Internationalizing Higher Education Institutions in Kazakhstan: Perspectives from a National Survey

As Merrill (2011: 161) points out, “integration with Europe is an example of how the Central Asian nations now are following different paths, and how generalizing about them can lead to inaccurate judgments. Kazakhstan, the one Central Asian nation that has territory in Europe, is on a self-proclaimed “Path to Europe”. Kazakhstan became the 47th signatory of the Bologna Process in 2010 and, since then, internationalization of education has become a major concern for senior university managers across the country. As Enders & Westerheijden (2011: 474) point out, “the ‘way to Bologna’ is a long one, with options for local interpretations and manifold pathways”. There has been very little research so far on the interpretations and pathways being followed in Kazakhstan, and the issues faced by a post-Soviet country at the beginning of its Bologna journey are significant for greater understanding of the processes of global education reform and the expansion of European educational ideas in a globalized world.

The proposed paper looks at some of the local interpretations and pathways being adopted by universities in Kazakhstan as they embark on their Bologna journey. It is part of a large-scale research project funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan. The aim of this research project is to examine the phenomenon of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan, in terms of institutional engagement with internationalization, teaching and learning, and research, in order to inform national policy as well as contribute to international knowledge in this area.
This paper focuses on one part of the study, namely, a survey of all universities in Kazakhstan, exploring perceptions, strategies and practices in the management and internationalization. The survey explores the visions and aims of Vice-Rectors and Directors of International Offices in the area of internationalization, their strategies for achieving these aims, and the challenges and opportunities they face in managing internationalization initiatives in general and Bologna initiatives in particular.

**Method**

Data for the paper are being collected through a written questionnaire survey. The questionnaire will be distributed to Vice-Rectors and Directors of International Offices in all universities in Kazakhstan in March 2014. The questionnaire includes items on perceptions of internationalization, areas of internationalization activity, strategies and policies related to the management of internationalization, implementation of internationalization activities, and challenges and opportunities. Both closed and open-ended questions are included. The questionnaire is written in the two most widely used languages in Kazakhstan, which are Kazakh and Russian. Results of closed questions will be analyzed statistically, and results of open-ended questions will be analyzed using qualitative analysis methods, through a process of coding and categorizing (Creswell, 2011).

**Expected Outcomes**

The expected outcomes of the part of the study reported in this presentation are a new perspective on the “local interpretations and manifold pathways” on the “way to Bologna” on the one hand, and national policy advice and a set of practical recommendations and best practices for senior university leaders and Directors of International Offices on the other. At the theoretical level, analysis of the interpretations and pathways being adopted in higher education institutions in Kazakhstan as they negotiate and manage the demands of internationalization and the Bologna Process will provide an alternative perspective in the current literature on internationalization of higher education. At the policy level, a summary of the main findings of the survey will be made available to the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan, and is highly likely to inform policy. At the practical level, the survey will produce useful information that can be shared among senior university leaders and managers in the form of recommendations and best practices.

**References**


**Author Information**

Aida Sagintayeva (presenting)
Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, Kazakhstan

Adil Ashirbekov (presenting)
Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, Kazakhstan

Zakir Jumakulov
Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, Kazakhstan

Jason Sparks
Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, Kazakhstan

Lynne Parmenter
Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education
Astana