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ACADEMIC MOBILITY AT YESSENOV UNIVERSITY: FOSTERING GLOBAL CONNECTIONS AND EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

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Abstract: Academic mobility, defined as the movement of students, faculty, and researchers across national borders to enhance their educational and research experiences, has become a significant feature of higher education systems worldwide. In Kazakhstan, academic mobility has evolved rapidly in recent decades, contributing to the modernization of the educational system and increasing the international competitiveness of Kazakhstani universities. This thesis explores the origins of academic mobility in Kazakhstan, identifying the key figures and milestones in its development, with a particular focus on its first introduction in Kazakhstani universities. Additionally, this study examines the role of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Kazakhstan in supporting academic mobility, the policies implemented, and the resulting opportunities for students and faculty. The thesis also delves into the cultural adjustment experiences of students participating in academic mobility programs, highlighting the challenges they face in adapting to new educational and cultural environments. The personal and academic consequences of the mobility experience of students participating in academic mobility at Yessenov University are investigated.

Keywords: academic mobility, international exchange program, global academic mobility, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Yessenov University.

Introduction.

The concept of academic mobility has transformed higher education in many countries, enabling students and researchers to experience new academic cultures, enhance their skills, and foster international collaboration. In Kazakhstan, the development of academic mobility has been closely linked to the country's efforts to modernize its higher education system following its independence. The introduction of academic mobility in Kazakhstani universities reflects the country's commitment to integrating with the global academic community [1]. This thesis aims to explore the origins of academic mobility in Kazakhstan, the first instances of student mobility, and the continued support and facilitation by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

In the early 2000s, various educational leaders and scholars in Kazakhstan began advocating for greater integration into the global academic community. While no single individual can be solely credited with founding academic mobility in Kazakhstan, various educational institutions and government leaders played a pivotal role in making it a reality. Among these was the establishment of exchange programs with universities in Europe, the United States, and neighboring Central Asian countries.

Kazakhstani higher education institutions such as Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Nazarbayev University, and the Eurasian National University took initial steps to create partnerships with universities abroad. These efforts paved the way for the country's broader participation in international academic exchange programs, starting with student exchanges and later expanding to faculty and researcher mobility. The first major academic mobility programs in Kazakhstan can be traced back to the early 2000s, when universities began to establish formal agreements with international counterparts. One of the significant milestones was the introduction of the Bolashak Scholarship Program, which allowed Kazakhstan's brightest students to study abroad in prestigious universities worldwide [2]. While the Bolashak program was initially aimed at

providing students with opportunities for graduate studies, it laid the foundation for student mobility by sending the first wave of Kazakh students abroad.

In the context of academic mobility within Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev University, established in 2010, has played a key role in promoting international cooperation, as it has developed partnerships with top universities worldwide. Nazarbayev University has provided a platform for both domestic and international students to engage in global academic exchange, hosting students from various countries while also sending Kazakh students abroad.

Another significant development occurred with the opening of international student exchange programs at universities such as Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and the Eurasian National University. These institutions, by collaborating with European and American universities, began sending students for semester-long or year-long exchange programs, marking the formalization of academic mobility within Kazakhstani higher education. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Kazakhstan has played a crucial role in supporting and expanding academic mobility. The ministry has introduced several policies and initiatives aimed at facilitating student exchanges, improving the quality of education, and strengthening international partnerships. These efforts have been instrumental in integrating Kazakhstan into the global educational landscape.

The Bolashak Scholarship Program, which was initiated by the first president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, continues to be one of the most prominent initiatives supporting academic mobility in the country. The Bolashak program not only sends students to study abroad but also provides opportunities for returning scholars to share their knowledge and contribute to the development of Kazakhstan's academic environment.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education has supported the creation of bilateral and multilateral agreements with foreign universities, making it easier for Kazakhstani students to apply for exchange programs. This includes partnerships with universities in Europe, North America, Asia, and beyond.

The ministry also provides significant logistical support, including funding for mobility programs, the establishment of international partnerships, and coordination with foreign governments to facilitate student visas, accommodation, and other support services for students abroad. Additionally, the government has worked to ensure that students studying abroad remain connected to their home universities through online platforms, maintaining academic continuity.

Academic mobility has had a profound impact on the development of Kazakhstan's higher education system. Through international exchanges, Kazakhstani students have gained exposure to new academic environments, teaching methodologies, and research opportunities. This has helped to raise the overall academic standards at local universities and contributed to the professional development of students, equipping them with skills that are highly valued in the global job market.

Furthermore, academic mobility has fostered cross-cultural understanding and collaboration, strengthening Kazakhstan's position in global academic and research networks [3]. The experience gained from studying abroad also plays a key role in the personal development of students, helping them build confidence, independence, and leadership skills.

Through partnerships with leading universities and academic institutions worldwide, Yessenov University offers its students the opportunity to study abroad, participate in exchange programs, and engage in joint research initiatives. These partnerships span various regions, including Europe, Asia, etc., ensuring a wide range of opportunities for students to gain international exposure and broaden their academic perspectives.

Methods and Materials

Yessenov University is committed to fostering an international learning environment that empowers students to expand their academic and cultural horizons. A recent event brought together first-year students and those who had participated in academic mobility programs at universities in countries such as Turkey, Poland, Malaysia, Azerbaijan, etc. The event, structured into three interactive parts, aimed to familiarize the new students with the opportunities of academic mobility, share personal experiences, and address their concerns regarding studying abroad. Here's an in-depth analysis of the meeting's methods.

Part 1: Interactive Game - Icebreaker and Introduction to the Meeting

The event kicked off with an interactive game designed to break the ice and create an engaging atmosphere for the attendees. The first-year students were introduced to the concept of academic mobility in an enjoyable and informal way. The game focused on key topics such as the benefits of studying abroad, the importance of cultural exchange, and the variety of countries and universities involved in mobility programs [4].

This icebreaker session used a quiz format, where students answered questions related to academic mobility, world geography, and the university's international partnerships [5]. The questions were designed not only to educate but also to spark curiosity among first-year students about the opportunities that awaited them through academic mobility. The game was structured to encourage team participation, fostering interaction and cooperation between students from different academic backgrounds.

The objective of this part was twofold: to introduce the upcoming agenda of the meeting and to spark interest in the possibilities of studying abroad. By presenting academic mobility in a lighthearted and accessible way, the event ensured that students felt comfortable and excited about the prospect of international study experiences.

Part 2: Presentation and Sharing of Experiences

The second part of the meeting featured a presentation where students who had previously participated in academic mobility programs shared their experiences. These participants represented various destinations, including Turkey, Poland, Malaysia, Lithuania, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan. Their diverse experiences provided valuable insights into what students can expect when participating in these programs, covering aspects such as educational systems, cultural adaptation, and safety.

- **Educational Experiences Abroad**

The academic mobility participants detailed their studies at different institutions, highlighting differences in teaching styles, course structures, and assessment methods. For instance, students who studied in Turkey and Poland discussed the interactive and student-centered teaching approaches they encountered, while those in Malaysia emphasized the emphasis on research and technological advancements in education. The participants from Lithuania and Azerbaijan shared how their experiences allowed them to explore innovative teaching methodologies and how these experiences positively influenced their academic growth.

- **Cultural Integration and Social Life**

Sharing insights into cultural adaptation was another key element of the presentation. Students spoke about their interactions with local communities, the challenges of language barriers, and how they navigated cultural differences. In addition, the participants provided tips on how to integrate into the local student community, including advice on extracurricular activities, local customs, and social events that helped them build connections and gain a deeper understanding of the host country's culture.

Safety and Well-being

One of the most crucial topics covered was safety during study abroad programs. Students shared their personal experiences regarding health insurance, emergency procedures, and the support systems provided by the host universities. This part of the presentation aimed to reassure first-year students about the safety measures in place, helping to mitigate concerns regarding traveling to foreign countries.

The diversity of the countries discussed - ranging from Europe to Asia - offered a well-rounded perspective on the various types of experiences that can be expected. For example, while Turkey and Kazakhstan were highlighted for their cultural similarities, Malaysia and Lithuania were noted for their unique academic environments and international student communities. This wide range of experiences painted a comprehensive picture of what academic mobility entails.

Part 3: Questions and Answers – Addressing Concerns and Clarifications

Following the presentation, the third part of the meeting allowed first-year students to engage directly with the academic mobility participants through a Q&A session. This interactive segment

served as a platform for students to raise specific concerns and seek clarifications on topics such as financial support, visa processes, accommodation, and language requirements [6].

Common questions revolved around:

Scholarships and Financial Aid: Many first-year students were curious about the funding opportunities available for academic mobility, including scholarships and grants that could help cover tuition, travel, and living expenses.

Visa and Legal Requirements: Students sought advice on how to navigate the visa application process and what legal documents were necessary for studying abroad.

Cultural Adjustment: There was significant interest in how to deal with feelings of homesickness, adjusting to different food and lifestyle habits, and maintaining mental well-being while studying in a foreign country.

Cultural adjustment is a significant aspect of academic mobility and refers to the process students go through as they adapt to a new cultural environment while studying abroad [7]. This process can greatly influence a student's academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being.

1. Understanding Cultural Adjustment

Cultural adjustment involves adapting to differences in: Language

Social norms and behaviors Educational systems Values and traditions Communication styles

Culture Shock – Frustration, confusion, or homesickness due to unfamiliarity. Adjustment Phase – Gradual adaptation to the new culture.

Mastery or Adaptation Phase – Comfort and ease in the new cultural environment.

2. Challenges Faced by Students

Language barriers, especially in academic settings

Differences in classroom dynamics (e.g., teacher-student relationships, assessment styles) [8]

Isolation or loneliness, especially if cultural or religious practices differ

Misunderstandings due to unfamiliar social cues Homesickness and emotional stress

3. Positive Aspects of Cultural Adjustment Personal growth and independence Enhanced intercultural communication skills Greater adaptability and resilience

Broader worldviews and global awareness Opportunity to build a diverse international network

4. Strategies for Coping and Thriving

Cultural orientation programs before or upon arrival Language support services like ESL (English as a Second Language) classes Counseling and mental health resources international student organizations and peer support groups Active participation in local events and cultural activities

5. Role of Institutions

Academic institutions can support cultural adjustment by:

Providing mentorship or buddy programs Creating inclusive classroom environments

Offering intercultural training for both students and faculty Promoting social integration initiatives.

Cultural adjustment is a dynamic and deeply personal process. While it may come with difficulties, it also offers immense opportunities for growth and learning [9]. With adequate support and an open mindset, students can successfully navigate the challenges and make the most of their academic mobility experiences.

Language Barriers: Language proficiency was a common concern, with many students wondering whether they would need to be fluent in the host country's language or if English would suffice for most academic and social interactions [10].

Academic mobility participants offered candid answers, drawing from their own experiences to provide practical advice. They emphasized that most universities offer support for international students, including language courses, mentoring programs, and orientation sessions to help students settle in. The presenters also reassured first-year students that the challenges they might face abroad are temporary and manageable with the right attitude and support systems in place.

The methodology behind the meeting was designed to be interactive and informative, catering to the needs of both the academic mobility participants and the first-year students. By incorporating games, personal experiences, and an open forum for questions, the event created an engaging and accessible environment for the students to learn about academic mobility. The use of real-life testimonials and the opportunity for direct interaction helped demystify the process and alleviated

any anxieties about studying abroad.

Additionally, the meeting format encouraged peer-to-peer learning, with first-year students benefiting from the firsthand accounts of their more experienced peers. This approach fostered a sense of community and trust, making it easier for students to imagine themselves participating in academic mobility programs in the future.

Results

The meeting between academic mobility participants and first-year students at Yessenov University proved to be a successful and insightful event. Through interactive activities, informative presentations, and an engaging Q&A session, students gained a clearer understanding of the benefits and challenges of studying abroad. This type of event not only informs first-year students about the opportunities available to them but also serves as a catalyst for future participation in global academic programs. By facilitating open dialogue and creating a supportive environment, Yessenov University continues to encourage its students to embrace the world of academic mobility, preparing them for the challenges and rewards of global education.

At Yessenov University, one of the core goals is to foster a globally aware and culturally competent student body.

Conclusion. In conclusion, organizing meetings between academic mobility participants and undecided students is an effective strategy for promoting study abroad opportunities and helping students make informed decisions. Such meetings provide a platform for open dialogue, peer-to-peer mentorship, and the addressing of concerns, all of which are crucial for students who are uncertain about taking part in mobility programs. Teachers can play a central role in facilitating these interactions, ensuring that students have the necessary support and guidance to navigate the decision-making process.

Conducting meetings between participants of academic mobility programs and students who have not yet decided on the possibility of studying abroad is an effective way to promote international educational programs.

These events help students make informed choices by providing real-world experiences and examples that help them better understand the prospects, benefits and potential challenges of studying abroad.

Open dialogue with those who have already gone through the path of academic mobility reduces the level of uncertainty and anxiety characteristic of the decision-making stage. In addition, such meetings create an atmosphere of trust and support, inspiring students to participate in international projects and broadening their horizons. Thus, such initiatives contribute to the formation of a more informed and motivated student community, ready to actively participate in the global educational space.

Ultimately, these meetings empower students to take charge of their academic journeys, broaden their horizons, and embrace the opportunities that come with academic mobility. By organizing these sessions, teachers not only provide valuable information but also help students envision a future full of possibilities and global connections, helping to cultivate well-rounded, globally aware individuals ready to thrive in an interconnected world.

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АКАДЕМИЧЕСКАЯ МОБИЛЬНОСТЬ В ЕСЕНОВ УНИВЕРСИТЕТЕ: УКРЕПЛЕНИЕ ГЛОБАЛЬНЫХ СВЯЗЕЙ И ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОГО СОВЕРШЕНСТВА

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Аннотация. Академическая мобильность, определяемая как перемещение студентов, преподавателей и исследователей через национальные границы для улучшения их образовательного и исследовательского опыта, стала важной чертой систем высшего образования во всем мире. В Казахстане академическая мобильность быстро развивалась в последние десятилетия, способствуя модернизации образовательной системы и повышению международной конкурентоспособности казахстанских университетов. В этой статье исследуются истоки академической мобильности в Казахстане, определяются ключевые фигуры и вехи в ее развитии, с особым акцентом на ее первое внедрение в казахстанских университетах. Кроме того, в этом исследовании изучается роль Министерства науки и высшего образования Казахстана в поддержке академической мобильности, реализуемая политика и вытекающие из этого возможности для студентов и преподавателей. В работе также рассматривается опыт культурной адаптации студентов, участвующих в программах академической мобильности, подчеркиваются проблемы, с которыми они сталкиваются при адаптации к новой образовательной и культурной среде. Исследуются личные и академические последствия опыта мобильности студентов участников академической мобильности в Есенов университете.

Ключевые слова: академическая мобильность, международная программа обмена, глобальная академическая мобильность, Министерство науки и высшего образования, Есенов Университет.

ЕСЕНОВ УНИВЕРСИТЕТІНДЕГІ АКАДЕМИЯЛЫҚ ҮТҚЫРЛЫҚ: ЖАҢАНДЫҚ БАЙЛАНЫСТАР ЖӘНЕ БІЛМ БЕРУ ЖЕТЕКШІЛГІН НЫГАЙТУ

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Аңдатпа. Студенттердің, оқытушылардың және зерттеушілердің білім беру және зерттеу тәжірибесін арттыру үшін ұлттық шекарадан өтуі ретінде анықталған ақадемиялық ұтқырлық бүкіл әлем бойынша жоғары білім беру жүйелерінің маңызды ерекшелігіне айналды.

Қазақстанда соңғы онжылдықтарда ақадемиялық ұтқырлық қарқынды дамып, білім беру жүйесін жаңғыртуға және қазақстандық жоғары оқу орындарының халықаралық бәсекеге қабілеттілігін арттыруға ықпал етті. Бұл мақала Қазақстандағы ақадемиялық ұтқырлықтың бастауын зерттейді, оның дамуының негізгі көрсеткіштері мен кезеңдерін анықтайды, оның қазақстандық университеттерде алғашқы енгізілуіне ерекше назар аударады. Сонымен қатар, бұл зерттеу ақадемиялық ұтқырлықты қолдаудағы Қазақстан ғылым және жоғары білім министрлігінің рөлін, жүзеге асырылып жатқан саясатты және студенттер мен оқытушылар құрамының мүмкіндіктерін зерттейді. Сондай-ақ, мақала ақадемиялық ұтқырлық бағдарламаларына қатысатын студенттердің мәдени бейімделу тәжірибесін зерттейді, олар жаңа білім беру және мәдени ортага бейімделу кезінде кездесетін проблемаларды көрсетеді. Есенов университетінде ақадемиялық ұтқырлыққа қатысатын студенттердің ұтқырлық тәжірибесінің жеке және ақадемиялық тәжірибелері зерттеледі.

Түйін сөздер: ақадемиялық ұтқырлық, халықаралық алмасу бағдарламасы, жаһандық ақадемиялық ұтқырлық, Ғылым және жоғары білім министрлігі, Есенов Университеті.