

REVIEW OF THE IQAA THEMATIC ANALYSIS

“Adaptation of Kazakhstani Higher Education Institutions to New Educational Realities: Challenges and Prospects”, 2024

The thematic analysis “Adaptation of Kazakhstani Higher Education Institutions to New Educational Realities: Challenges and Prospects” has been reviewed. It was prepared within the framework of the education quality assurance system. The analysis aims to assess the current state of higher education, identify good practices and areas of concern, and determine prospects for the further development of higher education institutions in the context of ongoing educational transformations.

In recent years, a number of significant reforms have been implemented in Kazakhstan’s higher education system to improve the quality of specialist training. The expansion of academic freedom and the autonomy of educational organisations, together with the adoption of the Concept for the Development of Higher Education and Science in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023–2029, have had a significant impact on the activities of higher education institutions.

The purpose of the thematic analysis is to examine the key trends and factors influencing the adaptation of higher education institutions to the current requirements of the educational environment, and to analyse the good and problematic practices identified on the basis of the results of the institutional accreditation of 14 higher education institutions in 2022–2023.

The report examines the development and implementation of educational programmes, their updating and monitoring, the involvement of employers and students in their enhancement, the introduction of innovative, joint and dual-degree programmes, the development of English-medium and dual education, and the implementation of minor programmes.

The analysis identified positive experience among a number of higher education institutions in modernising educational programmes and adapting them to labour market needs. At the same time, it revealed certain issues relating to stakeholders’ formal rather than substantive involvement in the development of educational programmes, as well as the insufficient development of certain aspects of internationalisation and practice-oriented learning.

Particular attention is given to the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes. Kazakhstani higher education institutions are gradually introducing mechanisms for recognising learning outcomes from online courses, continuing education programmes and certification programmes. However, recognition practices remain inconsistent and require further improvement of the regulatory framework, as well as greater student awareness of the opportunities available.

An important conclusion of the analysis is the need to improve the content of syllabuses, particularly the criteria for assessing learning outcomes. At a number of higher education institutions, assessment procedures lack sufficient transparency and detail. This calls for a clearer specification of the expected learning outcomes and the particular features of the disciplines studied.

The analysis also showed that higher education institutions actively use various mechanisms for student recruitment and cohort formation, including career guidance, digital services supporting admissions, discounts and concessions, and cooperation with employers in the context of targeted specialist training. At the same time, regional and socio-economic factors have a significant impact on enrolment figures and the quality of the student body, particularly at regional higher education institutions.

It should be noted that the analysis not only identifies areas of concern requiring further improvement, but also demonstrates significant positive changes taking place in Kazakhstan’s higher education system. Its strengths include the outcomes of education reforms implemented by the state; the expansion of academic freedom and the autonomy of higher education institutions; institutions’ active use of the opportunities available to modernise their educational activities; the development of innovative and joint educational programmes; strengthened career guidance; and the introduction of digital tools to support the educational process. Another positive trend is the gradual development of

mechanisms for recognising non-formal learning outcomes, which supports the principles of lifelong learning and the individualisation of students' learning pathways.

Overall, the thematic analysis is relevant, substantive and of practical significance. Its strengths include a comprehensive approach to issues relating to the development of higher education, the use of the results of external audits of higher education institutions, the inclusion of comparative analysis, and specific recommendations aimed at further enhancing educational activities and improving the quality of specialist training.

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