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ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНАЯ ПОЛИТИКА В ОБЛАСТИ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ /  
EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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**<sup>1</sup>Mukhametkairov A., <sup>2</sup>Kudysheva A., <sup>3</sup>Fominykh N.**

<sup>1</sup>Pavlodar Pedagogical University named after Alkey Margulan, Kazakhstan, Pavlodar

<sup>2</sup>South Kazakhstan Pedagogical University named after Uzbekali Zhanibekov

<sup>3</sup>Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Moscow, Russian Federation

**NETWORKING AS ONE OF THE WAYS TO DEVELOP SOFT SKILLS  
OF STUDENTS**

**Abstract.** This article examines the problem of developing soft skills of students, which are important competencies that help a person to communicate better and more effectively and, in the future, to work successfully. It has been established that soft skills, for example in the field of communication, can be learned at university, but this requires modern technologies such as networking and digital networking, the effectiveness of which has been proven in developed countries of the world. The problems and basic networking skills needed by students to carry out soft communication activities are identified.

The effectiveness of networking as a way to develop soft skills of students is implemented within the framework of the “Networking” development program to develop the art of communication and soft communication skills in three modules: “Forum Theater”, “Art of Self-Presentation” and “Business Games”. The carried out activities are aimed at increasing students’ levels of communication skills, communicative competence, and sociability. Its effectiveness is confirmed by the results of experimental work using three methods, as the soft communication skills of many students in the experimental group who attended a special networking course received significant development, both in relation to communication skills, as well as communicative competencies and sociability.

**Keywords:** soft skills, networking, communication skills, communication competencies, sociability, students.

**Introduction**

In modern conditions in the methodology of teaching and learning of students one of the essential topics is presented by many researchers the problem of formation of soft skills, which are considered to be important competences, as they help a person to work better and more effectively in the future, as well as simply to communicate with other people. One of the important soft skills are considered to be communicative skills that help students to communicate and understand other people. Their development is due to the fact that one of the problems of modern students is their pronounced inability to establish relationships in real life and maintain favorable personal and business relationships when communicating both with each other and with other people.

The reason for this situation is the difficult age, as well as the development of digitalization, in which there is communication not in real format, but through the Internet and social networks (allowing to communicate directly in the network). It is quite possible that it is therefore these conditions that lead to the fact that most children of high university age have

insufficient soft skills in the area of communicative competence. At the same time, it is important to note that communication is no longer taught in upper grades of secondary educational institutions, while many scientific studies show that not every adult can master such soft communicative skills as business communication and public speaking at a sufficiently high level. All this suggests that an insufficient level of soft communication skills can cause a large number of problems, as in university (in the form of insecurity or conflicts between classmates, between students and teachers and students themselves, and so on).

Based on all this, all new requirements arise to the need to form soft communication skills of students. New requirements, caused by the conditions of the constantly changing world, determine the need to adjust the system of education, especially in high university through the use of new technologies that allow to develop soft communicative skills of students. Such technologies in recent years include networking technologies. Networking is a type of activity, which is aimed at being able to achieve goals through informal friendly contacts and to cope more effectively with various life and other situations. Such activity is based on the ability to construct trusting and long-term relationships with other people and to realize more potential of one's social position.

It is conditioned by the fact that it is desirable for a modern high university student at this age to have skills to create trusting relationships based on mutual support, on the possibility to exchange opinions and knowledge quite freely and to provide others with emotional support. All this requires in turn the need for them to acquire appropriate communicative competencies and skills formed on the basis of networking.

The relevance of the study lies in the fact that the formation of soft communication skills of students dictates the need for a deeper study of the topic of networking and its relationship to the development of soft skills.

On the conditions of the presence of the indicated problem of development of soft communication skills of students and the feasibility of using networking as a way of their development, the topic of this study was determined.

The purpose of the study is to establish the relationship between the indicators of the effectiveness of the development of soft communication skills of students through the use of networking.

### **Research methods and organization**

In the process of research at the first stage of the study, the method of systematic literary analysis of theoretical and practical material, as well as content analysis of publications in the Internet and other media was used. The organization of the research is based on the selection of material and is presented in the form of purposeful practical observation of the processes that occur in the system of Kazakhstani education (using information and communication technologies) on the topic of networking.

At the second stage the method of pedagogical experiment was applied. The experimental work was organized on the basis Pavlodar pedagogical University named after Alkey Margulan in Pavlidar city. In total, 55 students participated in the study. Purpose of the study: to establish the influence of networking measures on the development of soft communication skills. Objectives: to determine the initial level of soft communicative skills; to propose a complex on the basis of networking on the development of communicative skills; to determine the level of formation of communicative skills; to draw conclusions.

The work is organized in three stages: ascertaining, main (or forming) and control. Students are divided into two groups: experimental and control. Only in the first group classes with the use of networking techniques were held. The following methods were used to diagnose the skills:

1. V.V. Sinyavsky and V.A. Fedorshin's test "Communicative and Organizational Skills" consists of 40 questions to assess communicative and organizational skills important for social communication;

2. L. Michelson's test to identify communicative skills (adapted by Y.Z. Gilbukh) - is considered a test to determine the achievements of a person regarding both the level of communicative competence and the assessment of the quality level of the formation of basic communicative skills (consists of 27 questions);

3. V.F. Ryakhovsky's questionnaire "Assessment of the level of sociability", includes 16 questions that give the opportunity to determine the level of sociability or sociability of a person.

Classes were held in the experimental group once a week for 44-90 minutes. A special program was used, in a collective form (trainings, discussions, games). The development program "Networking" is intended for students 15-18 years old, has a social and pedagogical direction (the volume of 72 hours, 2 hours in one week). The aim is to develop the art of communication and soft communication skills.

Objectives:

–educational: preparation of students for effective and successful public speaking; formation of abilities that help to cope with stressful situations when communicating or speaking in public; formation of skills to present oneself in a beautifully favorable way and to play up the situation;

–developmental: development of social skills of communication and behavior with an attitude to the ability to make independent decisions, especially in problem situations; formation of personal qualities necessary in the process of various kinds of communication;

–educational: formation of skills to understand and appreciate the feelings of other people.

It consists of three modules: the first module "Forum Theater", the second module "The Art of Self-Presentation", the third module "Business Games". It allows to pump such Soft Skills as interaction with people, creativity, flexibility of thinking, decision making, problem solving, and other above professional skills that help students to communicate well, well and will be important for their future career. The program is based on a creative approach to implementation, taking into account the age characteristics of students.

Classes on the module "Forum Theater" are held in a practical format: roles are played out, which are needed to prepare for a speech, discussions and so on. They are realized in the form of short sketches.

The module "The Art of Self-Presentation" - in theoretical and practical form (trainings and seminars) teaches the skills of self-presentation: how to make a presentation, how to present oneself. The main emphasis is on mastering by students the skills of successful self-presentation, which are aimed at students' work on themselves, on the ability to get acquainted and communicate, and to present themselves freely.

The module "Business Games" presents a game as one of the most effective ways of communicating with others. Through games (simulation method) it is possible to teach decision-making in different situations, as they simulate real life situations. Business games allow students to make decisions on their own, find more effective strategies in communication and behavior, and analyze their successes and failures. The business game will give students practical benefits: in the field of career guidance (invited professionals help the guys to get more experience and understand better the peculiarities of professional activity) and allows them to make an informed choice. Thus, a business game for teenagers can become an important starting point in making a decision related to professional choice; regarding the assessment of themselves and their competencies: creativity, ability to communicate, teamwork and others. The process of the game makes the environment easy and relaxed.

The conducted activities are aimed at increasing the students' levels of;

- communicative ability as an indicator of a person's soft skills in the area of successful conversation, interaction and participation in social activities;
- communicative competence as an indicator of soft skills of free communicative interaction, important for a person socially adapted in modern conditions;
- sociability, as an indicator of soft ability to open social communication with others, provided that they affect both business and personal relationships.

### **The results of the study and discussion**

Studying the literature in the field of pedagogy and psychology it should be noted that different scientists and researchers interpret the problem of soft skills in relation to communication between people in different ways. The analysis of the main scientific approaches concerning soft skills allows us to refer them to the group of non-cognitive competences (soft skills), which complement special skills or important qualities needed in professional activity (hard skills) (E.F. Zeer [1], Y.P. Povarenkov [2], A.V. Karpov [3] and others). The importance of specifically these skills in the process of teaching children in high university in order for them to be able to become competitive on the labor market in the future after leaving university and to be able to always build only effective life and social strategies. In this direction it is possible to note scientific views of such foreign authors as Cai, W.[4], Chassidim, H. [5], Chell, E. [6], Breithaupt, F. [7], Fernandez, F. [8], L. Huacong [9], Fixsen, A. [10] and others who indicate that soft skills are necessary as personal characteristics, not only for today's professionals, but also previously. Therefore, they should be developed both at the tertiary and secondary university level.

As a result of further theoretical analysis of the main problems regarding soft skills in the field of communication when forming them in the process of education in high university, among different points of view, the following clarification of its concept was chosen. Soft communication skills should be understood as a set of abilities (skills and abilities), formed in the process of specially organized training, acting as parameters of successful interaction both in real space and in virtual and digital space, which are gradually consolidated in a person or automated, when involved in educational or professional activities, according to its requirements [11]. Soft communication skills of students are an important condition for the formation of their personality and are characterized by some specific psychological parameters, which should be taken into account in the process of development.

Communicability in the general sense can be learned at university, as the process of learning requires the ability to communicate with other people and easily build a dialog with them. The ability of a high university student to adapt to communicative situations is considered an important element of this soft skill. Since there will be a significant difference in the dialog between classmates and with the teacher. It is noted that for the development of sociability are suitable discussions that are held between individual students and groups in the class, as well as presentations of individual projects with discussion and the organization of various kinds of discussion clubs. The latter two are most often included in the development of several soft communication skills such as leadership, positivity, self-presentation and some others. They are realized in recent years through the skills of working with modern technologies, such as networking and digital - networking, which allows to develop communication skills when working with digital materials and thus use the advantages provided by digitalization [12]. V.S. Mukhina notes that the development of communicative skills occurs in a person throughout his/her life [13].

Networking is based on the 6-handshake theory, which was developed in the late 20th century by Stanley Milgram and Jeffrey Travers (American scientists). According to the theory of networking, each person knows at least indirectly with another person of the given planet

through a chain of some common acquaintances, provided that on average the chain consists of five people. In this regard, the concept of "networking" is considered as a process of effective collection, storage and application of information, produced by a person personally or by a wide range of persons who are connected by a single community, created on the provisions of mutually beneficial relationships that deepen the achievements of community members.

In developed countries, the practice of implementing networking shows that this method allows to find effective solutions to a number of complex problems labeled networking activity to find, establish and maintain trusting, constructive and long-term contacts with other people [14]. The potential of the method of networking is revealed quite fully due to the creation in modern conditions of the most extensive base of public and personal contacts that give the opportunity to get some kind of help or in achieving the goals set by a person or a community. Its potential in the educational environment is aimed at providing an active and proactive activity for a person who seeks to expand his contacts significantly. For this purpose, it is usually recommended to involve students in activities such as seminars, trainings, conferences, where it is possible to significantly increase their circle of contacts, as well as to form or practice communicative social skills. During such events, in the course of organizing work in a team format or in the form of projects, relationships are constructively built to ensure the process of oral communication and strengthen indicators of mutual sympathy and trust.

Many authors, including O.V. Rubtsova, note that the theory of networking (S. Milgram and D. Traverson) has received new outlines regarding the development due to digitalization and rapid introduction of digital technologies in all spheres of life, including education. This theory raises the potential of social and professional networks and the whole Internet, as it allows to expand contacts and to form one's personal image faster and better. At the same time, the use of networking leads to both positive and negative indicators, depending on the level of communication skills and moral qualities [15].

Based on the results obtained, it is possible to identify the main skills that students should possess, based on the theory of networking, in order to carry out soft communicative activity: to be valuable to people; before asking for something to give something back; to regularly establish professional connections and constantly maintain them and others. The basic rules or principles of modern networking, which should be brought up already at university, are also outlined: it is better to be friends with interesting people, that only for the sake of benefit - it is called moral prostitution; make friendship with interesting people; it is necessary to get close to such people, from whom you can learn something; start communication with politeness, and friendship - with a smile; it is more correct to address a person by name, but to go to "you" is not necessary to hurry; it is necessary to let people address you as they like or more convenient; to solve problems you should not use half-familiar or unfamiliar people, as they will immediately stop communicating with you; any help is gratuitous, and service is paid; it is better not to have financial affairs with friends; it is possible to remind about the promised not more than once (in case of non-fulfillment forgive and forget; it is better to trust people (than to be distrustful, it is better to be wrong once again) and so on [16,17]. At the same time, it is important to know that there is positive (a person is looking for communication to become useful: giving more than receiving) and negative (for the purpose of profit, not wanting to repay anything to people) networking.

In the course of the study, the problems that are noted among students as related to weak communicative competencies and their insufficient knowledge of new rules in the field of both logical argumentation and networking were also identified. These include, first of all, the following:

– weak mastery of methods of learning new skills, including the selection of friends and acquaintances, and the conduct of discussions;

- a habit of mindlessly absorbing any information and arguing to achieve the truth, using incorrect techniques;
- the inability to realize thought experiments to the end and the aspiration to take one's own position, which is not subject to argumentation;
- disorganization in human behavior in the absence of ready answers;
- inability to choose, independently, for dialog or other communication, his own topic and inability to formulate his questions;
- dependence on templates, expressed in the fact that the pupil agrees in everything with the teacher, is afraid of critical remarks, as he accepts them as failures and as indicators negatively affecting his image, and some others.

The results of the experimental work according to the three methods are noted in Table 1.

Table 1 - Results of the ascertaining and control stage, in percentages

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Level of formation of soft skills</i>	<i>Establishing stage</i>		<i>Control phase</i>	
		CG	EG	CG	EG
<b>communicative ability</b>	low	7,5	10,7	7,5	7,2
	below average	25,9	32,2	29,6	21,4
	average	51,8	35,7	48,1	35,7
	above average	14,8	17,8	14,8	28,5
	high	0	3,6	0	7,2
<b>communicative competence</b>	low	11,1	14,2	11,1	7,1
	below average	40,7	42,9	40,7	25
	average	37,1	28,7	37,1	32,1
	above average	11,1	14,2	11,1	35,7
	high	0	0	0	0
<b>sociability</b>	low	18,5	21,5	25,9	7,1
	below average	22,2	17,8	25,9	17,8
	average	29,7	39,2	25,9	32,1
	above average	25,9	21,5	17,8	42,8
	high	3,7	0	3,7	0

The obtained data show that at the establishing stage the indicators in both groups were approximately the same. Only one person from the experimental group had a high level of communicative ability, and one person from the control group also had a high level of sociability.

In general, at the time of conducting the establishing diagnostics, students had low indicators, as mainly average and below average levels of development of soft communicative skills prevailed. At the control diagnostics no big changes were established. While in the experimental group, with approximately the same indicators of average and below average level of formation of soft communicative skills at the control stage, there is an improvement of indicators after the main stage. As on the ascertaining diagnostics there is a significant improvement in the indicators of soft communicative competences: there is an increase in the number of students who obtained indicators above average and very high, while the indicators of low, below average and average decreased. These indicators show that the soft communicative competencies of many students in the experimental group have significantly developed compared to students in the control group, which is clearly reflected in Figure 1.

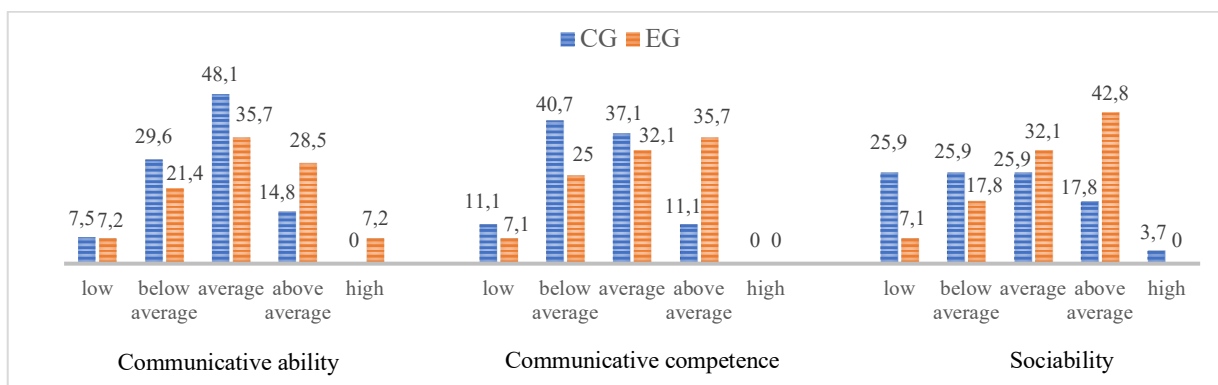


Figure 1. Comparative analysis of the results of the control and experimental groups, %

The obtained data indicate that the developmental program designed for the development of soft communication skills of students through networking is effective, as the results confirm the impact of the rules of networking on the dynamics of development of soft communication skills of students in the experimental group.

Discussion. In this direction we should refer to the opinion of experts on networking, for example, A.Babushkin, who notes that networking can be considered as knowledge, as a skill and as a competence. Regarding the development of soft communication skills, networking can be seen as the same skill or a way to teach people not only to get acquainted, but also to communicate with people and maintain relationships. Networking as a skill can be learned, as well as you can bring to automaticity and professionalism skills of business and personal communication. This is due to the fact that there are many ways, techniques and methods that make it possible to make communication with others more productive. At the same time, it is considered important to comply with the ways, techniques and methods of networking, because only under such conditions it is possible to predict good results with a high degree of probability [17]. According to A. Blesdova, the level of a person's training through networking can be assessed by the number of learned techniques, and the ability to confidently use them in practice, as well as the ability to adapt known communication techniques to changing conditions [18].

Some other studies emphasize the role of the game, which is based on the principles of networking, as a means of developing soft skills in education. It is noted that games have long been a means of learning and development. On this basis, networking can be presented as a powerful tool for developing soft skills of students for the following reasons: active participation helps to understand more deeply and thus develop such a soft skill as critical thinking; development of communication, as games always require some kind of communication and cooperation between participants, which allows to develop such soft skills as effective teamwork; problem solving, analyzing and finding solutions, as games require solving many problematic problems; problem solving, analyzing and searching for solutions, as well as problem solving, as well as problem solving. Thus, the obtained results are indirectly confirmed in the works and studies of other scientists and experts.

### Conclusions

In the course of literature and content analysis it was established that soft skills should be understood as a set of abilities (skills and abilities), which are formed in the process of specially organized training, acting as parameters of successful interaction both in real and virtual-digital space, and are an important condition of formation for students. Soft communication skills can be learned at university, but for this purpose it is necessary to use

modern technologies such as networking and digital - networking. The effectiveness of networking is proved by its potential and practices of implementation in developed countries of the world. Its potential in the educational environment for students is aimed at ensuring active and proactive activity and the desire to significantly expand their contacts through special programs and individual courses, as well as participation in events such as seminars, trainings and conferences.

The basic skills that students should possess, based on the theory of networking, in order to carry out soft communication activities are identified. And also the problems that are noted of students as related to weak communicative competences and their insufficient knowledge of new rules in the field of both logical argumentation and networking are established.

The results of experimental work on three methods show that soft communicative skills in many students of the experimental group who attended a special course of networking. The obtained results allow us to recognize the developmental program for the development of communication skills of students through networking as a way to develop soft skills. During the discussion it is indicated that the results of our study are indirectly confirmed in the works of other scholars and experts in the field of networking.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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**<sup>1</sup>А.Е Мухаметкаиров, <sup>2</sup>А.А. Кудышева, <sup>3</sup>Н.Ю. Фоминых**

<sup>1</sup>Әлкей Марғұлан атындағы Павлодар педагогикалық университеті, Қазақстан,  
Павлодар қ.

<sup>2</sup>Өзбекәлі Жәнібеков атындағы оңтүстік Қазақстан Педагогикалық Университеті

<sup>3</sup>Г.В.Плеханов атындағы Ресей Экономика Университеті,  
Мәскеу қ., Ресей Федерациясы

## **НЕТВОРКИНГ СТУДЕНТТЕРДІҢ ЖҰМСАҚ DAҒДЫЛАРЫН ДАМУ ТӘСІЛДЕРІНІҢ БІРІ РЕТІНДЕ**

**Аңдатпа.** Бұл мақалада адамның жақсы және тиімді қарым-қатынас жасауына және болашақта табысты жұмыс істеуіне көмектесетін маңызды құзыреттер болып табылатын студенттердің жұмсақ дағдыларын дамыту мәселесі қарастырылады. Жұмсақ дағдыларды, мысалы, коммуникация саласындағы дағдыларды университетте үйренуге болатыны анықталды, бірақ бұл үшін тиімділігі әлемнің дамыған елдерінде дәлелденген желілік және цифрлық желілер сияқты заманауи технологиялар қажет.. Жұмсақ коммуникативтік іс-әрекеттерді жүзеге асыру үшін студенттерге қажетті мәселелер мен негізгі желілік дағдылар анықталған.

Студенттердің жұмсақ дағдыларын дамыту тәсілі ретінде желінің тиімділігі Нетворкингты дамыту бағдарламасы аясында қарым-қатынас өнері мен жұмсақ қарым-қатынас дағдыларын дамыту үшін үш модуль бойынша жүзеге асырылды: «Форум

Театры», «Өзін-өзі Таныстыру Өнері» және «Іскерлік Ойындар». Өткізілген іс-шаралар оқушылардың коммуникативті қабілеттерін, коммуникативті құзыреттілігін, көпшілігін арттыруға бағытталған. Оның тиімділігі үш әдісті қолдана отырып жүргізілген эксперименттік жұмыстардың нәтижелерімен расталады, өйткені арнайы желілік курсқа қатысқан эксперименттік топтағы көптеген студенттердің жұмсақ қарым-қатынас дағдылары қарым-қатынас қабілетіне де, коммуникативті құзыреттілікке де қатысты айтарлықтай дамыды және көпшілдік.

**Кілт сөздер:** икемді дағдылар, нетворкинг, коммуникативтік қабілеттер, коммуникативтік құзыреттіліктер, көпшілдік, студенттер.

<sup>1</sup>А.Е Мухаметкаиров, <sup>2</sup>А.А. Кудышева, <sup>3</sup>Н.Ю. Фоминых

<sup>1</sup>Павлодарский педагогический университет им. Ә. Марғұлан, г. Павлодар, Казахстан,

<sup>2</sup>Южно-Казахстанский педагогический университет имени Узбекали Жанибекова,  
г.Шымкент, Казахстан

<sup>3</sup>Российский экономический университет имени Плеханова, г.Москва, Российская  
Федерация

## НЕТВОРКИНГ КАК ОДИН ИЗ СПОСОБОВ РАЗВИТИЯ МЯГКИХ НАВЫКОВ СТУДЕНТОВ

**Аннотация.** В данной статье рассматривается проблема развития soft skills у студентов, которые являются важными компетенциями, помогающими человеку лучше и результативнее общаться и, в будущем, успешно работать. Было установлено, что мягким навыкам, например, в области коммуникации, можно научиться в университете, но для этого требуются современные технологии, такие как нетворкинг и цифровые сети, эффективность которых была доказана в развитых странах мира. Определены проблемы и базовые сетевые навыки, необходимые учащимся для осуществления мягкой коммуникативной деятельности.

Эффективность нетворкинга как способа развития soft skills студентов реализуется в рамках программы развития «Нетворкинг» по развитию искусства общения и навыков soft communication в трех модулях: «Форум-театр», «Искусство самопрезентации» и «Деловые игры». Проводимые мероприятия направлены на повышение уровня коммуникативных способностей, коммуникативной компетентности и общительности студентов. Его эффективность подтверждена результатами экспериментальной работы с использованием трех методов, поскольку навыки мягкого общения многих студентов экспериментальной группы, посетивших специальный сетевой курс, получили значительное развитие, как в отношении коммуникативных способностей, так и коммуникативных компетенций и общительности.

**Ключевые слова:** гибкие навыки, нетворкинг, коммуникативные способности, коммуникативные компетенции, социализация, студенты.

### Information about authors:

*Mukhametkairov Arslanbek Erbolatovich* - 3rd year doctoral student, Pavlodar pedagogical university named after Alkey Margulan, Pavlodar, Kazakhstan; e-mail: mukhametkairov95@mail.ru.

*Kudysheva Ainash Amangeldievna* - Candidate of pedagogical sciences, Associate professor. South Kazakhstan pedagogical university named after Uzbekali Zhanibekov, Shymkent, Kazakhstan; e-mail: a.a.kudysheva@gmail.com.

*Natalia Yurievna Fominykh* - Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor, Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Moscow, Russian Federation; e-mail: shvidko72@mail.ru.

**Авторлар туралы мәліметтер**

**Мухаметкаиров Арсланбек Ерболатұлы** - 3 курс докторанты. Ә. Марғұлан атындағы Павлодар педагогикалық университеті, Павлодар, Қазақстан; e-mail: mukhametkairov95@mail.ru

**Кудышева Айнаш Амангелдіқызы** - педагогика ғылымдарының кандидаты, қауымдастырылған профессор. Өзбекәлі Жәнібеков атындағы Оңтүстік Қазақстан педагогикалық университеті, Шымкент, Қазақстан; e-mail: a.a.kudysheva@gmail.com.

**Наталья Юрьевна Фоминых** - педагогика ғылымдарының докторы, профессор, Г.В.Плеханов атындағы Ресей Экономика Университеті, Мәскеу, Ресей Федерациясы; e-mail: shvidko72@mail.ru.

**Сведения об авторах**

**Мухаметкаиров Арсланбек Ерболатович** - докторант 3 курса, Павлодарский педагогический университет им. Ә. Марғұлан, Павлодар, Қазақстан; e-mail: mukhametkairov95@mail.ru.

**Кудышева Айнаш Амангельдыевна** - кандидат педагогических наук, ассоциированный профессор. Южно-Казахстанский педагогический университет имени Озбекали Жанибекова, Шымкент, Қазақстан; e-mail: a.a.kudysheva@gmail.com.

**Фоминых Наталия Юрьевна**-доктор педагогических наук, профессор, РЭУ имени Г. В. Плеханова, Москва, Российская Федерация; e-mail: shvidko72@mail.ru.