050" as part of the state initiative "Mangilik yel zhastary - industriyagha", are aimed at this task. The program aims to provide grants for young people from the labor surplus southern regions of the country in secondary and higher educational institutions of the labor-deficit northern, western and eastern regions of Kazakhstan in order to reduce unemployment and to prevent a shortage of staff in pedagogical, technical and agricultural fields. Moreover, akimats of regions and cities are also actively involved in the process of training personnel for their needs. The akimat of Astana, for example, allocated funds through 1000 grants for graduates of schools for medical, architectural design, IT, and engineering specialties, as well as teachers capable of teaching in English. The akimat of the Atyrau region has allocated 222 educational grants for training 178 teachers, 35 doctors, and 9 veterinarians.

However, experts and analysts believe that Kazakhstan today needs more professionals in the field of applied technology and service than graduated white-collar workers. The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population conducted a survey of more than 3,700 employers and found out that more than 95% of the demand is related to

specialties of low and medium qualification. At the same time, 90% of managers who have difficulties in filling vacancies explain this situation either by the lack of staff with the necessary qualifications or by a low level of training. In this regard, the involvement of young people in vocational education in colleges should be supported and expanded. Although modern youth tends to regard technical education as less prestigious and in demand than higher education, new facts or arguments completely refute this assessment. Germany, for example, has a highly effective system of vocational education and training (VET). This is a very common way to acquire skills and build a successful career. For instance, in 2016, almost half of the German population, or 47.2%, received formal professional qualifications. In 2017, 1.3 million students entered the VET program. This system gives Germany huge economic benefits, since it helps to minimize youth unemployment to 6.4%, which is one of the lowest indicators in the European Union. As for Switzerland, there are eight universities of applied sciences that have appeared since 1997 because of the unification and specialization of over 70 advanced technical schools. They combine elements of general vocational education with practice, and offer specialized programs for professionals in the framework of lifelong learning.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan declares that there are no restrictions for obtaining work specialties neither by age, nor by sex, nor by place of residence, nor by other parameters. To make the system of technical and vocational training (TVT) more attractive and able to fill the market with the required specialists, in 2017 Kazakhstan launched the project "Free Vocational Education for All", which enables graduates who are trained at the expense of local and republican budgets to obtain up to three work qualifications. It is expected to spend 86.5 billion tenge for a well-trained labor force in Kazakhstan covering tuition fees, travel expenses and housing rent for non-residents, as well as providing a one-time hot meal and scholarship. However, according to the high-ranking officials, despite all the promises, the population remains passive and does not seek to get the first working specialty for free. The social survey

showed that 91.4% of the school-leavers surveyed do not plan to receive a vocational education, and only 22% of the population believe that TVT is prestigious.

However, there are still a number of concerns over the system of Kazakhstan's vocational education such as the insufficient number of colleges, outdated equipment, and inappropriate scholarships. In addition, the most popular technical courses in TVT, for the most part, remain paid and inaccessible to the young people from low-income families. Obviously, the creation of the respected national system of vocational training requires not only economic incentives, but also certain cultural and value shifts in the society. For the present, traditions, family expectations, public perceptions transmitted by the media are not aimed at the high appreciation of the status of working professions. The choice of a specialty is dictated primarily by prestige, but not by the real needs of the economy. It is not customary for parents and their children to study the demand for labor force and conjecture of the labor market before entering the university application process. That is why the wrongly oriented choice of the entrant turns into a social problem of unemployment in the country.

In conclusion, the citizens of Kazakhstan do not find blue-collar jobs attractive, given that there is still no strategy for promoting the image of professional training. The foreign experience offers various types of policies to shape the attractiveness of TVT. For instance, this educational sphere could be supported through effective specific programs, presentations of certain (flagship) institutions, vivid promotion of certain certificates, social marketing of large companies and national holdings. Particularly, the attraction of talented and motivated young people and business or political institutions whose participation in the vocational training institutions enhances the quality of education has the potential to contribute to the long-term improvement of the TVT image. Obviously, in order to overcome the economic and social challenges that Kazakhstan faces, an effective and long-term strategy for improving the educational quality of technical and professional cadres is needed.

## Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- During the Summit of the BRICS bloc (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) held in Johannesburg, leaders of BRICS emerging economies discussed prospects for cooperation in priority areas such as politics, security, trade, the economy, finance, culture and humanitarian ties. The summit agenda also included the coordination of actions on regional matters. As a result of the meeting, a package of documents was signed, including the Johannesburg Declaration, as well as the Memorandum of Cooperation in Environmental Protection.
- During his official visit to Baku, General Director of the Turkish Aerospace Industries Temel Kotil met with Defense Minister of Azerbaijan Colonel-General Zakir Hasanov to discuss the issues of organizing mutual visits of aviation experts within the military-technical cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey. The parties also exchanged views on the implementation of various programs.
- According to Defense Minister of Iran Brigadier General Amir Hatami, the country launched a production line for its air-to-air missile dubbed Fakour-90. It was noted that the missile was developed based on operational needs and in cooperation with the Army Air Force of Iran.
- During his official visit to Bishkek, Defense Minister of Kazakhstan, Colonel-General Saken Zhasuzakov met with President of Kyrgyzstan Sooronbay Jeenbekov to discuss the situation in the Central Asian region and exchange experience on ensuring joint security. In addition, the parties signed an agreement on cooperation in the field of military intelligence.
- During his official visit to Washington, Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Kairat Abdrakhmanov met with First Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan to discuss the bilateral cooperation between the two countries. The parties made a special emphasis on strengthening relations between Kazakhstan and the United States in the political and economic spheres, enhancing trade and investment.
- During his official visit to Moscow, Minister of Economy of Azerbaijan Shahin Mustafayev met with Minister of Economic Development of Russia Maxim Oreshkin to discuss the further

development of bilateral relations, including strengthening cooperation in the agricultural, financial, tax, customs, tourism, humanitarian spheres, as well as in the fields of education, sports, etc. The parties paid special attention to strengthening cooperation in the transport sector via the International North-South Transport Corridor.

## Economy, Finance, and Energy

- Germany's Deutsche Bank announced its plans to allocate a loan worth \$500 million to the National Bank of Uzbekistan for financing investment projects. The funds will be provided in order to finance investment projects in energy, transportation, agriculture, medicine, petrochemicals, infrastructure, and other sectors of the economy.
- According to the Turkmen state company Turkmennebit, the Turkmenbashi Complex of Oil Refineries started production of biaxially oriented polypropylene film (BOPF). The plant is capable to produce 21,000 tons of BOPF annually. The total cost of the project amounted to about €31 million.
- According to the state oil company of Azerbaijan SOCAR, the daily volumes of gas supplied to the population and other consumers in Azerbaijan in July 2018 stood at 7.720 million cubic meters compared to 8.402 million cubic meters in June 2018. Thus, in July 2018 the gas demand in Azerbaijan dropped by 8.12% as compared to June 2018. The daily gas consumption volume stood at 5.420 million cubic meters and 2.3 million cubic meters in Baku and in the country's regions, respectively. The number of gas consumers in Azerbaijan exceeds 2.1 million, while the gas supply level in the country nears 93%.
- According to the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges, 67 companies with Azerbaijani capital were registered in Turkey in June 2018, which is only two companies less compared to the same period of 2017. It was noted that the total capital of Azerbaijani companies registered in June 2018 amounted to 29.2 million liras, while this figure was 12.8 million liras in June 2017.
- According to the Ministry of Finance of Kyrgyzstan, in January-June 2018 the revenues of the republican budget amounted to 62.38 billion soms (\$915 million). The plan was reportedly overfulfilled by 3.6%. The receipts from the State Tax Service and the Customs Ser-

vice formed in the amount of 30.446 billion soms (\$446.9 million) and 20.016 billion soms (\$293.8 million), respectively. As for the non-tax revenues, the budget was replenished by 11.057 billion soms (\$162.2 million).

## Society and Culture

- According to the decree signed by President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, the country extended the period of visa-free stay for foreigners arriving in Belarus and leaving the country through the Minsk National Airport from five to 30 days. The document updated the list of states whose citizens are entitled to the visa-free regime. It has been revised to exclude the countries, with which Belarus has concluded bilateral agreements on the mutual abolition of visas.
- President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed the decree, according to which a number of ministries and organizations are ordered to provide humanitarian assistance to the victims of the earthquake in the Iranian province of Kermanshah. The number of victims of the magnitude 5.9 earthquake reached 287 people. The humanitarian cargo has already been handed over to the Red Crescent Society of Iran.
- According to Commander of Astara border, Colonel Nozar Moradi, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Iran's Astara and Azerbaijan's Lankaran border forces to put up a concrete wall along Astarachay river aimed to prevent seasonal floods which annually damage some villages along the borderline.
- According to a survey carried out by the Central Bank of Iran, 61.6% of Iranian families living in cities are members of social networks, while over 64% of the Iranian families have access to the Internet. In addition, 96.6% of the families have mobile phone; meanwhile, the figure for landline phone was only 74.9%.
- According to the Russian State Duma, the lower house of the Federal Assembly, passed the bill granting multiple visa-free entries to Russia until the end of the current year for foreign holders of Fan IDs used to attend matches of the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia.