

MIGRATION POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES: ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF INTELLECTUAL MIGRATION IN KAZAKHSTAN

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DOI: 10.52123/1994-2370-2022-825
UDC 325.252
CICSTI 12.79.51

Abstract. This article discusses the intellectual migration of Kazakhstanis who completed their studies at foreign universities.

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with 22 Kazakh graduates of foreign universities living abroad, the motives and reasons for their moving to other countries are analyzed, the process of transforming educational migration into intellectual migration is studied, and the factors affecting the willingness of Kazakhstanis to return to their homeland are considered.

The results of the study showed that the main reasons for migrating abroad are: family circumstances, the possibility of fully applying competencies and acquired knowledge, gaining professional experience, as well as a high level of economic development, comfort and security, transparency in employment process and satisfactory wages in recipient countries.

Meanwhile, according to the study, the factors that push out highly qualified specialists from Kazakhstan are: lack of career prospects, low wages, disagreement with the current political system and climatic conditions.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, intellectual potential, graduates of foreign universities, "Bolashak" program, intellectual migration.

JEL codes: H52, H50, H70.

Аңдатпа. Бұл мақалада шетелдік университеттерде оқуын аяқтаған қазақстандықтардың зияткерлік көші-қоны қарастырылады.

Шетелде тұратын шетелдік университеттердің 22 қазақстандық түлектерімен жүргізілген терең сұхбаттардың нәтижелері бойынша олардың басқа елдерге көшу мотивтері мен себептері талданады, білім беру көші-қонының зияткерлік көші-қонға айналу процесі зерттеледі, Қазақстандықтардың отанына оралуға дайындығына әсер ететін факторлар қарастырылады.

Зерттеу нәтижелері шетелге көші-қонның негізгі себептері: отбасылық жағдайлар, құзыреттер мен алған білімдерін толық қолдану мүмкіндігі, кәсіби тәжірибе алу, сондай-ақ экономикалық дамудың жоғары деңгейі, жайлылық пен қауіпсіздік, жұмысқа орналасу процесінің ашықтығы және қабылдаушы елдердегі қанағаттанарлық жалақы болып табылатындығын көрсетті.

Сонымен қатар, зерттеуге сәйкес, Қазақстаннан жоғары білікті мамандарды итермелейтін факторлар: мансаптық өсу перспективаларының болмауы, жалақының төмендігі, қазіргі саяси жүйемен келіспеушілік және климаттық жағдайлар болып табылады.

Түйін сөздер: Қазақстан, зияткерлік әлеует, шетелдік жоғары оқу орындарының түлектері, "Болашақ" бағдарламасы, зияткерлік көші-қон.

JEL кодтары: H52, H50, H70.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается интеллектуальная миграция казахстанцев, завершивших обучение в зарубежных высших учебных заведениях.

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На основе результатов глубинных интервью с 22 казахстанцами-выпускниками зарубежных вузов, проживающими за границей, анализируются мотивы и причины их переезда в другие страны, изучается процесс трансформации образовательной миграции в интеллектуальную, а также рассматриваются факторы, влияющие на готовность казахстанцев вернуться на Родину.

Результаты исследования показали, что основными причинами миграции в зарубежье являются: семейные обстоятельства, возможность полноценного применения компетенций и полученных знаний, получение профессионального опыта, а также высокий уровень экономического развития, комфорт и безопасность, прозрачность при трудоустройстве на работу и достойная заработная плата в странах-реципиентах.

Между тем, согласно исследованию, выталкивающими из Казахстана факторами для высококвалифицированных специалистов являются: отсутствие карьерных перспектив, низкая заработная плата, несогласие с текущей политической системой, экология и климатические условия.

Ключевые слова: Казахстан, интеллектуальный потенциал, выпускники зарубежных вузов, программа «Болашак», интеллектуальная миграция.

JEL коды: H52, H50, H70.

Introduction

Since 1991, the Republic of Kazakhstan has been actively working on investing into education. One of the areas of activity for the development of the intellectual potential of Kazakhstanis is the training of citizens in the best universities in the world as part of the “Bolashak” program. Thus, according to the data of the “Center for International Programs” JSC (2021), over 27 years of the program implementation, 14 033 scholarships were awarded to Kazakhstanis who have completed their studies or are studying at universities in Great Britain and Ireland (45,2%), the USA and Canada (25,7%), Europe (13%), Asia (8,2%), and Russia (7,9%) (*Center for International Programs, 2021*).

At the same time, diplomatic ties and the economic situation of the country allow Kazakhstanis to receive foreign education within the framework of other international scholarship programs and intergovernmental agreements, at their own expense or at the expense of university grants. Today, about 90 000 Kazakhstanis study at foreign universities (*The UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022*). Among them, 71 368 people study in the Russian Federation, 2 191 - in Turkey, 2 083 - in Kyrgyzstan, 1 792 - in the USA, 1 751 - in the Czech Republic (*The UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022*).

According to scientists, educational migration is “a set of people’s movement in order to receive education of various levels and for various durations”, which “is always aimed at obtaining new professional or scientific knowledge, regardless of the prospects for subsequent migration or return” (*Molchanov et al., 2018*).

At the same time, there is a “battle to attract the best minds” among the highly developed countries of the world at the moment. Many countries (USA, Canada,

France, Germany, Israel, South Korea) have simplified visa procedures and the rules for obtaining citizenship for skilled migrants with certain skills, competencies and knowledge. For example, the Concept of the Migration Policy of the Russian Federation (2018) notes that foreign citizens who have received education at Russian universities should be provided with jobs and have a priority right to obtain citizenship (*Concept of the Migration Policy, 2018*).

In this regard, in most scientific works, intellectual migration, understood as “the movement of qualified specialists for intellectual and professional activities” (*Bokayev et al., 2020: 29*), and educational migration are considered as interconnected processes. So, for example, a number of scientists note the risks of non-return and outflow of talented Kazakhstanis after completing their studies abroad (*Nasimova et al., 2020; Nurmagambetov et al., 2021*).

This study is aimed at studying the causes and motives for the migration of qualified specialists, as well as at considering the factors influencing the transformation of educational migration into intellectual migration.

Taking into account the target framework of the study, it is expected to find answers to the following research questions:

1) Why did Kazakh graduates of foreign universities decide to stay in other countries? What are the reasons?

2) Do Kazakh graduates of foreign universities want to return to Kazakhstan for permanent residence? Why?

Materials and methods

The main results of the study were obtained using a qualitative research method - in-depth interview, which is the most effective approach in international research (*Tiu Wright, 1996*).

In-depth interview is a technique that provides a vivid insight into a respondent's point of view on a research topic by encouraging the participant to share his/her personal experiences, opinions, and feelings (Milena et al., 2008). The main advantage of in-depth interview is that it provides more detailed information in comparison with other data collection methods (Boyce and Neale, 2006).

As part of the scientific work, 22 in-depth interviews were conducted with Kazakhstani graduates of foreign universities living abroad. In-depth interviews were conducted in Russian from May 2 to July 19, 2021. The average duration of one interview was 56 minutes.

All participants in the in-depth interviews currently live and work abroad. Among them there are 4 graduates who completed their studies in several countries: 1 graduate of universities in Hungary and Sweden, 1 graduate of universities in Finland and Canada, 1 graduate of universities in Japan and France, 1 graduate of universities in Russia and the USA. In addition, 4 graduates of British universities, 2 graduates of Canadian universities, 2 graduates of Russian universities, and one graduate of universities from the following countries took part in in-depth interviews: China, Latvia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Poland, Turkey, France, the USA. The age of the respondents ranged from 23 to 44 years. Kazakhstani graduates of foreign universities live in the following countries: 4 people - in the United States of America, 3 people - in Germany, 2 people from each of the following countries - the Russian Federation, France and Japan. By 1 person from each of the following countries: Turkey, Serbia, Canada, Norway, Great Britain, the United Arab Emirates, Poland, Sweden and Vietnam.

In this regard, all interviews were conducted through the "Zoom" communications platform. With the consent of the study participants, an audio recording of the conversation was made.

The results of in-depth interviews helped to identify the motives and reasons for the relocation of Kazakhstani graduates of foreign universities to other countries for permanent residence, as well as to find out to what extent Kazakhstanis living abroad are ready to return to Kazakhstan.

Results

Scholars note that the determinants of the decision to migrate fall into three broad classes: patriotic-social, family-personal, and economic-professional (Gmelch, 1983). Analysis of the results of in-depth interviews with Kazakh graduates of foreign universities revealed the main reasons for moving to other countries. Respondents pointed out both: push factors and pull factors.

The family factor, which is the basic cell of any society, had a huge impact on Kazakhstani graduates of foreign universities when they made the decision to move to another country for permanent residence. Thus, participants of in-depth interviews note that they are abroad due to family circumstances.

"By that time, I got married and my husband is studying a PhD program in Japan. And due to my marital status, I stayed in Japan" (Female, 28 years old, graduate of a Japanese university, lives in Japan).

Kazakhstan's dependence on world oil prices negatively affects economic growth rates (Forbes.kz, 2021) and creates certain difficulties for the country's citizens. For example, some Kazakh graduates of foreign universities note that initially they planned to return to Kazakhstan, but due to the unstable economic situation and problems with employment, they were forced to migrate to other countries.

"After graduating from the master's program, I returned to Kazakhstan. I wanted to find a job for six months. I was looking for a job, but there was no job, and at that moment I received an offer - to continue my PhD studies. That's why I left. Because I did not find a suitable job in time for six months" (Woman, 35 years old, graduate of a British university, lives in Norway).

Getting an education at the best universities in the world requires large financial costs; therefore, in order to justify these investments, graduates of foreign universities should try to maximize their intellectual potential. Thus, some of the respondents decided that in Kazakhstan they could lose all the knowledge, competencies and skills acquired abroad, in connection

with this, they emigrated from the country.

“Because, probably, I would not have found a job in Kazakhstan. This is where the problem is. ... [work] that would allow me not to lose my qualifications” (Male, 34 years old, graduate of Finnish and Canadian universities, lives in Germany).

A significant number of the respondents name the reasons for moving abroad as follows: the desire to work in another country, gain international experience, develop their intellectual potential and have further career prospects.

“When I was studying in Moscow, I didn't want to stay there. I wanted to return to Kazakhstan. But when there was an opportunity [to migrate] to the States, then, of course. Here you can earn more money and, again... there were more interesting jobs here. More opportunities, let's say, to develop [yourself]” (Male, 34 years old, graduate of Russian and American universities, lives in the USA).

According to HeadHunter, only 6% of Kazakhstanis believe that they receive a decent salary (Kursiv.kz, 2021). That is, this suggests that the vast majority of citizens of Kazakhstan receive wages below their own expectations. This is also confirmed by the results of in-depth interviews, according to which respondents name low wages and lack of career prospects in Kazakhstan as one of the push factors.

“I worked for 10 years. Then, well, there was such, so to speak, a certain gestalt, you know? That is, we still pay foreigners more than we pay Kazakh citizens. And for me it's like a feeling, again, dignity, probably. That I can also earn like foreigners. And that's why I left for a foreign country at the moment... I can do the same as our foreigners do in Kazakhstan. That is, the same work - the same salary” (Male, 41 years old, graduate of a British university, lives in Vietnam).

Disagreement with the current political system in Kazakhstan was also the reason for the relocation of graduates of foreign universities to other countries.

“Because it's useless to try [to do]

something against the system” (Male, 29 years old, graduate of a Chinese university, lives in the USA).

The Kazakh mentality, some cultural characteristics, as well as an ingrained way in which work and personal relationships are closely intertwined, served as a kind of impetus for moving to other countries for Kazakhstanis who completed their studies abroad.

“Our society is Kazakh, it dictates its own conditions, where a girl should be modest, constrained, should not argue if, for example, she is talking to someone, and this goes a little against my character. I'm more like this, I can be stubborn” (Woman, 28 years old, a graduate of a Polish university, lives in Poland).

Meanwhile, Kazakh intellectual migrants point out the high level of economic development of the countries in which they currently live, as well as transparency in employment and decent wages, as pull factors.

“The first reason is salary. That is, in Russia, the wages, in Moscow, in particular, ... wages are much higher for any medical specialty” (Male, 28 years old, graduate of Russian universities, lives in Russia).

“My first reason is, that is, this is a financial reason, because... education is a costly process... From a practical point of view, it makes sense... to recoup those costs that were made... It's easier to do it abroad because the salaries are higher. And there is less time to look for a job” (Male, 24, graduate of a Canadian university, lives in the UK).

There were respondents who named comfort and safety in their countries of residence as important factors for moving abroad.

“I like the city of Kazan. For the 4 years that I have studied here, for me... this city has become the second city after Aktobe. I feel comfortable here, I like the climate here. First, more objects. Secondly, the climate. And, as it were, in the aggregate, I wanted to stay here” (Man, 23 years old, graduate of

a Russian university, lives in Russia).

When a question about the readiness of graduates of foreign universities to return to Kazakhstan was asked, the opinions of the participants of in-depth interviews were divided. Some respondents would not mind returning to Kazakhstan after some time, provided that comfortable living conditions are created for them. Another part of the respondents stated that returning to Kazakhstan is not on their plans.

Some of the participants of in-depth interviews show a desire to return to Kazakhstan because of patriotic feelings, strong family and friendship ties.

“Yes... Because this is my homeland... There are relatives, parents, friends” (Woman, 28 years old, graduate of a Japanese university, lives in Japan).

Some respondents claim that they want to return to Kazakhstan, but for the time being they are forced to stay abroad due to the lack of job offers in their homeland that match their qualifications.

“Yes. I plan to do so [return to Kazakhstan]... That is, I'm going to live abroad for [gaining] international experience. That is, I plan to return to Kazakhstan, and I will have “international experience” in my resume. That is, I think that it is more comfortable for me to live in Kazakhstan... I have a plan like this. That is, I am not going to stay abroad for a long time. The question, of course, is this. Will I be able to find a normal project to return to? That is, what am I doing? With whom am I doing it? How much do I earn from this? That is, if there is a project in which the criteria will be met and, how to say, comparable to what I have now. That is, even under equal conditions, I will return to Kazakhstan. If there is a very big difference, then I will think: “Is it worth returning?” (Male, 41, graduate of a British university, lives in Vietnam).

Some Kazakhstani graduates of foreign universities are ready to return to their homeland, provided that cardinal changes in the political system take place in the country.

“If the situation changes, specifically, with the issues of corruption, because I

encountered corruption in my work. I don't want to face it at all anymore... And thank God I don't work for the Kazakh government. If I were working, I would, one way or another, face the issue of corruption. This is completely unacceptable to me ethically. That is, I can no longer, in principle, work in such conditions” (Woman, 44 years old, a graduate of a French university, lives in France).

“I even want to [return], but not in the current situation. That is, [if there are] political changes. And when they happen, I will be happy to come, build something interesting there” (Male, 29 years old, graduate of a Canadian university, lives in Canada).

“In the future, yes. I would like to [return]... The fact is that I don't feel safe in Kazakhstan... The fact is that I hold liberal views, democratic views, and I, at the moment,... will not be able to live under the control of those who now govern [the country]” (Female, 28 years old, a graduate of a Latvian university, lives in the USA).

However, among the respondents there were those who are not going to return to Kazakhstan at all. They justify their choice by the fact that there are no acceptable conditions for work, development and financial stability in Kazakhstan.

“Well, at the current conditions, no. I wouldn't want to [return]... Because the level of wages is not the same as here. Well, specifically in Moscow, I guess. I can't speak for the entire Russia. The level of technical equipment for work is low. Probably, these are 2 main points. That is, the economy and the material base at work (Male, 28 years old, graduate of Russian universities, lives in Russia).

I don't know, probably not. Why is the answer “no” now? Well, because I'm young. Maybe that's why. There's just nothing for me to catch [no opportunities]. And the country has nothing to offer me yet” (Male, 29 years old, graduate of a Chinese university, lives in the USA).

“At the moment, not really... Because I don't see development for myself, in the country, that is. I will most likely be the same average coach as, let's say, other guys who

work in this field” (Male, 23 years old, graduate of a Russian university, lives in Russia).

As known, 130 nations and nationalities live in Kazakhstan (Zakon.kz, 2021) and interethnic conflicts occur from time to time (Radio Azattyk, 2020). One of the respondents, a representative of a non-titular nation, shared his feelings about this and explained why he did not plan to return to Kazakhstan for permanent residence.

“In fact, yes, of course, I would like to have my place under the sun. Well, my own homeland and so on. But, a little scary, what will happen to the country in the future? The nationalist question arises especially terribly. Since I am, I have an ethnos, like, I am Russian, but it happened, from things that do not depend on us... Recently, some nationalist movements or something else are waking up to one degree or another. Yes, it does not occur at the highest level, for example, as political. But, although you come across it when you just go, there, in shopping centers, well, at the household level, you come across this. And you're scared for your children. Do you want your children to grow up in this? The question arises. Don't quite want to. That is, I'm afraid for my safety, well, for my future. The future of my children” (Male, 27 years old, graduate of an Italian university, lives in Germany).

Among Kazakhstani graduates of foreign universities who do not plan to return to their homeland, there are those who continue to benefit the country, even while abroad. That is, they believe that they can be much more useful by working and living in another country than in Kazakhstan.

“I think, being here, I have done a lot of useful things for Kazakhstan. And I still continue to do so. I bring European money and I take students here. And I write projects, I bring professors here... That is, I don't think that my physical staying in Kazakhstan would be much more useful to me than the way it is now, if measured by my effect. That is, being here, the same effect... I can show a lot of people who stay abroad, work, and do many things for Kazakhstan. And they give much more effect than those who come to Kazakhstan”

(Woman, 37 years old, graduate of Hungarian and Swedish universities, lives in Sweden).

“In fact, I would like to have the opportunity to work in all the countries that are open to me: in Kazakhstan, and in Europe, and in the United States, without having restrictions on where to live... As I said, I have project work. If I have projects around the world, I would continue to roam like a nomad from country to country and do my job... I would not want to be tied down by France, or by Kazakhstan, or by any other countries. And to have such an opportunity... to work in such projects, wherever they are physically located. Therefore, I am invited to Kazakhstan. So, today I was invited to Kazakhstan. I came here. I did it with great pleasure. If they invite me again, and I will have, well, comfortable conditions and it will suit my functions, and I will be able to perform them for the required amount, as a specialist, I will come with pleasure, of course. I liked it very much” (Female, 44 years old, graduate of a French university, lives in France).

Other factors hindering the return of graduates of foreign universities to Kazakhstan are ecology and climatic conditions. That is, air pollution in Kazakhstan, as well as the severe sharply continental climate, negatively affected some respondents in the question of returning to their homeland.

“Our climate is absolutely terrible. We must admit” (Male, 34, graduate of Finnish and Canadian universities, lives in Germany).

“At the moment, I am very uncomfortable being [in Kazakhstan] on a long-term basis. For example, I'm here for about two months and it's really hard for me physically because of pollution. Unable to breathe” (Female, 44, graduate of a French university, lives in France).

Conclusion

After completing their studies abroad, Kazakhstanis face some degree of uncertainty about their future. Graduates of foreign universities need to make further plans and decide whether to return to Kazakhstan or decide to continue their careers abroad. In this study, the reasons

and motives of why Kazakhstani graduates of foreign universities decided to stay abroad were identified. At the same time, the degree of readiness of Kazakhstanis to return to Kazakhstan and its reasons were studied.

One of the most important points that influenced the decision of Kazakhstanis to move abroad is the family factor. According to the results of in-depth interviews, this applies to women to a greater extent. Married graduates of foreign universities say that they follow their spouses and therefore currently live and work abroad.

Other factors that contributed to the departure of graduates of foreign universities from Kazakhstan that were named are: economic instability, low wages, problems with employment and precarious career prospects. That is, the economic crisis in Kazakhstan negatively affected the labor market, as a result, graduates faced the problem of finding a well-paid job that matches their qualifications.

Another reason to stay abroad that graduates mention is the fear of wasting in Kazakhstan the intellectual potential acquired in the process of studying at the best universities in the world. At the same time, respondents believe that there will be more opportunities to apply and develop their knowledge, competencies and skills abroad. In addition to this, Kazakh graduates of foreign universities believe that working in another country, one can gain international experience, which will open up further career prospects.

Respondents were also dissatisfied with the current political system in Kazakhstan. According to them, much needs to be changed in the state apparatus, and the absence of these changes will contribute to the further outflow of Kazakhstanis from the country.

Participants of in-depth interviews also touched upon the Kazakh mentality, some cultural characteristics and the close interweaving of personal and business relationships. That is, despite the fact that Kazakhstan is developing, respondents say that some issues are still being resolved by unscrupulous methods.

Kazakh graduates of foreign universities call economic development, high wages, comfort and safety of living as pull factors in the recipient countries.

Different answers were given to the

question about the degree of readiness of graduates of foreign universities to return to Kazakhstan. Some of the graduates noted that they would definitely return to their homeland after some time, other respondents also did not exclude such a possibility in the future. However, there were those who were more categorical and firm in their intention to stay abroad.

In this regard, part of Kazakhstanis are ready to return to their homeland because of strong patriotic feelings, family and friendship ties. Another part of the respondents are also ready to return to Kazakhstan after some time, if a suitable job with decent wages and good working conditions is offered. Some in-depth interview participants are waiting for changes in the current political system, and if there are changes, they are ready to return to Kazakhstan.

However, not all Kazakh graduates of foreign universities are ready to return to their homeland. They justify their choice by the fact that at the moment they live quite comfortably abroad, and they do not see financial stability, acceptable working conditions in Kazakhstan. Among the respondents there was 1 participant of non-titular nationality, who is concerned about nationalist sentiments among some of the population of Kazakhstan. In this regard, he also does not show any desire to live in Kazakhstan in the future. Participants of the in-depth interviews also noted the poor ecology and harsh climatic conditions, because of which they do not want to return to Kazakhstan.

There was another category of respondents who do not plan to return to Kazakhstan, but they maintain close ties with their homeland and do their best to benefit it in one way or another.

Summing up the results of the study, we can say that the reasons and motives for migration to other countries of Kazakhstani graduates of foreign universities, as well as the degree of their readiness to return to Kazakhstan, were identified. The results of this study can help in planning further actions and making strategic decisions in the field of Kazakhstan's migration policy.

This research has been funded by the Science Committee of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Grant No. AP13067766).

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ЖАҢАНДЫҚ СЫН-ТЕГЕУРІНДЕР ТҰРҒЫСЫНДАҒЫ КӨШІ-ҚОН САЯСАТЫ: ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ ЗИЯТКЕРЛІК КӨШІ-ҚОН СЕБЕПТЕРІН ТАЛДАУ

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МИГРАЦИОННАЯ ПОЛИТИКА В КОНТЕКСТЕ ГЛОБАЛЬНЫХ ВЫЗОВОВ: АНАЛИЗ ПРИЧИН ИНТЕЛЛЕКТУАЛЬНОЙ МИГРАЦИИ В КАЗАХСТАНЕ

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