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DOES KAZAKHSTAN NEED TO RATIFY THE TOKYO CONVENTION?

Abstract: The article considers the importance of further development of the process of internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan, in particular, increasing the competitiveness of exports of Kazakhstani educational services through integration into the educational area of the Asia-Pacific region (APAC). It is shown that ratification of the Tokyo Convention will contribute to the implementation of one of the indicators of the Concept of Development of Higher Education and Science in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023 - 2029, specifically increasing the proportion of foreign students. Ratification of the Tokyo Convention will give Kazakhstan the opportunity to strengthen diplomatic relations with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region. It will raise awareness of Southeast Asians about Kazakhstan's education system, higher education institutions, educational programmes, the national system of qualifications of higher education, the process of issuing diplomas and certificates. This will help to improve mutual understanding and trust between the countries, as well as promote wider intercultural exchange of knowledge and experience.

Ratification of the Convention will strengthen the status of Kazakhstani educational institutions in the educational area in the Asia-Pacific region, thereby attracting international students and researchers. Comparative analysis of the Lisbon and Tokyo Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education shows that joining the Tokyo Convention can make the APAC countries one of the important platforms for the export of Kazakhstani higher education.

Keywords: Internationalization of higher education, mobility, recognition, cooperation.

Introduction. The main document that defines the directions and priorities for the development of higher education in Kazakhstan is the Concept of Development of Higher Education and Science in the Republic of Kazakhstan (Concept) for 2023-2029, approved by the order of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan in March 2023 [1].

One of the main purposes of the Concept is to increase the attractiveness of higher and postgraduate education and positioning of higher education institutions of Kazakhstan at the international educational level. To achieve this, the implementation of the Internationalization strategy will be continued, including the creation of favorable conditions for the education of foreign students (infrastructure, grants, scholarships, etc.), information mechanisms, simplification of obtaining a student visa. To attract talented foreign youth, the implementation of the scholarship programme will be continued.

According to the Concept, one of the key indicators is the proportion of foreign students. Thus, by 2029 the contingent of foreign students is expected to be 10 % of the total number of students, which will amount to approximately 80-90 thousand.

Consider the dynamics of the arrival of foreign students in higher education institutions of Kazakhstan (Fig.1). If excluding the deviating value of 2019 due to the record number of students from Uzbekistan, the measures taken in recent years do not provide the dynamics of the number of foreign citizens. The proportion of foreign students in recent years does not exceed 3.3-3.5% of the total number of students. Now it is necessary to triple this indicator in 6 years.

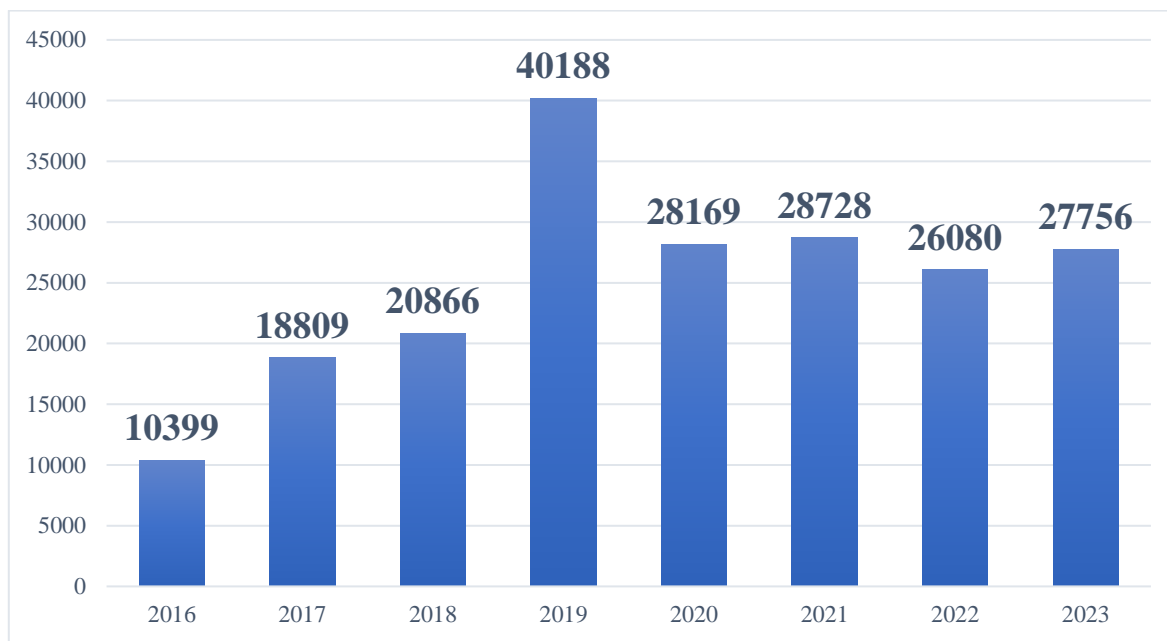


Fig.1 Dynamics of the number of foreign students in higher education institutions of Kazakhstan

The aim of this study is to explore the feasibility of achieving this strategic objective through accession to the Tokyo Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications in Asia and the Pacific.

The originality of the research is that for the first time it shows the advantages for the development of Internationalization processes, obtained by opening new markets for the export of educational services.

As a research *methodology*, the authors used various scientometric approaches that are used in the analysis of internationalization of education in international practice.

Materials and methods. As methods and sources of the research the study of the mentioned issues conducted on the basis of comparative analysis of materials and documents of the Current Archive of the Centre for Higher Education Development of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, regulatory materials, involvement of some statistical and factual data of UNESCO, works of foreign and domestic scientists on Internationalization of higher education.

Results and Discussion. Internationalization in higher education is commonly understood as a process whereby the activities of higher education institutions acquire an international dimension [2].

The internationalisation of education is a developmental process that is constantly discovering new and diverse forms of cooperation [3]. The concept of internationalization in higher education in

international practice traditionally includes two aspects: "internal" internationalization (internationalization at home) and "external" internationalization (education abroad, across borders, cross-border education). From year to year the number of students travelling abroad to study[4] is growing. So if in the year 2000, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 1.6 million students studied abroad, in 2022 there will be 6.4 million students[5].

International organisations and regional associations play an important role in the process of internationalisation of education, in particular, in promoting export of educational services. The active phase of formation of integration associations in Europe, which started in the middle of the last century, accompanied by migration of population between countries, posed a logical question of recognition of education documents issued abroad [6].

Mutual recognition of educational credentials is becoming an increasingly important tool to facilitate student and labour mobility. Citizens usually face this problem when going to work or study abroad with diplomas or returning to their own country after studying abroad. It is also relevant in cases where education was received in one's own country but a foreign diploma was issued.

One of the principles of academic recognition is that the first condition for the recognition of a qualification is that it is recognized in the country where it was obtained. Recognition Conventions, which can cover the whole region and its borders, provide a legal basis for fair, transparent and non-discriminatory recognition of qualifications, both between countries in the region and worldwide. It is a form of agreement between sovereign nation states that ensures that the parties' responsibilities in the recognition process are shared on the basis of mutual trust and information. A recognition convention does not lead to the harmonization of education systems. Conventions are important for legal rationality, as well as for the exchange of best practices and benefit analysis, which contributes to the implementation of the principles of fair recognition.

The issue concerning the recognition of higher education qualifications was raised for the first time at the second session of the UNESCO General Conference in 1947 [7]. And in the period from 1960-1991 the initial legal framework for the recognition of qualifications under the auspices of UNESCO was formed. In 1997, the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, the so-called Lisbon Convention [8], adopted in Lisbon.

In 1998, Kazakhstan officially adopted the Lisbon Convention, which became the legal basis for the active development of international co-operation with 56 countries that have also signed the Convention. This step contributed to the establishment of common approaches to the structure of higher education, quality assurance system and awarded qualifications. As a result, the mobility of students and teachers between higher education institutions has been expanded and a new impetus has been given to the development of scientific co-operation. An important step towards fair recognition processes, making it more transparent and effective has been switched from nostrification to recognition, starting from June 2021. As a result, the Rules for Recognition of foreign education documents were developed [9].

Intensive activities in line with the Lisbon Convention have ensured the increasing academic mobility of students, providing them with the opportunity to receive education in educational institutions mainly from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Europe [10].

There were 108,504 applications for the procedure of recognition of educational documents from 2018 to 2023. The largest number of submitted educational documents for the recognition procedure comes from the regions as follows: Central Asia 62,445, Europe 26,016, West and South Asia 19,122, Americas 309, Asia-Pacific 340, Africa 272. [11].

The scholarship programme for foreign citizens, which has been implemented since 2019, has also become a catalyst for attracting foreign students, 550 grants are allocated annually for its implementation. This year, 6024 applications were received from 80 countries. The leaders are

Afghanistan (2156), Uzbekistan (692). Only 317 applications (2.9 per cent) were received from Asia-Pacific countries.

Such low representation of applicants from APAC countries is due to low informativeness of citizens of APAC countries about the quality of higher education in Kazakhstan, higher education institutions, their educational programmes, national qualification framework, diplomas awarded, etc.

The past few decades have seen a significant expansion of higher education in the region, with important implications for social mobility.... According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, more than 20 per cent of the youth population (15-24 years old) are not in education, employment or training. This example illustrates significant gaps in young people's access to education. Among the total number of mobile outbound students from the Asia-Pacific region, 2/3 of students are from China, India, Republic of Korea, and Vietnam. In 2020, more than 1 million Chinese citizens, 132,000 from Vietnam, and 100,000 from South Korea studied overseas.

According to A. Muzayev, one of the important factors in assessing the attractiveness of a country's education system in terms of attracting international students is the transparency and understandability of the procedure for recognizing qualifications, use of common tools, and compliance with international recommendations [12].

In this regard, it is timely and important to pay attention to the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (Tokyo Convention), which entered into force on 1 February 2018[13]. As of September 2023, it has 12 States Parties.

This convention, developed within UNESCO, is an instrument aimed at establishing commonly accepted standards for the recognition and assessment of higher education qualifications in the Asia-Pacific region.

As outlined by Mr. Shigeru Aoyagi, Director of UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific (UNESCO Bangkok), «The Tokyo Convention will help countries minimize further disruption for all students and graduates through fair and transparent recognition of online and blended learning. This is key in the context of COVID-19 and for the future of higher education» [14].

The main goals of the Tokyo Convention are: to strengthen links and cooperation between Asia and the Pacific countries through the recognition of qualifications, to support academic mobility and knowledge exchange, and to preserve and promote cultural specificities and traditions in the different countries of the region by recognizing and respecting the diversity of study programmes and qualifications.

The Tokyo Convention seeks to recognize the diversity of educational programmes and qualifications, which can be difficult to compare, in order to support lifelong learning and encourage learning in different countries.

Thus, the Tokyo Convention has purposes that transcend the simple recognition of qualifications, encompassing important aspects of cooperation, mobility and diversity of education systems to improve education and promote sustainable development in the Asia and the Pacific region.

A comparison of the Tokyo and Lisbon Conventions shows the similarity of the main provisions. However, the concept of «Higher education» in the Tokyo Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications has a wider aspect and is adapted to the current realities in higher education. This broadened definition of «Higher education» in the Tokyo Convention reflects current trends and the diversity of educational opportunities available in different countries. It also takes into account the importance of recognizing qualifications from different educational systems, including vocational and technical education.

In this way, the Tokyo Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications approaches the definition of «Higher Education» in a more flexible and modern way, taking into account the diversity

of educational pathways and forms of learning that are becoming increasingly relevant in today's world.

Both Conventions provide for the competences of central authorities, other Parties (constituent parties) or institutions of higher education. The Conventions also specify the need to take measures to ensure that information is transmitted to the relevant authorized bodies (constituent Parties, Parties, institutions of higher education) and that the provisions of this Convention are implemented in the territory of the Party where recognition takes place.

Both the Lisbon and Tokyo Conventions define the basic principles of qualifications assessment:

- Adequate access for qualification holders to information on the education system, procedures and criteria for the assessment and recognition of qualifications;
- Non-discrimination;
- Reasonable timeframes for recognition and review procedures;
- Transparency, consistency, reliability of assessment procedures and criteria;
- Accountability of higher education institutions for providing information upon request.

In each of the conventions, recognition of qualifications issued by other parties is a condition for access to higher education. Except where there are substantial differences. Nevertheless, in such cases both conventions provide for the use of *mutatis mutandis*¹.

Both conventions, however, recognize the importance of ensuring the quality of education and the recognition of qualifications obtained in different countries. They seek to establish mechanisms for the recognition of academic mobility and take into account the uniqueness and diversity of study programmes.

Both Conventions stipulate that Parties should have National Information Centers (NICs) providing access to information on higher education.

The Tokyo and Lisbon Conventions oblige the establishment of transparent systems to fully describe qualifications and learning outcomes obtained on its territory and to provide adequate information on any institution within its higher education system.

The executive structures and procedures of both conventions are the same: establishment of a National Information Centre, designation of a member of the Network of National Information Centers and participation in the Committee of the Convention (Intergovernmental Conference).

However, the two conventions have different geographical coverage, with the Tokyo Convention focusing only on the Asia-Pacific region, while the Lisbon Convention focuses primarily on the European region.

In Kazakhstan, the Bologna Process and Academic Mobility Center, which was transformed into the Higher Education Development National Center in 2023, served as the National Information Centre under the Lisbon Convention. This center provides the Convention countries with information on Kazakhstan's higher education system and quality assurance mechanisms, qualifications and institutions, and issues qualification assessments to individuals in accordance with the obligations established by the Convention.

If the Tokyo Convention is ratified, the Centre may expand its geographical scope.

Conclusions. Ratification of the Tokyo Convention will give Kazakhstan an opportunity to strengthen diplomatic relations with like-minded countries and make a significant contribution to the development of the Asia-Pacific region. It will raise awareness of the residents of the Asia-Pacific region about Kazakhstan's education system, higher education institutions, educational programmes, the national higher education qualification system, the process of issuing diplomas and certificates.

¹ *Mutatis mutandis* - is a Latin phrase meaning "with respective differences taken into consideration"

This will help to improve mutual understanding and trust between the countries, as well as promote wider intercultural exchange of knowledge and experience.

Joining this important document will raise awareness among citizens of APAC countries about Kazakhstan's education system, higher education institutions, educational programmes, the national higher education qualification system and the process of issuing diplomas and certificates. Such interaction will contribute to improving mutual understanding and trust between the countries, as well as expanding intercultural exchange of knowledge and experience.

Cooperation with APAC countries in this area will allow Kazakhstan to share its experience and successful practices in the field of education quality assurance, as well as to take into account international standards and methodologies for further development of its system. It will also help to attract more international students from APAC countries, providing them with access to quality education and creating conditions for the exchange of knowledge and experience between students of different cultures.

The development of cooperation in this area will establish fair recognition of diplomas and certificates, which will facilitate the mobility of students between countries, as well as promote the integration of Kazakh educational structures into the international educational space.

Implementation of the Tokyo Convention does not require changes in domestic legislation or policy. Kazakhstan already fulfils similar obligations under the Lisbon Convention.

Therefore, we consider that ratification of the Tokyo Convention is necessary. Ratification of the Convention will strengthen the status of Kazakhstani educational institutions in the educational space of the Asia-Pacific region, thus attracting international students and researchers, which will not only diversify the cultural and scientific environment, but also bring additional funds into the educational field.

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ҚАЗАҚСТАНҒА ТОКИО КОНВЕНЦИЯСЫН РАТИФИКАЦИЯЛАУ КЕРЕК ПЕ?

Андатпа. Қазақстандық жоғары білім беруді интернационалдандыру процесін одан әрі дамытудың, атап айтқанда Азия-Тынық мұхиты аймағының білім беру кеңістігіне интеграциялау арқылы қазақстандық білім беру қызметтері экспортының бәсекеге қабілеттілігін арттырудың маңыздылығы қарастырылуда. Токио конвенциясын ратификациялау Қазақстан Республикасында жоғары білім мен ғылымды дамытудың 2023 – 2029 жылдарға арналған тұжырымдамасының индикаторларының бірін, атап айтқанда шетелдік студенттердің үлесін арттыруға ықпал ететіні көрсетілген. Токио конвенциясын ратификациялау Қазақстанға Азия-Тынық мұхиты аймағындағы елдерімен дипломатиялық қатынастарды нығайтуға мүмкіндік береді. Оңтүстік-Шығыс Азия тұрғындарының Қазақстанның білім беру жүйесі, жоғары оқу орындары, білім беру бағдарламалары, жоғары білімнің ұлттық біліктілік жүйесі, дипломдар мен сертификаттар беру процесі туралы хабардар

болуын арттыру. Бұл елдер арасындағы өзара түсіністік пен сенімді жақсартуға, сондай-ақ білім мен тәжірибенің кеңірек мәдениетаралық алмасуына ықпал етеді.

Конвенцияны ратификациялау Азия-Тынық мұхиты аймағының білім беру кеңістігіндегі қазақстандық оқу орындарының мәртебесін күшейтеді, осылайша Халықаралық студенттер мен зерттеушілерді тартады. Жоғары білімнің біліктілігін тану туралы Лиссабон және Токио конвенцияларының салыстырмалы талдауы Токио конвенциясына қосылу Азия-Тынық мұхиты аймағы елдерін қазақстандық жоғары білімнің экспорты үшін маңызды алаңдардың біріне айналдыра алатынын көрсетеді.

Кілт сөздер: жоғары білім беруді интернационалдандыру, ұтқырлық, тану, ынтымақтастық.

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НАДО ЛИ КАЗАХСТАНУ РАТИФИЦИРОВАТЬ ТОКИЙСКУЮ КОНВЕНЦИЮ?

Аннотация. Рассматривается важность дальнейшего развития процесса интернационализации казахстанского высшего образования, в частности увеличения конкурентоспособности экспорта казахстанских образовательных услуг через интеграцию в образовательное пространство Азиатско-Тихоокеанского региона (АТР). Показано, что ратификация Токийской Конвенции будет способствовать реализации одного из индикаторов Концепции развития высшего образования и науки в Республике Казахстан на 2023 – 2029 годы, а именно увеличения доли иностранных студентов. Ратификация Токийской конвенции даст Казахстану возможность укрепить дипломатические отношения со странами Азиатско-Тихоокеанского региона. Повысит информированность жителей Юго-Восточной Азии о системе образования Казахстана, высших учебных заведениях, образовательных программах, национальной системе квалификаций высшего образования, процессе выдачи дипломов и сертификатов. Это поможет улучшить взаимопонимание и доверие между странами, а также будет способствовать более широкому межкультурному обмену знаниями и опытом.

Ратификация конвенции усилит статус казахстанских учебных заведений в образовательном пространстве АТР, тем самым привлечет международных студентов и исследователей. Сравнительный анализ Лиссабонской и Токийской конвенций о признании квалификаций высшего образования показывает, что присоединение к Токийской конвенции может сделать страны АТР, одной из важных площадок для экспорта казахстанского высшего образования.

Ключевые слова: интернационализация высшего образования, мобильность, признание, сотрудничество.

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