

# Preparation of Economics Teachers in Kazakhstan

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**Abstract:** *The current stage of the world development is characterized by the rapid changes in political, economic and social fields caused by scientific and technological progress and globalization with intensified competition in the global market. Entering the top 30 of the most competitive countries was set as one of the main directions of the state policy of Kazakhstan (Strategy “Kazakhstan-2050”, 2012). To increase the competitiveness of the country the government proposed implementation of the new model of the economic growth based on the development of human capital, stimulating of export-oriented production, strengthening the role of the private sector and comprehensive support for entrepreneurship – leading force of the national economy (Strategy “Kazakhstan-2050”, 2012; Kazakhstan Strategic Development Plan until 2025, 2017). Development of the human capital and entrepreneurship activity require the presence of the population that possess relevant knowledge and competencies. Therefore, today, the state pays more attention to economic literacy and the development of entrepreneurial competencies among the population already starting from the school level. In turn, the quality of economic training of students is largely determined by the competence and level of economic preparation of teachers. The implementation of the tasks of school economic education actualizes the need for qualified and competent economics teachers. Therefore, the issues of the preparation of the future economics teachers and the possibilities of the advanced training for the in-service teachers also become relevant. Thus, this study explores the state and main problems of preparing of pre-service and in-service economics teachers in Kazakhstan.*

**Keywords:** *teacher education, economics, kazakhstan, educational programmes*

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## 1. Introduction

The current stage of the world development is characterized by the rapid changes in political, economic and social fields caused by scientific and technological progress and globalization with the intensified competition in the global market. These global changes in turn influence on education requiring an adequate response to the realities of the time.

Here increases the role of schools that are an inseparable part of the social system (Franković, 1970; Turkkahraman, 2015). Besides providing basic knowledge in humanities, natural and social sciences, the purposes of the school include preparing students for the future responsibilities, identifying their strengths and determining directions for choosing future

profession and jobs, participation in public life, social behaviour skills and societal challenges, adaption to the changes and success in life and current environment (Dadova, 2014; Dewey, 1938; Gyunger, 2016; Kivelä, 2018; Schleicher, 2018). To succeed in this changing world a person needs to be competitive. Competitive advantage of people is provided by their knowledge and skills (Cortright, 2001; Garmise, 2014). Besides the content of the education, renewed attention is paid to the relationship between the improvement of students' learning and learning outcomes and the enhancement of classroom teaching, that in turn reflects the effectiveness of teacher education and professional development (Alton-Lee, 2003; Hiebert et al., 2002; Lampert, 2001; Măță et al., 2020; Wilson, 2017).

Responding to these global changes and challenges, Kazakhstan conducts a policy of reforming of the education system starting with the school education. More attention is being paid to economic preparation and development of entrepreneurial competencies of the population since economically literate citizens possessing entrepreneurial competencies are able to make rational choices, use efficiently their limited resources such as time and money, and build wealth and consequently shape a wealthy community. In these conditions, teaching economics at school level and in particular development of entrepreneurial competencies are becoming one of the key directions in the modernization of school education in Kazakhstan.

### ***1.1. Context of Kazakhstan***

Kazakhstan is a young state that obtained its independence only at the end of the twentieth century, in 1991 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. For the period of independence, the state underwent numerous changes and transformations in all the fields – political and economic systems, public administration, international relations, and social area. In particular, a transition from the planned economy to market, transfer of the capital to Astana (Nur-Sultan), membership in international organizations such as UN, OSCE, CIS, OECD, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Custom Union, etc., early implementation of the Strategy “Kazakhstan-2030” and entering the top 50 of the most competitive countries of the world (INFORM, 2018).

However, as a former Soviet country, Kazakhstan has features of post-Soviet development. In particular, the population of former socialist countries had a different attitude to private finances and private ownership. Socialist society strived to establish communism, which is characterized by communal ownership of goods, no competition, no private property (Marx & Engels, 2004). These features contradict to conditions of a market economy based on private ownership, private property, privately owned capital, private initiative and competitiveness (Lipsits, 2004; McConnell et al., 2009; Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010).

The global economic crisis of 2008 demonstrated to the full extent the insufficient level of economic preparation of the population in Kazakhstan that resulted in the mortgage crisis in the country (Revyakin, 2009). The gap in the economic and financial literacy between advanced capitalist countries and former Soviet countries is still noticeable. According to the 2014 Standard & Poor’s Global Financial Literacy Survey (Klapper et al., 2015), the number of financially literate adults aged 15 and above in Kazakhstan was 40%, meanwhile, the highest level of financial literacy around the world was in countries with developed and advanced economies, such as Denmark, Norway and Sweden with 71% of the financially literate population. In conditions of a market economy, people need to not only possess economic knowledge but also be capable of efficiently and skilfully

applying it in practice. Therefore, today the government of Kazakhstan pays more attention not only to the economic preparation and financial literacy but also to the development of entrepreneurial competencies among the population. The necessity of economically literate population and development of entrepreneurial competencies is expressed in such national development programmes as Strategy “Kazakhstan-2050”, “Kazakhstan Strategic Development Plan until 2025”.

### ***1.2. Kazakhstani policy***

Today one of the main directions of the state policy of Kazakhstan is entering the top 30 of the most competitive countries (Strategy “Kazakhstan-2050”, 2012). According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2019 issued by the World Economic Forum, Kazakhstan currently occupies 55th place in the ranking of 141 countries (Schwab, 2019). To increase the competitiveness of the country the government proposed implementation of the new model of the economic growth based on the development of human capital, stimulating of export- oriented production, strengthening the role of the private sector and comprehensive support for entrepreneurship – leading force of the national economy (Strategy “Kazakhstan-2050”, 2012; Kazakhstan Strategic Development Plan until 2025, 2017). Along with this, the development of the human capital and entrepreneurship activity requires the presence of the population with relevant knowledge and competencies (Figure 1).



**Fig. 1.** Stages of achieving the top 30 of the most competitive countries

**Source:** Strategy “Kazakhstan-2050” (2012), Kazakhstan Strategic Development Plan until 2025 (2017)

Therefore, today, the state pays more attention to economic literacy and the development of entrepreneurial competencies among the population already starting from the school level. In turn, the quality of economic training of students is largely determined by the competence and level of economic preparation of teachers.

## **2. Aim of the research**

The implementation of the tasks of school economic education actualizes the need for qualified and competent economics teachers. In accordance with the requirements of the time, the professional training of teachers also changes. Therefore, the issues of the preparation of the future economics teachers and the possibilities of the advanced training for the in-service teachers also become relevant.

The aim of this study is to explore the current state and main problems of preparing of pre-service and in-service economics teachers in Kazakhstan.

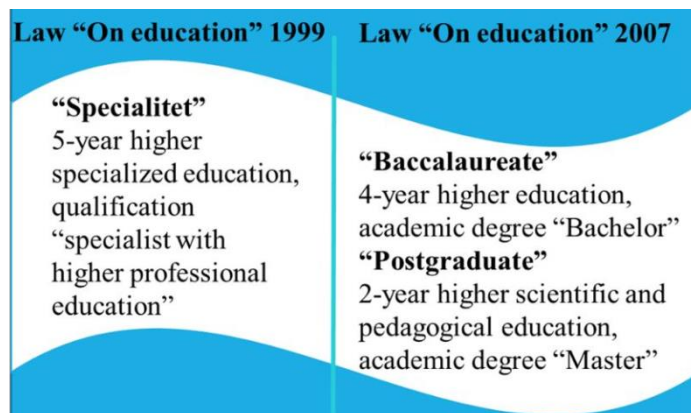
## **3. Results**

### ***3.1. Changes in teacher education after Bologna Process***

Before the introduction of the Bologna Process, in accordance with the Law “On education” adopted in 1999, the higher teacher education in Kazakhstan was provided by “Specialitet” – higher specialized education with the training period of 5 years, confirmed by the awarding of a person who successfully passed the final attestation, the corresponding qualification of “specialist with higher professional education” (Iskakov, 2010) (Figure 2).

Higher specialized education remained the main and only level of higher education in Kazakhstan for five years.

Kazakhstan joined the Bologna Process in 2010 but the structural changes in the Kazakhstani system of higher education started already at the preparatory stage since the beginning of 2000s (Kontsipko, 2012). In 2004 universities on an experimental basis began to introduce educational programmes for Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees (Zhilbaev & Shakhanova, 2015).

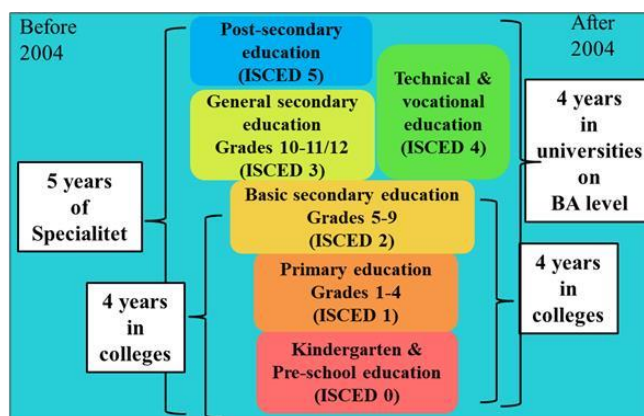


**Fig.2.** Structural changes in teacher education

**Source:** Iskakov (2010), Zakon Respubliki Kazahstan ot (2007)

Legally the two-cycle system of “Baccalaureate” and “Postgraduate” was introduced with the adoption of the new Law “On education” in 2007 (Figure 2). The access to the second cycle was provided for the successful completion of the first cycle lasting four years (Zakon Respubliki Kazahstan, 2007).

With the transition from the one-cycle higher education system to the two-cycle system period of the teacher training for different levels of education changed (Figure 3).



**Fig. 3.** Period of the teacher training for different levels of education; **Source:** Professional’nyi standart “Pedagog” (2017), State compulsory standard of higher education (2018)

In particular, a period of teacher training for all education levels from kindergarten to post-secondary education decreased from 5 years of higher specialized education to 4 years of Bachelor's programme (Professional'nyi standart "Pedagog", 2017; Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2018).

### ***3.2. Pre-service economics teachers***

To enter the economics teacher profession a person need to complete a programme of higher education that in turn requires passing the university entrance exam.

#### *Unified National Test*

The university entrance exams in Kazakhstan are conducted in the form of an independent test assessment – Unified National Test.

The Unified National Test (UNT) is a qualifying exam for admission to organizations of higher education. Eligible applicants for the UNT are high school (Grade 11/12) and college graduates who wish to enter university in the current academic year. After receiving the test result, the applicants can apply to different universities in the country. If the school or college graduates are not going to enter a Kazakhstani university or planning to study abroad and enter a university abroad, then they do not need to take the UNT (Electronic government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2020).

The Unified National Test for high schools' graduates (Grade 11/12) consists of 5 subjects: three compulsory and two elective subjects. Compulsory subjects include Mathematics literacy, Reading literacy and History of Kazakhstan. Elective subjects are combined in accordance with the chosen specialization or faculty (Table 1). Whereas, the UNT for college graduates includes only 2 subjects: general professional discipline and specialty discipline (National Testing Center, n.d.).

**Table 1.** The UNT compulsory and elective subjects for the school graduates  
(National Testing Center, n.d.)

1.	Mathematics literacy	Education Faculty – Biology & Geography
2.	Reading literacy	Economic Faculty – Mathematics & Geography
3.	History of Kazakhstan	

The Unified National Test contains 120 test items. Total testing time is 230 minutes. The maximum score is 140, the minimum passing score is 50.

Besides the UNT, high school and college graduates applying to the educational specialties must take a special exam. Unlike the UNT, which is conducted by the National Testing Center, a special exam is conducted directly by the chosen university and consists of psychological testing and solving pedagogical situations (National Testing Center, n.d.).

#### *Basics of Law and Economics*

In Kazakhstan preparation of the future economics teachers, carried out on the basis of the State compulsory standard of higher education (2018), is presented only by one BA degree

4-year educational programme 5B011500 (6B01401) – Basics of Law and Economics. The main aim of this programme is the training of highly qualified teachers in the field of the basics of Law and Economics for secondary schools and colleges. To enroll in this speciality applicant must pass the UNT with the elective subjects World History and Geography. The minimum number of ECTS required for completing the study is 240. The content of the educational programme includes three directions – Pedagogy and Psychology, Economics, and Law. However, the credits' number and subjects' distribution may differ depending on the institution of higher education. For instance, Karaganda Economic University of Kazpotrebsoyuz offers BA degree 4-year educational programme “Basics of Law and Economics” that consists of 279

ECTS, in Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University this educational programme includes 240 ECTS, in Pavlodar State



Pedagogical University – 242 ECTS, in Kostanay State Pedagogical University – 240 ECTS (Karaganda Economic University of Kazpotrebsoyuz, n.d.; Kazakh National Women’s Teacher Training University, n.d.; Pavlodar State Pedagogical University, n.d.; Kostanay State Pedagogical University, n.d.).

The educational programme “Basics of Law and Economics” provides three types of practicum during each year of the study – learning, teaching and pre-diploma. The final certification consists of two stages – the state exam in the speciality and the writing and defence of the thesis (project) which is a generalization of the results of the student’s independent study of an actual problem corresponding to the profile of the educational programme. After passing the final certification the student obtains an academic degree “Bachelor of Education in the speciality “5B011500 (6B01401) – Basics of Law and Economics” (State compulsory standard of higher education, 2018).

### ***3.3. In-service economics teachers***

The possibilities of the advanced training for the in-service economics teachers include three types of professional development – mentoring, certification and courses of economics training.

#### *Mentoring*

System of mentoring is a comparatively new phenomenon in secondary education in Kazakhstan. Mentoring was officially introduced in Kazakhstani organizations of secondary education only from January of the current year and legalized in the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On the status of a teacher” No. 293-VI adopted on December 27, 2019. According to this law mentoring is considered as “the activities of a teacher in providing practical assistance in professional adaptation to a person who started the professional activity of a teacher in the organization of secondary education for the first time” (Zakon Respubliki Kazahstan, 2019). Mentor’s activities last for one academic year and a teacher assigned as a mentor receives a salary bonus for the mentoring. Mentors can only be appointed from among teachers who have the appropriate education and are directly involved in teaching in secondary education.

*Certification*

In-service economics teachers are obliged to pass certification every 5 years (Zakon Respubliki Kazahstan, 2019; Zacon, 2016). Certification of teaching staff and persons equated to them for the confirmation of qualification categories is carried out in two stages:

1) National Qualification Testing. The test consists of 100 items including 70 questions regarding subject knowledge area (Economics and Financial literacy) and 30 questions concerning general teaching methodology. Total testing time is 200 minutes, for teachers of Mathematics, Chemistry, Computer Science and Physics total testing time is 230 minutes. The minimum passing score differs depending on the categories of teachers (Table2):

**Table 2.** Passing scores of National Qualification Testing

Category	Minimum passing score	
	Economics and Financial literacy	General teaching methodology
Teacher - Moderator	50%	30%
Teacher - Expert	60%	35%
Teacher - Researcher	65%	40%
Master - Teacher	70%	45%

**Source:** adapted from Education MFCER (2020)

2) Comprehensive analytical synthesis of the results of activities – is provided in the form of the portfolio collected by the teacher for the last five years of teaching activity (Zacon, 2016).

*Courses of economic training*

Advanced training for economics teachers and in-service teachers is provided also by the two types of economic training courses organized by different organizations:

1) The course “Basics of Economics and Entrepreneurship” for teachers of Geography, Mathematics, Computer Science, Basics of Law in secondary schools organized and conducted by JSC “National Centre for professional development “Orleu”.

The aim of the course is to form and expand knowledge of basic economic theory and economic culture; principles and patterns of economic

activity; key priorities and directions of the state policy of Kazakhstan in the field of economics and entrepreneurship; basics of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial competencies (JSC “National Centre for professional development Orleu, n.d.).

2) The course for teachers of the school subject “Basics of Entrepreneurship and Business” organized by National Chamber of Entrepreneurs “Atameken”. This course is conducted by specially invited business coaches.

The aim of the course is to form basic knowledge of entrepreneurship, business, economics, management, marketing, taking into account Kazakhstani and international practice. Much attention in the course is paid to the methods of gamification in school economic education. Duration of the course is 10-14 days (National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, 2020).

### ***3.4. Preliminary results***

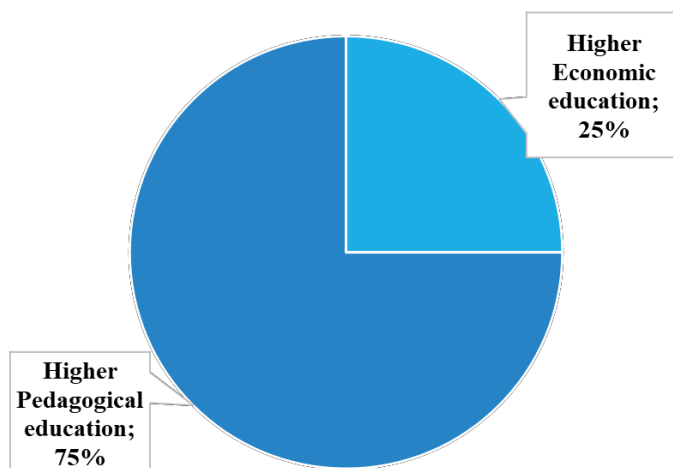
This study is a part of the doctoral research in the process, and here are some preliminary results obtained in the interviews with the in-service economics teachers from different secondary schools. All participant teachers were from different school types – lyceum, gymnasium, boarding school, women’s gymnasium, comprehensive secondary school. Distribution in accordance with the school types is presented in Table 3. The taught courses included Basics of Economics and Financial Literacy, Basics of Economics, Basics of Entrepreneurship and Business.

**Table 3.** School types’ distribution

School Types	
Lyceum	2
Gymnasium	3
Specialised Boarding school	1
Women’s gymnasium	1
Comprehensive secondary school	5
Total	12

**Source:** Authors own contribution

As can be seen in Figure 4 only 25% of school economics teachers participating in the study have higher economic education (Figure 4).



**Fig. 4.** Basic education of school economics teachers

**Source:** Authors own contribution

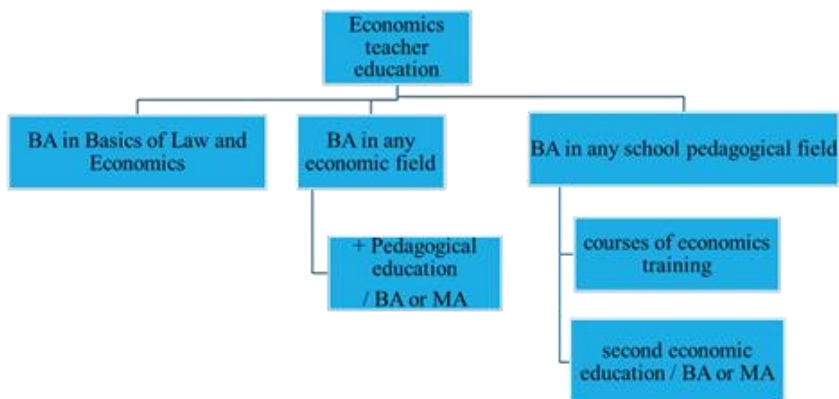
All the answers regarding the basic education of participant economics teachers are presented below in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Basic education of school economics teachers

Basic education of school economics teachers	
Primary education	1
History	3
History and Geography	1
Mathematics and Physics	1
Mathematics	1
Chemistry	1
Vocational Training	1
Economic education	3
Total	12

**Source:** Authors own contribution

Thus, the trajectory of entry into the profession of economics teacher includes three main directions (Figure 5).



**Fig. 5.** Education of the Economics teacher

**Source:** Authors own contribution

The first direction is entering the university for a Bachelor degree in Basics of Law and Economics. After completing the study a person can start working as an economics teacher on all levels of school education and college. The second direction is entering a Bachelor degree in any economic speciality. But becoming a full-fledged economics teacher requires the presence of additional education in the field of pedagogy or teacher training. The third direction is obtaining a BA degree in any field of school education with the subsequent completing the courses of economics training or additional education in the field of economics.

#### 4. Conclusions

In the opinion of Walstad (2001), high school has the best conditions and “perhaps the only opportunity for improving the economic understanding of all youth” (p. 195). The quality of economic training of students is largely determined by the competence and level of economic preparation of teachers.

In Kazakhstan preparation of school economics teachers is implemented in three possible trajectories of entry into the profession for both pre-service and in-service teachers:

- 1) BA degree in Basics of Law and Economics;
- 2) BA degree in any economic speciality with subsequent pedagogical study – BA or MA degree in Education;

3) BA degree in any pedagogical speciality with subsequent economic study – BA or

MA in Economic speciality or the courses of economic training (Orleu, Atameken).

Professional development for the in-service economics teachers is also provided by certification and mentoring.

However, subject preparation at a classical university is more effective, since it is based on a wider range of disciplines and is combined with scientific research (Gyunger, 2016).

The main problems in the preparation of economics teachers in Kazakhstan are the following:

- there is no integrity and consistency in the training of teachers of economics in Kazakhstan;
- there is no single unified system for training teachers of economics;
- speciality “Basics of Law and Economics» is provided by the small number of universities in the country; theoretical and practical content of the speciality and number of ECTS differ in different universities depending on the faculty that hosts the speciality (Economics faculty, Law faculty, History faculty, etc.).

Besides, today the education system of Kazakhstan is in the process of reforming, in particular, in school education, there is a modernisation of the content of the education programmes with the transition from theoretical knowledge to practical competencies. In this regard, in the area of school economic education new subject “Basics of Entrepreneurship and Business” is being introduced in Grades 10-11/12.

Thus, preparation of economics teachers in Kazakhstan is also still in the state of changes and modernisation.

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