

**The implementation of the  
Bologna Process in Kazakhstan  
Higher Education:  
views from within**

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by

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# Abstract

In this thesis I examine the question: how do Kazakhstan academics respond to the reforms of higher education (HE) carried out as part of Europeanisation? I study the local academics' accounts of the process of implementation of the Bologna Process and of wider Western education standards within local post-Soviet practice, since the beginning of the twenty-first century. This local policy implementation is examined within the framework of educational policy borrowing, grounded in works by Steiner-Khamsi, Silova, and Phillips. Thirty-eight interviews were conducted in four HE institutions in different regions of Kazakhstan and analysed through the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based on work by van Dijk and Fairclough. Using the method of CDA, I explore how power relationships and abuses of power play out between the educational authority and the academics in the politically-driven reform environment, and how academics respond to this in their views of the reforms.

I found that participants overall are critical of the reform process. They respond with three discourses, identified as nostalgia and loss, progress and modernity and chaotic reform. While the discourse of nostalgia implicitly connects to the 'better' Soviet education, as an ideological belief inherited from the past, and the discourse of progress reflects the spread of the ideology of European modernity, they both appear in connection to the central discourse of chaotic reformation. I found that chaos, which is a prime characteristic of the reforms in Kazakhstan HE, is linked to clashes between political/educational motivations and Soviet/Western approaches. These findings support my main argument that the specific post-Soviet context should be taken into account in studies of education in the 'Second World'. These 'context models' are influential on how Western standards are implemented in the reality of post-Soviet education.

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# Chapter I. Introduction

This thesis is a study of the educational reforms that are taking place as part of the Europeanisation of higher education in Kazakhstan, based upon an analysis of Kazakhstan academics' responses to these reforms. While one side of this topic can be understood as the implementation of borrowed educational patterns within a country's context, the other and very important side is that this context is the post-socialist world, which itself represents a specific phenomenon. Kazakhstan is a part of that post-socialist world, being earlier an inseparable unit of the Soviet empire, but currently positioning itself in the world arena as a separate and independent state. I have two overarching arguments that frame my overall conception of the research and my approach to examining the research question. The first is that joining the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) for post-socialist states is primarily a political move, deriving from their post-colonial agenda and their striving to establish closer relationships with the West, in order to reduce the educational, cultural and political influence of Russia. In other words, the European world represents not only modernity and progress for Kazakhstan and similar countries, but also becomes a way for them to secure their independence. I also contend that this political motive is overlooked by scholars in comparative education. Thus an examination of post-socialist education is invalid without taking into consideration the specificity of the post-socialist world and the legacy of the Soviet empire. In relation to this research I address two main features. One is the existence of the specific Soviet-origin ideological beliefs, which shape the consciousness of post-Soviet people generally and its academics in particular. Another is the inheritance of a highly developed education system from the Soviet past and hence post-Soviet academics carrying patterns of educational values, experiences, knowledge and standards established within that education system. My second overarching argument is that Kazakhstan's education reforms under Europeanisation, which are undertaken at the system level, should be positioned with those post-socialist states which are members of the EHEA, instead of positioning Kazakhstan within the Central Asian region, as is most common in the literature.<sup>1</sup> The premises for the formulation of each of these arguments are considered in two following sections.



## 1. The non-Russian post-Soviet world: premises for Westernisation

Educational reforms in countries happen for different reasons. One of the popular neo-institutionalist views on the educational reforms claims that they happen due to global cultural forces and through the influence of globalisation as a whole. Another point of view, found among scholars of the theory of educational policy borrowing, is the conception that international educational patterns are driven by particular national settings and out of the internal needs of particular societies (Schriewer and Martinez 2004). Hence, educational reforms might be a part of more global transformations in a society, often with the aim of meeting internal political goals over wider social goals. In the literature this is referred to as prioritising educational *politics* over educational *policy* (Steiner-Khamsi 2004). This is especially true for those societies, where political, societal and hence educational changes are caused by the collapse of the old world and the birth of the new one. In recent history, this can definitely apply to those societies that appeared as a result of the collapse of the socialist world that, in turn, brought significant changes to the world and intensified globalisation in general.

It is widely accepted in the literature that the movements towards the West (including Western Europe, North America, Australia, and Canada), or westernisation, are movements towards progress, modernity and democracy (Potter et al 2008; Heath 2004). While I fully agree with this, in this research I look from another perspective at westernisation in post-Soviet and wider post-socialist states, which are pithily termed “the Second World” by Khanna (2009). In this research I use both the terms post-Soviet and post-socialist. These are close in meaning, yet, with the difference that the term post-Soviet refers to the states of the former Soviet Union and post-socialist to all countries of the Warsaw Treaty. I argue that movements towards the West and processes of westernisation in post-Soviet states are to be considered as post-colonial movements and processes, part of an agenda of liberating from Russian influence. Here I refer to the Moore’s understanding of “postcoloniality”, where:

the cultures of postcolonial lands are characterized by tensions between the desire for autonomy and a history of dependence, between the desire for autochthony and the fact of hybrid, part-colonial origin, between resistance and complicity, and between imitation (or mimicry) and originality. (Moore 2001: 112)

Within such a view, I see Europeanisation of post-Soviet education as a liberating movement away from Russian dependence.<sup>ii</sup>

The rationale for this view draws upon some observations. First, after the collapse of the Soviet empire, many Western patterns – such as a market economy, contemporary business and management practices, and the development of private property, among others – became welcome in the post-Soviet states. Kazakhstan, since that time, has been in the vanguard, in terms of its willingness to adopt pro-Western approaches and its openness to attracting international companies to develop its natural resources. The trend of westernisation became one of the political priorities of Kazakhstan, and while it was introduced in practice, it was also announced in official documents.

Yet, to better understand Kazakhstan and the overall post-Soviet area, it is necessary to take into account that the post-Soviet space carries a legacy of the Soviet empire and it inherited numerous specific Soviet patterns, unlike those in the Western world. The causes of the collapse of the Soviet empire are still a much discussed topic in both Western and post-Soviet social sciences. Among a range of the reasons discussed for this collapse, I highlight that of the politics of nationality, the national question, which, as it was prophetically said, would destroy the Soviet Union (Brzezinski 1989).

The existence of the nationality question in the Soviet empire was hidden for many westerners and within the empire itself, as it was generally accepted that national issues had been resolved fully and finally, and a new community of “Soviet people” had been formed (Antonyan and Davitadze 2004). Yet, while this was, to a great degree a theoretical and ideological concept, in fact there were hidden but difficult relationships between the empire’s multiple nations, but primarily between the Russians and the non-Russians (Slezkin 1994; Haarmann 2013; Bialer 1988; NSA1997). Much of this derived from a specific understanding of the conception of “nationalism” in Soviet doctrine and social sciences. Any display of non-Russian independence, such as an expression of national culture or history, was traduced as anti-Soviet and anti-Russian nationalism. Following d’Encausse’s observation “that Russia and the Soviet system were two aspects of the same thing” (d’Encausse 1991: 175), nationalism was equated with anti-Russian sentiment. Such a specifically understood nationalism strongly discouraged non-Russians from resisting, which supported the interests of the Russian majority. In turn, the state’s policies officially recognised and supported the dominant status of the Russians, so “despite all the propaganda about the multi-national Soviet state and the ‘blossoming of nations’, the Soviet Union in many ways looked like a Russian state” (Prasauskas 1998, cited in Jha 2007).

Cultural discrimination and national inequality became realities amongst supposedly equal Soviet subjects. Official Soviet ideology presented the Russians as ethnically and morally superior: it privileged Russian nationality, Russian language, Russian history, and Russian culture:

But in this case, the “Soviet” meant 99% “of Russian culture.” All Soviet citizens spoke in Russian, drew on experience primarily in Russian history, and perceived the value system of the Russian society. Also, they were brought up on classical Russian literature because they did not have anything like this themselves. Let us remember that in the era of “late socialism” all the Baltics and the inhabitants of Central Asia, Caucasus, Transcaucasia, Slavs and Turks, Jews and Chechens were all “ours”; the Soviet. Ours is namely in such “Russian” sense of the word. (Vladimirov 2011, personal translation from the Russian)

At the state level, a zone of universal harmony was what the authorities were working for. If something interrupted that harmony, it was assumed to be a form of anti-regime activity and an unambiguous challenge to communist rule (Beissinger 2009). It was denied and castigated as bourgeois nationalism (Bagramov 1987, cited in Beissinger 2002: 53). Such a specific interpretation of nationalism steadily increased discontent among non-Russian nations, as expressed in the headline “Russians rule, others fume” (Barringer 1986)<sup>iii</sup>. That is why, after the collapse of the empire, post-Soviet nationalism in the non-Russian republics was not only characterised by a distinctly anti-Russian sentiment, but also exhibited a desire for national revival. The official Soviet approach to nationalism in Kazakhstan was no different from the approach it took to all the non-Russian cultures with which it came into contact. Such an approach to the nationality question in the Soviet empire was also overwhelmed by its “blood history”, because the empire system itself was grounded on the coercion, oppression, mass terror, and extraordinary killings of its own people (Crouch 2006; Smith 1999; Rosefielde 2009; Conquest 1990). After all, when the state’s grip weakened at the beginning of the 1990s, the nations “broke free” (Vdovin 2011).

One of my assumptions is that, despite the legislative and geographical collapse of the Soviet empire in 1991, the overall opposition between the imperial strivings of modern Russia and its former satellites persist. The strength of opposition differs in degree and character from one state to another, as each of the post-Soviet states differs in their geographical, cultural, economic and other features. It mainly depends on two factors: the level of presence of a

Russian population within a state and its geographical closeness/remoteness from Europe: the closer to Europe, the more strength and vice versa. The most European post-Soviet states are Ukraine, Belorussia, Moldova, and the three Baltic states, which are now the members of the European Union (EU): Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. By implication, westernisation in Russia itself is not a mainstream move as there is a historical opposition of Russia towards the West. The latter:

may be explained as a cultural phenomenon and in this context, [it] appear[s] to be a product of not only actual experience but of former experience as well. This phenomenon replicates in different forms so-called traditional archetypes of national consciousness stemming from the past. We would argue that Russian perceptions of the “alien nations” (and first of all, the Western world) form a coherent structural component of the national consciousness in regard of national identity. (Diligensky and Chugrov 2000: 4)

Yet, the tensions between Russia and its former satellites are not only political, but intellectual as well. They relate, for example, to their different approaches to interpreting their shared history. This is an issue which Russia’s officials strive as far as possible to control in these countries. Examples from recent history are helpful. One is the Holodomor, or “Extermination by hunger” (Conquest 1986; Pianciola 2001), which is a highly delicate issue in the relationships between Russia and some post-Soviet states, such as Kazakhstan and Ukraine. In 2006 the Ukraine Parliament officially admitted the Holodomor as a genocide of Ukrainians, while Kazakhstan’s authority has avoided doing so because of a stated reluctance to unnecessarily politicise the tragedy (Pannier 2007; Narodezkii 2011). As it is supposed: “In plain language this meant that the Kazakh authorities feared offending Russia’s political elite, which is very sensitive and perceive of the mere mention of the famine as a challenge to the Russian government and Russian history” (Narodezkii 2011, personal translation from the Russian). More evidence of such control is a recent case of the squeezing of Professor de Haas out of his post at Nazarbayev University in Astana (Kazakhstan) over a lecture on the recent Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which was cancelled as being seen as “politically sensitive”. The initial impetus to prevent the talk, as it would “introduce falsehoods into the minds of students”, came from an official of the Russian Embassy in Astana. “This Russian interference puts Kazakhstan’s independence in doubt” said Professor de Haas (Leonard 2015).

As I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the post-colonial political motives in relation to liberation for the educational changes under westernisation in post-soviet states are overlooked by scholars of comparative education. These scholars tend to consider this from a traditional point of view, pointing to the enthusiasm of these countries to become educationally modern and be involved in the world's development. Yet, I would like to suggest some reasons that this liberating and post-colonial agenda is missed by scholars. My explanation is one that I mentioned above with regard to the national question: it is not always explicit or much discussed, it is hidden.

It is overlooked partly because there is a tendency to think that with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the independence of the post-Soviet states from Russia can be taken for granted. But such an understanding was recently overturned with the beginning of the war against Ukraine in 2014. Hence Europeanisation in these states is considered by many Westerners as a logical further move towards openness, progressiveness, and modernity or as part of globalisation. In comparative education the mainstream idea of the rationality for post-socialist societies' education borrowing from the West comes from the narrative of progress, modernity, and "salvation", which the West is inevitably positioned to bring for "those who have fallen outside the narratives of progress" (Lindblad and Popkewitz 2004, cited in Silova 2010: 6). In this research I maintain the position that while the discourse of European progress and modernity is actual for the education reforms, the post-colonial agenda, implying the weakening influence of Russia, should be taken into account when it comes to the post-Soviet world. In this research both aspects are taken as equally important.

This post-colonial motivation is also missed because it is implicit. Within these states it is consciously understood, from internal historical experience, that it is safer to publicly use the rhetoric of openness and cooperation with Europe for progressive goals, rather than to use post-colonial rhetoric. This is grounded in an awareness that the possibility of the existence of Russian colonialism and hence of a post-colonial agenda has never been accepted by Russian consciousness and Russian-Soviet social sciences. There is a rich literature about the approach in the Russian/Soviet social sciences to the issue of colonialism in the Soviet Union (Olcott 1995; Lieven 1993; Annus 2012; Khalid 2000; Morrison 2007; Sunderland 2004). I would suggest that the overall sensitivity of Russian consciousness and social sciences to the colonial/anti-colonial topic relates to the existing alternative views of the past, which contradict the officially propagandised version of history in the Soviet Union and that is maintained in modern Russia. These contradictions cover a range of issues, such as mass famine or colonisation, and relate to the distortion and silencing of history. Surely it can be

said that the entire human history is a distorted history, “very largely a manufactured falsehood” (Hamer 2013: 15). And while this applies to the democratic world (Pilger 2004), it is more manifest in the totalitarian one, where intellectual life was regulated by the state. As Conquest states in regard to the latter, “real facts, real statistics disappeared to the realm of fantasy. History, especially the history of Communist Party, was rewritten. A new past, as well as a new present, was imposed on the captive mind of the Soviet population” (Conquest 2000 in Kydyralieva 2010). At a deeper level this goes back to the issue of how the Russian and then Soviet empires were founded, which inevitably undermines the existence of modern Russia within its current borders. Therefore speaking from a post-colonial rhetoric can be insecure.

Kazakhstan is a part of that post-socialist world, being the “most thoroughly Sovietized” state (Akiner 1995: 51). I consider Kazakhstan as the most vulnerable to Russian pressure among the post-Soviet states that chose westernisation as the main direction for their development. Its vulnerability first of all is explained by its geographical location, its remoteness from Europe, and the specificity of its population.<sup>iv</sup> It is the only Central Asian state which borders Russia. This border of 7591 km (Kurtov 2014) is the longest land border in the world and thus it is difficult to control. It is also located between two overpopulated superpowers: Russia and China. Within its own overall small population of 17 million people, a quarter are Russians. As evidence of its vulnerability, an interview with Russian political analyst Baunov is remarkable. He states: “There is no West to be at war with Russia for Kazakhstan”<sup>v</sup> (Kalashnikova 2015). This was said in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict after pointing to the West’s support of Ukraine, while also implying the impossibility of such support for Kazakhstan in an imagined war with Russia.

Despite these features the pro-Western path of Kazakhstan overall, including in education, has been a purposeful strategy and a significant political course. As I mentioned previously, I consider westernisation for Kazakhstan within a post-colonial discourse as part of its attempts to move away from and decrease the Russian influence on the country. The initiatives towards internationalisation in education in the 1990s can be considered as part of this westernisation trend. One of these was the launch in 1993 in Kazakhstan of the international “Bolashak” programme for training young people abroad, the first initiative of this type across the whole post-Soviet area. Also, the country’s gradual reform of its education system since gaining independence culminated in its joining the Bologna Process in 2010. It is the only Central Asian state to become a member of EHEA.

The latter also opens up the issue of language, which is one of the most sensitive issues in the whole post-Soviet area. Language is a highly politicised issue and an instrument for political manipulation in the post-Soviet area, as we can witness in the example of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014. Ukraine was traditionally considered and still desired to be, by Russian officials, a Russian language domain. Consequently, with westernisation, the dominance of the Russian language in the post-Soviet states has decreased with the growing popularity of English. As an overall trend, for post-socialist non-Russians, English became an alternative being free from the dependence and dominance of Russia. In this way I see a future decision to replace the imposed Cyrillic alphabet by the Latin one.

The pro-English tendency together with the recovery of national languages in those states contributed to an overall decrease in Russian influence in the post-Soviet area, culturally and educationally. However, these changes meant that the Russian language became an influential psychological issue for all, but especially for ethnic Russians living in those states and for officials in Russia. It is part of the widely recognised nostalgia in Russia, where “the bulk of the Russian society suffered from the syndrome of dismemberment stemming from the break-up of the Soviet Union and the collapse of its status of a great power” (Diligensky and Chugrov 2000: 16, see also Carter 1990). Interestingly Diligensky and Chugrov (2000) also argue that the dissipation of the Soviet empire was far more painful for Russians than was the loss of colonial empires by the British, French, or other nations, due to the large proportion of Russians living in post-Soviet states.

## **2. The rationale, research question and methodology of the study**

Given that the decision to join the EHEA was made at the governmental level and was therefore inherently political, I was interested to learn how these politically-driven reforms are being responded to by academics. I consider the latter to be the main actors in the reform process and the direct implementers of the European innovations in Kazakhstan education.

My interest in the higher education (HE) reforms in Kazakhstan under the Bologna Process and the wider Europeanisation of Kazakhstan education stems from my personal experience as an academic in a higher education institution (HEI) in Kazakhstan. Since the 2000s, the post-Soviet reforms have intensified, and currently, all Kazakh HEIs are fully included in the reforms, even those specialising in the arts that had initially retained the former education system. While working for this type of HEI, I witnessed resistance to the reforms among my colleagues. The most memorable of my observations was what I saw as their

incomprehension of the necessity for the reforms and their constant questioning of why breaking with the Soviet-era education system was necessary when it was one of the best in the world. Yet, while staff wrangled with these doubts and questions, no administrator heard their opinions or their accounts of the reforms. Instead, they were ordered to continue implementing and keeping pace with the new requirements. This resonates with what Trowler stated in regard to UK academics under similar pressure to reform: “From some positions they are seen as being sinned against, from others as having been ex-sinners now undergoing reform (whether they like it or not)” (1997: 302).

The pressure for intensive adaptation to the reforms, which Kazakhstan academics were subject to after the 2000s, could have been associated with the fact that Kazakhstan soon intended to sign the Bologna Declaration, or at least to fulfil the requirements for joining the EHEA. Of these facts, general academic staff members were unaware, since academic personnel are never typically in the position to make decisions regarding the establishment of international associations or agreements. In this sense, the reforms were executed in a situation in which academics were forced to implement them without being given an explanation. At the same time, people in power turned their eyes to Europe for reasons that encompassed far more than just education. Since joining the EHEA was a political decision in Kazakhstan’s case, I developed a research interest in an investigation of academics’ accounts of the reforms. I have entitled this thesis “the views from within” and this relates to the voices of local academics and specifically to those who participated in my research. I acknowledge I have worked within the university system when the reforms have started. From my position as an insider I could see how the conflict between the political goals and education reality has emerged. Drawing on this, I wanted to explore the academics’ views and evaluations of the reality. My central research question is thus: how do Kazakhstan academics respond to the reforms of higher education (HE) carried out as part of Europeanisation?

Yet, the value of the study of the Europeanisation of education in post-socialist states is not limited to those who have a commonality of political factors. In addition, it is valuable for its potential contribution to the field of educational policy borrowing. This theory provides the primary theoretical grounding for my research. Apart from the framework of the theory of educational borrowing based on work by Steiner-Khamsi (2003, 2005, 2006, 2012a, 2012b), Silova (2002a, 2002b) and Phillips and Ochs (2003, 2004), this research also employs work addressing post-Soviet and post-socialist education reforms in other countries such as Georgia, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and the Baltic states by Heyneman and Tomusk. The chief



questions of the theory ask how and why international patterns play out differently when borrowed and applied in different local contexts and practices (Steiner-Khamsi 2005, 2012a).

One of my rationales for this research is that the appearance of post-socialist societies changed the traditional strategy of educational transfer in the world, and in turn has promoted and expanded the theory of educational policy borrowing in the last twenty years. It was normally accepted in the literature that educational flows occur from the developed First World to the Third World, which was colonised by the First World, with the post-socialist countries missing from consideration (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006: 6). The Third World countries are predominantly ones where there were no prior education systems, and thus where the initial establishment of education systems similar to Western ones took place. This contrasts with educational transfer into post-socialist societies. These had already inherited a well-developed educational system and are engaged in the re-modelling of this. I refer here to the remark by Khanna (2009), where he pointed out that the use of the term “the Second World” reflects the rich societal legacy that the post-socialist states inherited from the Soviet Union and thus they cannot be referred to as the Third World. Instead they are positioned somewhere in between the Western “developed” World and Third “developing” World.

While efforts to join the developed world can be strong among post-socialist states, the process is not always easy for several reasons. First, there are many social features shaped within these states, which have long been influenced by Soviet/Russian culture – among others, a particular system of education, research, and science; a strong Russian language presence in post-Soviet societies’ education; and people’s mental patterns, especially those of people educated during the Soviet period. Hence, the patterns of educational transfer from the First to the Second World have their own specificity and can be significantly different from the traditional generalisations found in educational transmission between the First and the Third World.

Given that all post-socialist countries have shared an identical education system, the problematic issues found in one country can be extrapolated to a certain degree into other countries with this inherited Soviet education system. It is remarkable that among the post-Soviet states, while Kazakhstan intensively adopted the reforms, others, such as Russia and Georgia, opted for a more gradual implementation. Despite these differences in the reform process between states, my study will contribute to our understanding of how the reforms as a whole have worked – or not – in post-Soviet and post-socialist areas. Hence, this study of the educational reforms in Kazakhstan is an attempt to answer the main questions of the

theory and thus it can extend our understanding of the more general patterns behind educational transfer from the Western to the post-socialist world.

While the collapse of the socialist system happened because of major underlying factors and could hardly depend on the efforts of a single state, and Kazakhstan, in this sense, as Olcott claims, was to “catapult to independence” (1992), it does not necessarily mean a successive turn to pro-European values in each separate post-Soviet state. For example, the five states of the Central Asian region chose different methods for their post-Soviet development, with only Kazakhstan having a definite pro-Western orientation (Gleason 1997) and that is why it is an interesting phenomenon.

The geographical location of Kazakhstan in Central Asia often leads to the consideration of Kazakhstan and its development within the context of its regional neighbours. I argue in this thesis that such an approach, while seemingly superficially correct, is often confusing and misleading. It prevents the comprehension and evaluation of the actual westernisation trends in Kazakhstan, as they are distinct in this country from the rest of the area and are closer to the processes that have gone in other post-Soviet states, such as in the Caucasus, Baltic or Eastern European states. Therefore, the education reforms in Kazakhstan should be understood at a deeper contextual level and in connection with those countries who also undertook westernisation in education and are members of the EHEA and the Bologna Process. So, an understanding of Kazakhstan’s education reforms gained by relating it to the other states in the region based on their geographical closeness is clearly misleading. Yet, this is what one can find in the existing literature of scholars of comparative education.

In short, the education reforms in Kazakhstan in fact are a reconstruction at a state-wide, systematic level, rather than the implementation of various separate initiatives in education. The major characteristics of this are: a new legitimation basis, the total restructuring of the education process at all levels, including the taught programs and the curricula among other elements, funding reforms of the allocation of internal state resources, and the internationalisation of education. This is not at all what other countries in the region carry out (Dixon and Soltys 2013; Abdygapparova et al. 2004)

In my attempt to answer to the research question of how the Kazakhstan academics respond to the reforms in education, I chose Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), based on the work by van Dijk and Fairclough, as the main tool for the data analysis. The choice of CDA was made due to the specific task I intended to perform as a researcher of the post-Soviet education reforms. As I stated above, the post-Soviet people are the carrier of the specific mental

patterns, which were formed under the highly ideologically controlled Soviet society (this issue is examined in detail in Chapter IV, section 1.2). These ideological beliefs were an inevitable element in the academics' accounts of the education reforms. Thus CDA was applied as a relevant tool for discovering these underlying beliefs of the academics. Also, the participants showed a discursive aspect in their responses with similarities, differences and conflictual patterns in their texts, which in turn formed particular discourses or sets of discourses. The appearance of these discourses was always based on a wider contextual field, presupposed by various ideological beliefs and pre-existing knowledges, which post-Soviet academics carry within their mindsets as descendants of the Soviet past. Distinguishing these became the main research task for me as the researcher.

Another benefit of the application of CDA in this research is that educational reform as a societal practice implies the presence of another actor in the reform process, with which the academics are in contrastive or conflictual relations. By this, the educational authority, which initiated the reforms in the country, is implied. Therefore, there was the presence of all the conditions needed to make possible the application of CDA here: conflictual relations between the dominant (the educational authority as power) and dominated (the academics) players, and reproduced discourses on the basis of ideological beliefs. The policy implementation is the other side of the relationships between the academics and the authority. As reforms are always introduced from above, the attitudes and reactions to them are a reflection of the relationships between those who impose them and those who are the direct implementers in the educational practice, i.e. academics. CDA is then used as the method for examining the power relationships between the two sides of the social practice, which allows us to learn how the academics respond to the novelties and reform practice.

Intending to investigate the qualitative patterns of the problem, a typical method of qualitative research, a semi-structured interview, was applied for the data collection. Thirty-eight academics from four Universities in different regions of Kazakhstan participated in the interviews covering fifteen core questions. The questions were split up into three groups, covering at first the participants' general attitude to the reforms and the reasons for the Europeanisation of Kazakhstan education. Questions were then posed on the implementation of the specific innovations, such as the introduction of the credit system, new methods of student assessment, changes in teaching loads, academic research activity and publishing, language policy, and, finally, the comparison with past experience in the Soviet education system and an imagined return to it.

These themes are consequently analysed in the three analytical chapters. In the first analytical chapter, I look at the general themes, which cover the participants' attitude to the reform process in Kazakhstan HE and the comparison of their current experience with the Soviet education system, are investigated. The analysis in that chapter shows that while the participants supported the reforms in education under the European system, they also displayed strong nostalgic sentiments about the former education system, as they constructed this as providing stability, guarantees for students and staff, and a systematic approach to education management. In the second analysis chapter, I examine the implementation of the new standards in student assessment, the implementation of the credit system and teaching loads. The participants' responses reflected accounts of the chaotic and unprofessional management carried out by the educational authority, the lack of training among the staff itself and the general unpreparedness in the overall system with respect to the reforms. In the final analytical chapter, the participants' accounts of the new criteria to apply in the field of academic research, publication and academic mobility are studied. The analysis in this chapter shows that while the academics are those required to meet the new requirements under Western academic standards, it is not always realistic for them due to some constraints. These are the poor competency in foreign languages (mainly English) and the different research traditions they had in the former system, especially in the social sciences and humanities, which impede the involvement of the post-Soviet academics in the international academic community.

As I will argue, the participants transmitted particular patterns of discourses in their responses. Overall, three sets of discourses can be identified throughout the participants' accounts: discourses of nostalgia and loss, discourses of progression and modernity, and discourses of chaotic reform and variations of the latter. Each of these discourses is a reflection of certain societal or historical beliefs which people are accustomed to hold. For example, the discourse of progression and modernity, which conveys the welcoming of educational reforms under Western educational standards, is the reflection of the ideology of universality, progressiveness, and the historical significance of contemporary Europe and its values (Seidman 2013). It is also a reflection of the same public discourse circulating within Kazakhstan society, where, after the collapse of the Soviet system, the aspiration to progression through the Europeanisation process grew dramatically. Another set of discourses was realised through nostalgia and loss. By this, the academics conveyed the Soviet ideology about having the best Soviet education and graduates, thorough systematic knowledge and better education quality. The discourses on chaotic reform, institutional

ignorance and lack of concern towards education conveyed the message of the dominance of political over educational goals among those in power. In addition, the pursuing of political aims, such as the fight against corruption in education, or the carrying out of reforms in an environment where there is a lack of information and in the absence of an appropriate training for academics, made the local educational practice even worse.

The study shows that the central discourse that academics respond with is one of chaotic reform, which arises when different approaches, patterns, or models are combined in one practice. This is paired with the deficit of knowledge, skills, and information about Western educational standards by local reform agents, which is caused by the objective factors of the post-Soviet context, both professional and societal. Some of these factors include the excessive political governance in education; a lack of local professionals with adequate knowledge about Western education and those trained to Western standards; missing professional administration and management; and low levels of English competency, among others. At a deeper level, these deficiencies were generated by the historical separation of the local academic community from the world community. The discourse of nostalgia appears when the participants find themselves in the constrained and confusing reality, under which the models of the past become more preferential. The Soviet models, as ones well-known and familiar to the local academics, serve as escape mechanisms for them in the face of chaotic reforms. In turn, the discourse on modernity and progress arises when the academics recognise the better professional value of the Western models and their limited skills for meeting the new requirements by themselves. Both discourses, of nostalgia and modernity and progression, are interwoven with the central theme on chaotic reform. This or that combination of discourses is found overarching across the accounts of the participants.

Prior to turning to the study of the education reforms under Western standards in Kazakhstan, it is worth considering the prerequisites for this. In the next chapter I study the geographical, psychological, historical, and cultural features of Kazakhstan that first of all made it an interesting example among other post-Soviet states and second made pro-westernisation possible.

## Chapter II. The Kazakhstan Context

In the Introductory chapter I outlined the main arguments for my study, which are based on the existence of historical colonial relationships with Russia and a post-Soviet post-colonial move away from it. In this chapter my aim is to consider this aspect in a wider frame and study Kazakhstan as an entity within its geographical, historical, cultural and political context. An additional aim is to trace those particular features of Kazakhstan which contributed to its current pro-Western reforms. At first sight, the very notion of a Central Asian state being inspired by European educational processes and other European initiatives may seem rather unusual. Indeed Kazakhstan is a post-Soviet state, located in Central Asia, predominantly a Muslim nation, with a Turkic language and a nomadic cultural tradition, yet it seeks the broad ties with the European world. So, the case of Kazakhstan may seem unique in having a pro-European orientation despite being a 'non-European' state.

To study Kazakhstan's educational reforms, it is first necessary to examine the country's geographical, historical, cultural, and other features which have influenced Kazakhstan's unique position among its neighbours and its course of development. While there are many things can be said about the historical, political and cultural background of Kazakhstan, in this chapter I concentrate on those features that have influenced the country's turn towards Europe as a model for development and its borrowing of Western policies in education.

One of the overarching arguments of my research is that the pro-Western reforms of education policy in an independent Kazakhstan are primarily for **political purposes**, and specifically are part of a post-colonial move away from Russian political and cultural influence. Kazakhstan education policy can thus be considered to constitute education politics, since politics plays a crucial role in education policymaking. Yet, the pro-Western motives within Kazakhstan politics did not arise solely as a result of the collapse of Soviet empire. In what follows, I argue that there are cultural and historical prerequisites dating back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which have contributed to the attractiveness of European values for the nation today. This Eurasian culture and mentality in turn is based on the specific geographical location of the country, which we can focus on to understand the logic of Kazakhstan's joining the Bologna Process. I argue that there is confusion in the Western academic literature about the geography of Kazakhstan, which often leads scholars into misunderstandings about the nature of the educational changes in the country.

The following chapter consists of two sections. The first part analyses the premises for Kazakhstan joining the European Education Area and for its widely pro-Western orientation. I point to particular features in three fields, the geography, history and politics of Kazakhstan, which, I suggest, explain the orientation of this country towards the West. Therefore, this is structured in three subsections dealing with: the geographical location of the country; Kazakhstan's cultural and historical heritage with a focus on its nomadic past, religious beliefs and the effects of Russian colonisation; and, finally, the country's pro-European modern politics and development. My particular focus in this chapter is on establishing the geographical, cultural and historical distinctness of Kazakhstan from its neighbours in the Central Asian region. This supports my argument that the educational reforms in Kazakhstan should be studied in the context of the other post-Soviet and post-Socialist states which are members of the EHEA, rather than within the context of the Central Asia region.

The second section is devoted to an examination of the education reforms. As I argue throughout this research the reforms in Kazakhstan are carried out at the system level, meaning that all parts of the education system became subject to change. In order to summarise the main changes in the overall process, I distinguish them into large-scale (subsection 2.1) and small-scale reforms (subsection 2.2). I include in large-scale reforms all those changes in education that involved socio-cultural, economic and legislative aspects. These are: the transformations in the research and science infrastructure and the language politics of education, and the introduction of private education, new principles of funding and internationalisation. Those particular issues, which directly touch education and training processes, are by contrast, referred to as small-scale reforms. These include: the introduction of new programme structures and qualifications, and the move to a credit system, student-centred learning, and new specialities. As the particular study of all aspects of the reforms is not my primary focus, I cover only those which are discussed by the participants and so are analysed further in the empirical chapters.

## **1. Cultural and historical context for the pro-European orientation of Kazakhstan**

### ***1.1. The geography of Kazakhstan: being a Eurasian land***

The geographical location of Kazakhstan can be considered as the first significant feature which contributes to an understanding of how the Europeanisation of Kazakhstan education became possible. The first thing to point out is that the country is a transcontinental land on the border of two continents, Europe and Asia, and thus is partly geographically located in

Europe. The European part of Kazakhstan makes up 14% of its territory, an area which is equal in size to Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands put together. Yet, this is due to the fact that Kazakhstan is one of the largest countries in the world, in ninth place by territory. This vast territory is bigger than the entirety of Western Europe or “larger than the area of the U.S. states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah combined” (Gleason 1997: 51).

It is my argument here that the frequent mis-location of Kazakhstan in a geographical sense and the reference to it as purely within the Central Asian region have caused many misunderstandings in the Western literature of how it became possible for Kazakhstan to join the EHEA. For example, one of the popular view expressed in the media is that membership of the Bologna process has grown to include many countries of the former Soviet Union, as far afield as Kazakhstan, a country of Central Asia that has no physical connection to Europe (Clark 2015). Another example is the suggestion that Kazakhstan could join Bologna because of its level of political entrepreneurship and power, which have “succeeded (in) changing the map of Europe” (Tomusk 2011: 59). This is followed by the conclusion that:

good friends and perhaps also natural resources may appear essential if one intends to make an impact on international agreements and geography – not to mention the willpower of the president putting the two in [sic] a good use. One can imagine the amount of champagne consumed in some of the offices of the Republic of Kazakhstan on March 12, 2010.<sup>vi</sup> (Tomusk 2011: 58-59)

Such problematic views became possible due to the notion of ‘Central Asia’ that has been entrenched in the Western literature since the dissolution of the Soviet Empire (Cowan 2006, Mayhew et al. 2004). While this is a convenient notion with which to operate, it is also a confusing one as it misleads some researchers about Kazakhstan’s geographical (and cultural) location. Although Westerners usually consider Kazakhstan to be purely a Central Asian state, in Soviet-Russian literature Kazakhstan is traditionally referred to as “Kazakhstan and Middle Asia” (Cowan 2006; PGGN 2006) or “Kazakhstan and Central Asia”, showing it as distinct from the rest of the region, as “Kazakhstan territory was physically and conceptually located midway between Central Asia and Russia” (Gleason 1997: 51). (See the map in the Appendix 1.) Consequently, joining the Bologna Process became possible due to the mere fact of geography. Its geographical location supported Kazakhstan in becoming a member of some European associations, such as the Organisation for Security and Co-



operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), in addition to the Bologna Process. The same factor played a role in the case of other transcontinental countries, such as Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey, in their gaining membership of the Bologna Process.

The geographical context dominates the Western studies of the education reforms in Kazakhstan (Heynemann 2010; Silova 2005, 2011a; Steiner-Khamsi 2006; Tomusk 2011). Yet, the challenge here is how best to assess Kazakhstan's processes: whether it through geographical belonging or the character of structural changes. The main question is whether Western educationalists' treatment of Kazakhstan within the traditional framework of Central Asia is appropriate for these reforms. Commonly educational reforms in Kazakhstan are considered in the context of those in the other Central Asian states, of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Mongolia. This approach is obviously based on the geographical location of these countries, alongside shared cultural and historical characteristics.

This is one of my arguments in this thesis, that the study of Kazakhstan's education reforms in should not be misdirected by giving too much weight to its geographical location, rather it should draw upon the character of the reforms. Kazakhstan is the only state in the Central Asian region that is a full member of the EHEA (Soltys 2015) and, consequently, its reforms are closer to those in post-Soviet and post-socialist states, which are also members of the EHEA. Similarly, the process of reform in Kazakhstan education is different from those in its Central Asian neighbours.<sup>vii</sup>

The unique geographical location of the country has forced the Kazakhstan government to proceed with balanced and flexible politics with different partners. This is influenced by how, despite its large territory, Kazakhstan has a very small population, with only 17.29 million people (World Bank Group 2014a), yet it is surrounded by two overpopulated world powers: Russia with 146 million people to the north and China to the south-east with 1.364 billion people (World Bank Group 2014b). This is what Olcott probably meant when she said of Kazakhstan: it is "blessed with resources, but cursed by geography" (2002: 10).<sup>viii</sup> Yet, this has pushed Kazakhstan to enhance and strengthen the European presence in the country, as both its neighbours are striving to impact on Kazakhstan, including exerting an interest over the country's natural resources.

While geography may seem unimportant in a general approach to the entire post-socialist bloc, it makes sense to include it in the study of the education reforms in Kazakhstan. Taking

its geographical context into consideration allows us to understand the reasons why it participated in reform under the Bologna Process. Taking an overarching view, it underlines the motivation for pursuing pro-European politics in the country as the main vector for its development.

Despite the fact that Kazakhstan is usually considered in the context of Central Asia in the literature, it differs from its neighbours in its mentality and mode of development. In the following section I consider other specific features of Kazakhstan which contributed to its pro-Western orientation.

## ***1.2. Cultural distinctions between the Kazakhs and other Central Asian nations***

### **1.2.1. Kazakhstan's nomadic past and the open-minded culture**

The pro-Western orientation of Kazakhstan is not only based in its geographical Eurasian location, but also in the world view of the Kazakhs themselves. The Kazakh world view itself is a specific one, which again can be identified as more Eurasian than Asian. This specificity is found in Kazakhs' attitude to the wider world, their cultural and folk pre-Soviet past, religious background, ethnic composition, and the degree of Russian impact. In this sense their world view is different from that of their Central Asian neighbours as Olcott points out: "Although the Kazakhs have borrowed much from other cultures, colouring contemporary life with Islamic, Russian and Soviet influences, the Kazakhs remain unique – similar but not identical to other Central Asian nationalities" (1987: xix).

Many features in the modern Kazakh world view are a legacy of their nomadic past. Yet, this nomadic past is linked to the most tragic period in the nation's history. The 'social evolution' and therefore 'civilising' of the Kazakhs at the beginning of the Soviet era very much affected the destiny of the nation and its population. The eradication of nomadism was rationalised on the basis that it did not fit with Marxist theory, as nomadism relied on the existence of private property including cattle and land. The criticism by the official Soviet scholars, such as V. Batrakov, M. Saharov, S. Tolstov, was used as an excuse for the mass genocide of the Kazakhs in the 1920s and 1930s (Gellner 1984, 1988; Khazanov 2002; Kradin 2003). That is why nomadism was a dangerous topic for discussion in Russian-Soviet literature (Khazanov 1984, 2002) and still is not publicly discussed in Kazakhstan. Western scholars produced alternatives to the official publications stating the Soviet view on Central Asian nomadism (Gellner 1984, 1988; Khazanov 1984).

It is important to point out that the basic features of the nomadic past, to a large degree, colour today's Kazakh culture, way of thinking, world view and attitude to the wider world. One of the most important features of nomadism consists in its indissoluble and necessary connection with the outside world, with societies which have different economic and social systems (Khazanov 1984: 3-4). Nomadism, in turn, is determined by such characteristics as territorial vastness (Young-Min 2007) and religious tolerance (Privratsky 2011; Salhani 2011).

Despite the fact that nomadism as a lifestyle has disappeared, the Kazakh world view in many ways carries nomadic patterns, such as openness and tolerance to others' cultures, and an inability to exist in isolation (Khazanov 1984, 2002). I would argue that this nomadic background predisposes Kazakhstan, in a psychological sense, to a pro-Western orientation and general openness to the Western world and its values. In the next section I continue my focus on culture turning to the specificity of religious beliefs of the nation, which created an atmosphere of tolerance to other cultural influences.

### **1.2.2. The religious background of the Kazakhs**

Another distinctive feature of the Kazakhs as a nomadic people is their religious practice. The vast majority of the population are followers of Islam, which is recognised as one of the key elements of national identity. Although Islam is a major faith in the entire Central Asian region, in some post-nomadic societies, such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, it has been adopted differently than in the settled nations, such as Uzbekistan or Tajikistan.

The moderateness of Kazakh religious beliefs has promoted an overarching tolerance among people to other, non-Muslim, religions and cultures. Sufi Islam, an Islamic mystical ascetic tradition in Central Asia, is characterised by heterodoxy. There is considerable latitude in the observance of religious principles and the people do not accept religious fundamentalism. This factor leads some scholars to mistakenly conclude that, traditionally, Kazakhstan is not a Muslim nation, or that Kazakhs are only nominally Muslim. This viewpoint dominates those Western sources which are based on the Soviet political approach. In particular, Privratsky identifies this in Olcott, who writes that: "All information supports the conclusion that until the first decades of the nineteenth century the Kazak masses were Muslims in name only, with no knowledge of Muslim rituals or beliefs" (Olcott 1987, cited in Privratsky 2001: 24). This standard view came from "the problematic premise that its nomadic provenance makes it a marginal expression of Islam by definition" (Privratsky 2001: 9). That is why Sufism was identified with 'folk Islam', which is an error in the Western view on Kazakh Islam. Other Western and Soviet scholars, such as Bainbridge, and Trimmingham, designate Kazakh

religion as “folk”, “popular”, “parallel” or “everyday”, which are established clichés in the field (ibid.: 16).

I argue that Privratsky’s study itself is significant for its many detailed insights into Kazakh religious life. He clear-sightedly catches the difference between traditional Islam and “Muslimness”, “which ... becomes very striking in Kazak usage” (ibid.: 243). “Muslimness” is understood as Muslim life, identity, and spiritual substance, and as prevailing over rituals and following Shariah law: “If the Kazak case demonstrates one thing about religion, it is that Muslims are energized as much by a longing to touch the world of spirit (ruh) as by a need for the social way of religious law (din)” (ibid.: 260).

To Kazakhs the rigidness and dogmatism of ‘radical’ Islam are alien, as they do not harmonise with the Steppe and nomadic mentality. What could be seen as a weak Muslimness in comparison with other Muslim societies, represents religious moderation, a middle way among the various branches of modern Islam (including radicalism or fundamentalism): “Then there is the Islam one finds in a country such as Kazakhstan, where the approach to religion is drastically different than what one will find in Egypt or even in next-door Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, or Kyrgyzstan” (Salhani 2011: 9).

Both nomadism and moderate Islam have determined the Kazakh world view, and made this an open-minded culture (Aitken 2011; Khanna 2009). It can be argued that a predisposition to contact with the outer world is central for Kazakhs, rooted in the very nature of their nomadic culture, world view and absence of religious rigidity. It is what makes Kazakhstan different from its neighbours in the region, where sedentarisation, along with Islamic religion, have led to more traditional societies, such as those of the Uzbeks and the Tajiks. In other post-nomadic societies, such as Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, pro-Western development does not find substantial support. However, Kazakhstan’s distinctiveness is not limited to its people’s internal characteristics such as nomadism and religion. In the next subsection I study country-specific aspects of the powerful effects of Kazakh intelligentsia and Russian colonisation on Kazakhstan.

### **1.2.3. The historical turn to Europeanisation under Russian influence**

Kazakhstan is also distinct from its neighbours because of the stronger influence of Russian rule, which is linked to the fact that Kazakhstan has a shared border with Russia unlike other states in the Central Asian region. Kazakhstan experienced the biggest colonial impact of the Russian/Soviet empire among all other post-Soviet states. Looking at it positively,

development under Russian colonisation was progressive and advanced the nation, and it is because of these dramatic changes that gradual movement forward has been maintained into the present. While bringing progress to the aboriginal people was not the aim of the empire, and progress was achieved as a side effect of Russia's colonial purposes (Shorish 1984), it nevertheless changed the Kazakhs' destiny in a radical and new way.

The history of Kazakhstan is a tragic experiment. A combination of progressive achievements and tragic events characterise Kazakh history perhaps more than that of any other country in Central Asia or the whole Soviet region. It was very popular to say that Kazakhstan was 'a laboratory of the friendship', while in fact what was taking place was not just an experiment in friendship with Russia, but a much bigger experiment. The most tragic outcome of this experiment, among others, was the dramatic decrease of the aboriginal population due to genocide, which it is estimated would be between 28 and 35 million today (Tatimov 2012). So, the Kazakhs survived this two-century experiment, however with great losses (d'Encasse 1990). All these experiments over this land and nation were so dramatic and influential that they cannot be encompassed by scholarly analysis. Russian influence in the region remains an unresolved issues in the social sciences. For a long time contemporary scholars differed in their accounts of the role of the Soviets in Central Asia, naming it as a colonised territory on the one hand, and a blessed land on the other. Yet, as Carey and Raciborski (2004: 200) argue: "All analysts agree that Central Asia, where Muslim communities were brutally suppressed in the final decades before 1917 and then were reacquired by the USSR after a brief independence after World War I, were colonies". They also compare the Central Asian states to the classical colonies (ibid.). In contrast, Russian and Soviet scholars and publics traditionally reject even the idea that they were colonisers (Carley 1995; Grachev and Rykin 2006; Khalid 2000; Morrison 2007; Sunderland 2004).

In this respect, the Kazakh intelligentsia, who were influenced by the European enlightenment, placed great importance on knowledge and the progress of the nation in a European direction. The generations of Kazakh intellectuals from the mid-19th through to the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were remarkable. That time is characterised by the appearance of many prominent representatives of the Kazakh intelligentsia, which was formed under the influence of Russia and of wider European culture and education. Through being trained in Russian and Western universities these Kazakhs became familiar with European culture, and European political ideals and values. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Kazakh intelligentsia grew and became a social stratum which was strong enough to organise social, cultural and political movements, often divided into Russian and Muslim ideological ideas and

priorities (Uyama 2000). Yet, on the whole the movements of the Kazakh intelligentsia represented a coherent form of interaction among nomadic, Islamic, and Russian influences (ibid.).

Russian colonisation, in fact, was a way of Europeanising the Central Asian Muslims. At the time Russian culture served as an important transmitter of European cultural values, which in turn had been imported into Russia from the West since the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century under Peter the Great's reforms (Cracraft 2006; Stevens 2014). So, it can be argued that the orientation towards European values in Kazakhstan occurred due to Russian influence. I argue that the Kazakh intelligentsia played the same role as did Russian intellectuals in Russia itself at the time, being influenced by European liberal ideas of enlightenment, progress and modernity. For example, members of the Kazakh intelligentsia, such as Akhmet Baitursynuly, Alikhan Bokeikhanov and Myrzhaqyp Dulatuly, considered themselves as Westernisers. On the pages of the popular newspaper *Qazaq* (published from 1913 to 1918) they stated: "We are Westernizers. We do not look to the East or the Mongols in our striving to bring our people closer to culture. We know there is no culture there. Our eyes turn to the West. We can get culture from there through Russia, through the mediation of Russians" (Martynenko 1992, cited in Kendirbaeva 1999: 8). A similar view is described by McKenzie in his characterisation of Chokan Valikhanov, who was another prominent Kazakh scholar, ethnographer, historian, traveller and educator from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century generation of intellectuals:

Western secular culture and education, accompanied by suitable reforms, were the answer to the ignorance and backwardness of his people ... [He] adopted many aspects of Russian culture, not because they were specifically Russian but because they were European. Russia was simply geographically the most immediate conveyor ... For him European culture meant education and progress under secular auspices. (McKenzie 1987, cited in Sabol 2003)

For the Kazakhs, Russian culture was a carrier of European modernity and it is because of this European and universal aspect to Russian cultural influence, that it was attractive to them. At the same time the Russian national culture itself was considered particularly weak. The view of an intellectual of that generation Alikhan Bokeikhanov is helpful: "The culture of our Russia is low. Russia has no factories and plants capable of producing valuable things.

Culture is in Western Europe: in France, England, Belgium and Germany” (Bokeikhanov 1915, cited in Kendirbaeva 1999).

Thus, the influence of the Russian/Soviet Empire contributed to making the European world attractive to the Kazakhs. Russian cultural and educational influence became a carrier of European knowledge and values to the region, which found supporters within the most educated people of that time.<sup>ix</sup> I argue that these tendencies, that date back to the beginning of the last century, are reflected in today’s desire for Europeanisation and modernity in Kazakhstan. That is why the desire for Europeanisation is much stronger within Kazakhstan than within its neighbours.

I would argue that the world view of modern Kazakhs and thus of contemporary Kazakhstan was formed from a combination of both internal and external factors. One of these is nomadism which, as a traditional way of life, was natural for the Kazakh people. Second, there is Islam which was brought to the Kazakh steppe somewhere during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and internalised as the natural religious belief in a moderate form as Sufi Islam. Finally, Russian influence expanded the nation’s world view to include European values. This combination of factors makes Kazakhstan different from its neighbours. While in the shared Soviet system these differences did not play a substantial role, after the collapse of the Soviet Empire they contributed to the ways that they chose to pursue development.<sup>x</sup> As Gleason states in the post-Soviet period the differences among neighbouring states have continued to increase:

The states of Central Asia started from a common point within the Soviet Union, yet with the coming of independence they quickly took very different paths. Kyrgyzstan set out with great enthusiasm and commitment on a course of liberalization. Kazakhstan adopted a “Western” development model, embracing democracy, a market economy, the rule of law, and civil rights as a road map for the future. Uzbekiston assumed a quite different posture, emphasizing traditionalism, strong leadership and state, collective rights, national consolidation. Turkmenistan quickly evolved into an Oriental despotism based upon anticipations of economic self-reliance. Tojikiston [sic] slid into internal strife. These different experiences would suggest that independence acted as a gyre, magnifying small differences among the cultures of Central Asia and propelling the new states in different directions. (Gleason 1997: 181)

I have considered, in turn, these three components – Nomadism, moderate Islam and strong Russian influence – as being, in combination, the main contributors to the modern pro-Western orientation of Kazakhstan. When, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the borders opened and direct contact with the Western world became possible, the Euro-Asian culture of the Kazakhs and Kazakhstan found its further realisation. In the next section I develop this theme.

### **1.3. *The post-Soviet period: Kazakhstan's pro-Western orientation***

Being a transcontinental Eurasian state, Kazakhstan, after gaining its independence, put much effort into developing Eurasian rhetoric as the official frame of reference for both its internal and external politics. Within the country it was used for developing various images and rhetoric around the idea of Eurasia, ranging from the establishment of the Eurasian University in Astana to the daily advertising of various products (Mostafa 2013). Externally, the idea of a Eurasian state was announced as a way of establishing and developing a connection with the Western world. The Eurasian rhetoric in Kazakhstan was based on the geographical context and the people's world view. It was constructed as a cultural type and was used in politics. For example, it was mobilised in campaigns for Kazakhstan to become a member of some European associations, such as OSCE and UEFA, in addition to the Bologna Process.

Pro-Western development was reflected in a range of official documents and in the Eurasian model of development. One of these documents is entitled *The Way to Europe* aimed on closer cooperation with the EU (Kostaki 2012; Vlasov 2012). It states three priorities, including to attract investment from Europe with the aim of promoting Kazakhstan as a European strategic partner in the fields of energy, transport, engineering and new technologies, and to seek assistance in establishing legislation and institutions following the example of the EU (Cutler 2010; Vlasov 2012; Weitz 2008). The political view of Kazakhstan is to see the country as part of the European space or at least as a country with a strong presence of European business and politics within it.<sup>xi</sup> The political opposition in the country is even more strongly pro-European than the government (Kassenova 2008).

Almost all social reforms followed Western models as well. These include reforms to the pension system, the education system, public health, tax laws and the banking sphere, and the monetisation of benefits. Overall, in its external politics, Kazakhstan demonstrates an unambiguously pro-Western orientation having close cooperation with the EU and becoming the most prominent partner for Europe in the Central Asian region (Dave 2008). Against this,



critics of Kazakhstan highlight that it is a state of low civic development and that practices abuses of human and political rights under an autocratic regime (Bureau 2014; Human Rights Watch 2015; Tsertsvadze and Boonstra 2013). It is an example of a “strong state-weak civic society” (Soltys 2015: 188).

The adoption of Eurasian ideas and a pro-Western way for Kazakhstan originate from the spiritual and political ideas of prominent Kazakh historical figures (Chapter II, section 1.2). The Eurasian doctrine itself appeared after the period of transition following the collapse of the USSR and the demise of the Soviet identity, which existed for decades in Kazakhstan. To substitute the Soviet one, a Eurasian identity was adopted as the primary idea for constructing the national identity in Kazakhstan. President Nazarbayev became the most influential person in promoting the image of Kazakhstan as the Eurasian state on the international stage: “We are a Eurasian country with its own history and its own future. Therefore, our model will not look like someone or other. It absorbs the achievements of different civilizations” (Nazarbayev 1997). He has constantly referred to Kazakhstan as a Eurasian land, straddling East and West (Cummings 2003:140).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, at the level of policy, the first attempts to find a substitute for communist ideology were taken in “A Strategy for the Development of Kazakhstan as a Sovereign State” (1992) and also in “Ideological consolidation of society as a condition of progress in Kazakhstan” (1993). Also, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, ethnic conflict re-emerged. So, in creating the Eurasian idea, the President created a united idea for all, including all the ethnic groups in Kazakhstan promoting national stability. In this regard Kazakhstan, mainly by the efforts of Nazarbayev, presents itself as a land of peace, tolerance, and national harmony. As Cummings states “The elite has been eager to portray its self-image as generous, peace-loving, secular and Eurasian” (2003: 140).

After presenting the Eurasian idea in 1994 in Moscow State University, the Eurasian framework was adopted through the range of political documents. The most important was the Strategy document “Kazakhstan-2030” which was presented in an address to the people of the country entitled, “Prosperity, security and improvement of welfare of all Kazakhs” (1997). Here, “the leadership claims that Kazakhstan’s uniqueness, which stems from being Eurasian, is symbolized by the snow leopard, an animal unique to the Kazakhstani mountains, fiercely independent ‘but never the first to attack anyone’. The snow leopard is a combination of ‘western elegance’ and ‘oriental wisdom’, embodying ‘a space that links Europe to the Asia-Pacific region’” (Cummings 2003:141). Other documents of that period

include: “Address of President to the people of Kazakhstan” (1998); “About national security of the Republic of Kazakhstan” (1998), “At the dawn of the 21st century” (1996); “Eurasian Union: ideas, practice, perspectives 1994–1997” (1997) and his various volumes pertaining to his vision of Kazakhstan and its place in the wider world (ibid).

An important feature of Nazarbayev's interpretation of Eurasianism is the departure from "anti-Westernism". For Nazarbayev the Eurasian ideal is not alienation from Europe, and the interaction with it on a new inter-state and inter-regional level offers a more dynamic way forward (Mostafa 2013; Kofner 2012; Cummings 2003). With this approach, the Customs Union between Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarussia in 1995, and later in 2003 of the Eurasian Economic Space took shape. Nazarbayev stressed the economic but not the political status of these institutions. Unlike the European Union, the political sovereignty of the states would not be diminished and all the issues within the organizations would be decided by consensus (Kofner 2012). However, the distancing from Europe of Russia's contrasts with Kazakhstan's Eurasian ideas, and this has been a tension in the current relationship between the two countries within the recently established Eurasian Economic Union.

It is worth focusing on how differently the doctrine of Eurasianism played out in Kazakhstan and Russia (Mostafa 2013; Uffelmann 2011). The Eurasian approach of Kazakhstan contains “no apparent conflict between Eurasianism and Atlantism rather they are convergent, complementary and enforce the common values and principles” (Mostafa 2013: 168). It also fits with the globalisation model, rather it offers an alternative route for development of Kazakhstan and its integration into global process (ibid.). Modern Russian officials follow the cultural and political ideology of Eurasianism of Russian intellectuals at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As I stated, their classic version of Eurasian ideology was created in opposition to Eurocentrism and to European modernity and cultural colonialism. This ideology was created as a justification for the Russian empire as a distinctive empire-civilisation, a super-ethnic nation, and the leader of colonised peoples (Turome and Waldstein 2013). The distancing from Europe in Russia's view today is in contrast to Kazakhstan's Eurasian approach which manifests as a tension in the current relationships between the two countries.<sup>xii</sup>

Given my main argument that Westernisation is a reflection of a post-colonial agenda, while it is not external, rather it accompanies pro-European development, I argue that the issue of the country's security should not be underestimated. It is interesting to observe how pro-Western rhetoric increased recently after the war in Ukraine. For example, the recent renewal

of the agreement on the enhancement of cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan (EUEA 2015), signed after the beginning of the military conflict and Russia's politics in Ukraine, can be considered in this light (Norling 2015; Plotnikov 2015). Yet, it is also promoted a new stage of cooperation with Europe.

As for public opinion in Kazakhstan, it also shows stronger pro-Western orientations than in other post-Soviet states. For example, according to surveys that took place in 2006, 57% of Kazakhstan's citizens supported partnership with Europe over partnership with other post-Soviet republics (Petuhov 2006). This percentage is the highest among other newly-independent countries which have integrated with Europe. The figure for Russia is 51%, while for Belorussians and Ukrainians, it is 39% and 38% respectively. On the contrary, there is little desire amongst Kazakhs for closer relations with the post-Soviet area, only 33% of the population wants this, while in Russia, the proportion is 37%, and in Belorussia and Ukraine it is 48% ((*ibid.*: 12). Commenting on these results, Petuhov states that "Kazakhstan's pro-Western orientation is mainly due to the fact that this country has really rather closer economic links with the West than, for example, Ukraine and Belorussia" (*ibid.*: 12, personal translation from the Russian). Statistics suggest that 59% of Kazakh citizens aged 55 and over mourn the collapse of the USSR. However, this figure is small in comparison with similar-aged people in Russia, Belorussia and Ukraine (Petuhov 2006). It is interesting that, overall, Kazakh citizens have least regrets about the dissolution of the USSR (41%), while in Ukraine and Belorussia the figure is 55%, and the highest percentage is in Russia (67%) (*ibid.*).

I would suggest that this preference for Western values is largely an expression of an aspiration for the modernity and progress which are traditionally associated with Europe. It is also what I note as being reflected in the discourse of modernity and progress in the accounts of academics, analysed in the empirical chapters. In other words, post-colonial desires are implicit in the actions of the political elite of the country rather than being explicitly transmitted in the public's views. In the following section I turn to the key aspects of Kazakhstan's education reforms.

## **2. The reform of Kazakhstan education**

### ***2.1. Political will for reforms***

Overall the period of reformation in Kazakhstan education up to date covers around 25 years. It is worth saying that all reforms in the country, including those in education, were initiated by President Nazarbayev, who is the first President of Kazakhstan and has held the position since 1991. Many experts recognise the fact that actually all changes in the country have been driven by his political will and vision: “Nazarbayev himself who plays the key role in both the formal (constitutional) and informal system of exercising power in Kazakhstan. It is he who personally takes the key decisions concerning the country’s political, economic and social life” (Jarosiewicz 2016:9). The strong political drive behind the education reforms is also seen from the analysis in this study (Chapters VI-VII), which actually characterises the way reformation is carried out in the country.

From the very beginning of Nazarbayev’s presidency, the main direction of his ‘multi-vector’, ‘multilateral’ politics (Cummings 2003) has sought to establish contacts with the Western world and Europe in particular. Pointing to the historical pre-requisites which were explained earlier (Chapter II, section 1.2), Nazarbayev’s pro-Western initiatives are seen as the continuation of the spiritual efforts and longing of prominent figures in the Kazakh intelligentsia at the beginning of the 20th century, who pointed out their preference for the development of Kazakh land in a similar way to that of European countries. Yet, it is only after gaining independence that the ideas of that generation got the opportunity for realisation.

Nevertheless, following presidential decrees, a large number of state documents on the reform of education have been issued over the decades (see Table 1 below). Within them several particular directions are highlighted: the development of international cooperation in education, including the foundation of the international scholarship programme ‘Bolashak’; new ways of financing education; the development of private education, quality control in education and changes in the language politics of education. The underlying reason for modernisation in education was the need to transform it according to the newly formed market economy, the challenges of globalisation and the subsequent joining of the Bologna Process.

## **2.2. Chronology of the reforms**

In many cases the reforms in education in the initial period after the country gained independence in 1991 were somehow spontaneous, and expressed through a number of revisions in adopted education policy documents at that time. For example, the Law on Education adopted in 1992 was amended in 1997, followed by the new Law on Education in 1999. The spontaneity was somehow unavoidable in the initial period of the reforms because earlier the country's education was governed by the centralised authority in Moscow, and thus changes after gaining independence were often undertaken for the first time.

I would prefer to distinguish the overall reformation process in the Kazakhstan education system in two major periods from those chronologies found in the literature (see Korol 2004; OECD 2007; Yakavets 2014; Yakavets and Dzhadrina 2014). I see 1997 as a demarcation line, before which changes in education were made according to the needs of the market economy and overall socio-cultural changes that happened after the dissolution of the Soviet system. Indeed, "the initial stage in the reform process was to develop and implement measures adapting the educational system to the new social, economic, and political conditions" (Brunner and Tillett 2007 cited in Hartley et al. 2016:280). Thus, the Laws on Education of 1992 and on Higher Education of 1993 were to establish "general rules for how (institutions of higher education) were to operate irrespective of their status, type of ownership, size (number of students) or specialization" (ibid.:280). In other words, the changes were intended to meet the country's societal tendencies. Also, it is worth noting that internationalisation in education and development of international cooperation in education were the other features of that period.

Yet, after signing the Lisbon Convention in 1997 the reforms in education (both at the level of policy production and policy of practice) turned towards the international requirements and preparation for entering the EHEA. At that time the international cooperation in education had been expanded. Table 1. shows the major events in education legislation and practice.

Period	Main purposes	Policy documents adopted	Key events in education practice
1991-1997	Basic legislation on education Internationalisation of education Language politics	Law on Education (1992) Law on Higher Education (1993) President's resolution on the establishment of the international scholarship 'Bolashak' (1993) Law on Languages (1997)	Changes in education, according to the market economy Development of private education Kazakh language as a language of instruction
1998-2010	Adoption of international agreements  Preparation to join the Bologna Process  New strategy in education development according to international requirements	Law on Education (1999) National Programme on Education 2000-2005 (2000) Strategy on Educational Development until 2010 (2001) Law on Science (2001) State educational standards (2002) State educational standards for secondary education (2003) Concept of development of the education system until 2015 (2004) National Education Development Programme 2005-2010 (2004) State educational standards on Bachelor/Magistracy/PhD programmes. The main provisions (2004) Classifier of specialities of Bachelor and Magistracy programmes (2004) State Programme for the Development of Science 2007-2012 (2007) A three-language policy (2007)	Signing Lisbon Convention (December 1997) Expansion of international 'Bolashak' programme (2005) New modes of financing in education and science, licensing and accreditation of HEIs, new state education standards, etc. Dissolution of the Akademia Nauk Creation of National Accreditation Centre (2005) Creation of National Education Quality Assessment Centre (2005) Introduction of Western-type three-tier system: Bachelor, Master and Doctorate Introduction of a credit system English as language of instruction Joining the Bologna Process (2010)
2010-present	Further adoption of EHEA requirements	State Programme for the Development of Education 2011-2020 (2010)	National Qualification Framework (2012) Creation of Centre of Bologna Process and Academic Mobility (former National <b>Accreditation</b> Centre) (2012)

Table 1. Chronology of education reforms in Kazakhstan

The table shows which novelties were implemented in the country prior to meeting the requirements for joining the Bologna Process. Yet, there is also a range of parameters, both required and recommended, which Kazakhstan was subject to implementing after signing the Bologna Declaration in 2010. These are particular procedures to verify the alignment of the national qualification frameworks with the Bologna Qualification Framework.

The particular aim of the Bologna Framework is to create a single European Research Area and to align it with qualification requirements in HE among all participating countries and to create national qualification frameworks in those where they are absent (Bologna Follow-Up Group 2005). These criteria were developed and released in the so-called Dublin Descriptors, also called cycle descriptors or qualification descriptors, and were adopted as the Qualifications Framework of the EHEA in 2005 (ibid.). The Dublin Descriptors are a set of skills or competencies required for the award of a given qualification, associated with awards at the end of each level or cycle (Bachelor – Master – PhD). As it is stated (ibid.), the difference between the Dublin Descriptors and the traditional criteria for higher education lies in what is seen according to expectations of achievements at the end of a cycle. If the traditional approach to higher education was relatively explicit about the knowledge to be achieved or at least the knowledge covered by the curriculum, the Dublin Descriptors are structured around the competencies and skills implicit in the traditional assessment values and practices (ibid). Some of these criteria are the demonstration of knowledge and application of this in practice and other professional approaches to solving problems within the field of study; the ability to gather and interpret relevant data and make judgements; the ability to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences; the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity; demonstrating critical thinking and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas; and demonstrating lifelong learning skills among others (ibid.)

These descriptors became the basis for later adopters of the Bologna Process such as Kazakhstan, to develop their own National Qualification Framework (NQF). In Kazakhstan it dates from 2012, initially being provided by the State Programme for Development of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 adopted after officially joining the Bologna Process in 2010 (see Table 1). Despite the adoption of this document, the adoption of the qualification descriptors of EHEA in education practice is weak. As seen from further analysis in this study, participants often point to the lack of awareness of qualification skills, for example, regarding the differences between Bachelor and Master programmes and the

competencies students should achieve after completion of a programme (Chapter VII, section 1).

Other evidence of insufficient acknowledgement of the European qualification criteria among Kazakhstan staff is the outcomes of the study on the operation of the United National Test (UNT) made on Kazakhstan schooling reforms by the Cambridge team. The experts point to what little progress has been made in corresponding the Kazakhstan UNT with the criteria of NQF and, therefore, European ones, and are questioning why this is happening in local practice. Thus, the outcomes of that study confirm the earlier conclusion by TEMPUS (Winter et al. 2014) that of the five steps required for full operation of NQF only the first is in operation, which stands for “Decision taken. Process just started” with the partial adoption of the second step “The purpose of the NQF has been agreed and the process is under way including discussions and consultations” (ibid.:140-141) Yet, the subsequent three steps have not begun. These are “The NQF has been adopted formally and the process of implementation started” and “Redesigning the study programmes is ongoing and the process is close to completion” (ibid.).

These examples are seen in the light of the existing gap in the Kazakhstan reform process between “the context of text production”, meaning the policy on NQF, and the existing “context of practice” (Bowe et al. 1992). I would say that the specificity of the post-Soviet Kazakhstan context, to which I point throughout my study, adds more to this gap, complicating it with the absence of knowledgeable professionals who can link the policy with the reality of practice to promote reduction of the gap.

### **2.3. The main trends in the reform process**

As I mentioned in Chapter I, all states in “the Second World” inherited a well-developed education infrastructure from the Soviet Empire and that is why reform under Europeanisation is a form of re-modelling, from the Soviet model of education to the European one. Yet, to some extent, it can be also argued that these transformations in post-Soviet education are a way of returning the system to the source from which it was originally borrowed. This position is based on the historical fact that Soviet education, as a continuation of education under the Russian Tsarist Empire, traces its source back to Western education which was initially imported to Russia at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Cracraft 2006; Stevens 2014; Stillings 2005). Yet, with the passage of time it developed into a distinct education system and was modified along Russian and then Soviet lines. It thus achieved a



substantial distinctiveness, despite some large-scale resemblances to the Western system. As Graham wrote “The superficial similarity of the two systems should not blind one, however, to the enormous differences” (1992: 50).

The distinctiveness of the Soviet education system from the Western one was, above all, shaped by the strong ideological control that existed under the Soviet system (see Chapter IV, section 1.2). This, for example, led to the removal of research from HEIs, the development of a highly centralised education system, the establishment of an authoritative mode of management, and the dominance of teacher-centred education, among other shifts. A particular expression of the state’s political and intellectual control was the establishment of the Russian language as the main language of instruction, as a main means for creating a Russophone world.

The current reforms in Kazakhstan education started straight after the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1991. The first steps towards the changes were undertaken well before the country prepared to join the Bologna Process. These were local initiatives for improving the quality of education led by teachers and the public, “who had complained about the decreasing quality of graduates entering universities” (Khalikova and Silova 2008: 143). In contrast to other former socialist states, some changes in education in Kazakhstan were initiated without direct international pressure and in the context of the decreasing influence of international donors (ibid.: 144). The launch in 1993 of the state’s “Bolashak” programme, aimed at educating Kazakh young people abroad, was a step towards the internationalisation of education, and is one example of this. Yet, parallel to this, the influence of international agents, such as TEMPUS and the Soros Foundation, which started their activity in the country in 1994 and 1999 respectively, was another means of stimulating reform in the country (McCabe 2014; Khalikova and Silova 2008).

Preparation to enter the EHEA started in 1997, when Kazakhstan was the first of the CIS countries to sign the Lisbon Protocol, which was a necessary prerequisite for it to move further towards joining the Bologna Process. Since then, with the help of international organisations and extensive cooperation between Kazakhstan and the EU, reforms were made in order to bring Kazakhstan education closer to international requirements. For example, TEMPUS projects were particularly effective in: the modernisation of the curriculum, the introduction of new courses, and improving the overall quality of teaching and learning in accordance with international practice (McCabe 2014). Overall the reform of Kazakhstan education covers the period from 2002 to the present.

Higher education reform in all post-Soviet countries obviously goes beyond the main package entailed in the Bologna Process. Indeed some requirements which were established in European HEIs long before the initiation of the Bologna Process in 1999 (Tomusk 2004) were entirely new to the post-Soviet system. That is why reform in the direction of the Western education system entails the implementation of a wide range of Western practices going beyond Bologna. This includes, for example, the introduction of 12 years of schooling and credit and testing systems, which have been the basics of Western education since the late 1980s. That is why, in the case of the post-Soviet states and the wider socialist world, overall education reform is multiple and complex.

While there are some shared tendencies across the reforms in post-Soviet states (Silova 2009; Soltys 2015), there are also differences between them. For example, Kazakhstan took a sharp turn toward education reform and adjustment to the Western system of education. In fact it was one of the first states, among other post-Soviet members of the EHEA, to totally eradicate all aspects of the Soviet education system from its practices by the time it joined the Bologna Process in 2010. The current situations in other states, such as Ukraine, Armenia, and Russia, are a mix of both systems, with some features of Soviet education still in use (Kovtun and Stick 2009; Sabitov 2011). They have maintained: the Soviet specialist five-year programme alongside the Western Bachelor's four-year programme, the aspirantura alongside Master's courses and the award of Kandidat Nauk and Doktor Nauk alongside PhD degrees (EACEA TEMPUS 2012). Comparing Kazakhstan and Russia, Vlasov (2006) points out that, from the end of 1990s, the progress of educational reforms in the two countries have diverged. For example, while both states contributed to the development of private education, in Russia its education policy has focused mainly on preserving state and free higher education. On the contrary, Kazakhstan adopted much more liberal strategies in this area, extended fee-based education even in state HEIs (ibid.).

As a whole, the reforms have affected all aspects of education at all levels. I have summarised the changes in Table 2, which shows the differences between the Russian and the Western systems, together with those policies implemented in Kazakhstan. In the following subsections, specific areas of reform are examined further.

#### ***2.4.Reform at the socio-cultural level***

In this subsection I attend to three areas that changed under the reforms where those changes, while happening in the education field, impacted on the wider social, cultural and political domains. In this sense I understand that, for example, the restructuring of the

previous research system (see sub-subsection 2.2.1), undoubtedly affected not only education, but also transformed the culture. Therefore I see this as an issue going beyond the confines of education. Similarly, this applies to the changes in the language policy, which in the post-Soviet environment is an issue of cultural and political importance. The language politics of education should be seen as a part of this larger cultural and political process (sub-subsection 2.2.2). The final issue is that of internationalisation (sub-subsection 2.2.3). Again, while on the surface, this relates specifically to education, at a deeper level, it reflects the cultural and political priorities of the state. An important detail to mention here is that, in Kazakhstan, internationalisation started almost straight after the dissolution of the previous political system in 1993, which I

**Table 2: Comparison of Soviet, Western and Reformed Kazakhstan HE systems**

			Soviet education system	Western education system	Introduced in Kazakhstan reforms
Socio-cultural scale	1	Ownership of HEIs	Public	Public, private	Public, private
	2	Financing of education	Free education	Free education, fees	State grants, fees
	3	Research process organisation	Akademia Nauk system	HEIs	HEIs
	4	Profile of HEIs	Teaching	Research and teaching	Teaching and research
	5	Language of instruction	Russian	Varied	Kazakh, Russian, English
	6	Management style	Top-down, command	Democratic	Top-down, command
	7	Academic exchange	Within the Soviet bloc	Internationalisation, academ.mobility	Internationalisation, academic mobility
Institutional scale	1	Three-tier programme, structure	Specialist-Aspirantura-Doktorant	Bachelor's-Master's-Doctorate	Bachelor's-Master's-Doctorate
	2	Three-tier structure, years	5+3+3	4+1(2)+3(4)	4+2+3
	3	Three-tier programme, degrees	Specialist-Kand Nauk-Doktor Na	Bachelor's-Master's-Doctorate	Bachelor's-Master's-Doctorate
	4	Mode of postgraduate degrees	Research	Research, taught, professional	Research, professional
	5	Academic system	Linear	Credit	Credit
	6	Mode of teaching	Teacher-centred	Student-centred	Student-centred
	7	Mode of student assessment	Oral examinations	Mostly written assessments	Mostly written assess., some oral exams.
	8	Academic weeks in a semester	17-18	15-17	15
	9	Length of a contact hour, minutes	45+45	50	50

would argue is an important political move by the state to frame the overall post-colonial agenda. This constitutes one of my main arguments throughout this thesis. Another reason to pay attention to these particular issues is that they all recurred in the interviews with Kazakhstan academics, which are analysed in Chapters V-VII.

#### **2.4.1. Changes in the science and research policies**

The separation of science from HEIs is a historical phenomenon, shaped in the depths of the Soviet state. This system was formed under Stalin's governance of Soviet science and was dictated by the state's ideological decision to prevent talented but politically untrustworthy scientists from "infecting undergraduates with their unorthodox political ideas" (Graham 1992: 54). Separated from HE, research activity was concentrated in a number of scientific-research institutions headed by the Soviet Akademia Nauk, which had a multi-level hierarchy and a tightly-controlled net of research institutions. There were branches of Nazionalnaya Akademia Nauk in all national republics, the Kazakh Akademia Nauk being one example. This system was "most unusual in terms of [the] American experience" (Graham 1992: 50). These scientific institutions were prestigious and elitist establishments which, being headed by the Communist Party, provided different social benefits to their members. That is why, in the Soviet Union, a powerful motivation to do research and to contribute to the welfare of the country co-existed with an idea of science as "a source of prestige and financial benefits, rather than research activity for its own sake, which was at least as common" (Rabkin and Mirskaya 1993: 557). A large number of salaried scientists and researchers in these institutions were professionally occupied full-time with scientific research with no or only incidental obligations to teach undergraduates (Kojevnikov 2008).

This led to a situation where HEIs in the Soviet Union and in the wider post-socialist world engaged with teaching rather than research as they were not intended for research from the beginning (Balázs et al. 1995; Egorov 2010; Graham 1992; Kojevnikov 2008). They were teaching organisations and this explains the existence of poor levels of academic research in Soviet HEIs. In the post-Soviet period, therefore, the tradition has been extended and remains in many HEIs. It is only the introduction of European standards that has pressured post-Soviet HEIs to change.

Under the Bologna Process reforms in Kazakhstan in 2003, the Nazionalnaya Akademia Nauk, as a state establishment, "in the form in which it existed before" as "a relic of the past" was deleted (CentrAsia 2003). It was re-organised into a public establishment without funding from the state. The elimination of the Akademia Nauk was widely contested in the local

media (Apseitov 2013; Nysanbayev and Udarzev 2005; SocialismKz 2014) with opponents perceiving this as 'killing' science as traditionally the Akademia Nauk was seen as the home of science and research (Egorov 2010; Graham 1992).

Following the examples of many developed countries, the reforms aimed to reorganise the system by making Kazakhstan HEIs the main centres for research. A similar re-structuring took place in Georgia (Silagadze and Filipchuk 2012). Research was transferred to grant financing under the Ministry of Education and Science who support concrete research projects in HEIs in a similar way to international practice. Kazakhstan became a trailblazer in post-Soviet reform compared to other states, as an Akademia Nauk still exists in most of them (Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova), despite their being members of the EHEA. In this regard Kazakhstan took a radical turn in its reforms, which I relate to the primacy of politics within the motivations for the reforms.

In addition, post-Soviet academics who were used to being more involved professionally in teaching than in research activities, have been required to dramatically increase their research activity and find this challenging. It is challenging because in the Western and Soviet academic traditions, different attitudes to research activity and research performance together with different interpretation of various concepts, were formed. The difficulties which post-Soviet academics face with under the current reforms to their research activity are analysed in the Chapter VII.

#### **2.4.2. Changes in the language politics of education**

Another major reform relates to the issue of language. During the Soviet period the dominant role of the Russian language was not in doubt. Indeed, the Soviet Union represented a Russian-speaking world, where Russian and overall Russification were the mechanisms for constructing a shared Soviet identity as well as for consolidating the numerous ethnic groups into one socialist entity. These were also mechanisms for promoting imperial goals similar to the practices of colonisation in other parts of the world (see Migge and Léglise 2007) and tools for controlling a wider socialist space in Eastern Europe. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and under pro-Western reforms, the main linguistic changes in Kazakhstan have been the revised status of Russian, the recovery of the Kazakh language and the increased role of English both in education and society.

The dominant position of Russian in the national territories of the Soviet Empire led to a lowering of the status of the indigenous languages there. The position of Kazakhs' mother

tongue during the Soviet past repeated the fate of many other indigenous languages in other colonial regions of the world. There was only limited use of Kazakh in education, daily life, the media, and at an official level. The reason for this is linked to the fact that the native population, and thus the number of native speakers, shrank dramatically during the Soviet era (Fierman 2009). This, to a great extent, sealed the fate of the Kazakhs' mother tongue (ibid). Moreover, prior to this, Kazakh had changed its writing system twice: there was an initial shift from Arabic to Latin script in 1929, followed by a turn to Cyrillic in 1942.

Yet, there were differences in Soviet language politics in different regions and nations. For example, while in Kazakhstan, there was a high level of Russification, in the Caucasus states, such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, it was a more moderate influence (Fierman 2009). The latter can be explained by the preservation of the original writing scripts in Georgia and Armenia and consequently these countries having lower Russian populations, as I mentioned earlier (Chapter I).

In Soviet education, Russian was the main language of instruction. Compulsory Russification required that Kazakh children be trained in Russian schools due to a lack of Kazakh ones (Fierman 2006; O'Callaghan 2004). In fact the number of Kazakh schools and the hours reserved for studying the Kazakh language were very limited: "Most cities had few if any Kazakh-medium schools" (Fierman 2009: 88). In Almaty, the former Kazakhstan capital, with a population of hundreds of thousands of Kazakhs, there was only two Kazakh schools both located on the outskirts of the city (ibid.). Similarly, the regional centre of Aktobe, with a population of 350,000 people, housed only one Kazakh school, in addition to a school with classes in both Russian and Kazakh. Textbooks in the Kazakh language were rarely published: for instance, only 32 appeared in 1966 across all higher education disciplines (Fierman 2009). One of the consequences of this language politics is a current lack of fully trained professionals who effectively own the Kazakh language. Another one is that several generations of indigenous groups do not speak their native language or only have partial knowledge of it. This especially relates to those who grew up within the Soviet Union (Kolsto 1999; Holm-Hansen 1999).

Language in the post-Soviet period became a highly political issue across the whole post-Soviet area. The dissolution of the Soviet Union made visible this language problem, as all of the resultant republics in turn increased the study of their native languages. Much has changed in Kazakhstan in relation to the Kazakh language. First, due to the programme of repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs abroad, the number of native speakers has increased. Second,

the number of schools and universities teaching Kazakh has expanded, as has the variety of Kazakh media, textbooks, and other literature. For example, today almost 50% of all Kazakhstan's university students participate in educational programs in Kazakh, while during the Soviet period this number did not reach 20% (Oralova 2012: 129).

However, the two languages, Kazakh and Russian, are interlaced in complex ways in contemporary Kazakhstan (Fierman 2006). Russian's influence on Kazakhstan stems not only from the presence of a large Russian community there, which currently constitutes a quarter of the population, but also from the presence of a substantial Russian language domain, which is widely used socially, although Kazakh is the state language. In addition to this bilingual Kazakh-Russian tension, with the turn to a market economy and in the course of pro-Western development, English has come to play an important role.

Indeed after the fall of the Soviet bloc, the language situation shifted to the reality that "in the postSoviet [sic] countries, the language that came to replace Russian was the global lingua franca English" (Pavlenko 2009: 257). In other words, there was a turn from the Russian to the English speaking world. The general trend in post-Soviet countries towards more learning of English increased for several reasons. This was due to practical needs, on the one hand, and because English became perceived as a prime tool for weakening the cultural and linguistic dependency on Russia, on the other (ibid.).

In 2007, in order to promote their language policy, Kazakhstan introduced the Trinity Languages Project. It is based on studying Kazakh, English and Russian with priority being given to Kazakh and English (Oralova 2012). While the post-socialist period nurtured a trilingual young generation speaking Kazakh, Russian and English or even Kazakh–English bilinguals, in general practical life this produces a very complex situation. The reforms towards European education standards have stressed students' need to learn English, which today is mandatory and begins in elementary school.<sup>xiii</sup> Foreign language skills have increased with the development of internationalisation. While Kazakh students, as a younger generation, are enthusiastic about learning English, the latter is a big problem for academics, especially for those who grew up in the Soviet period. Today they are under the pressure from new demands to participate in academic mobility, publish in international journals and produce research at the international level. In Chapter VII, I analyse the challenges that academics face with foreign language competency.



### **2.4.3. The internationalisation of Kazakhstan education**

Internationalisation in Kazakhstan education became one of the country's first steps towards the outer world, and preceded all the subsequent reforms in education, such as implementing the credit system and joining the Bologna Process. It started almost immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and had the purpose of establishing contacts with the wider world. For the Kazakhstan government, internationalisation in education became a key priority, one example of which is signing of 124 international agreements with foreign countries for cooperation in education (ICEFMonitor 2014). Internationalisation in Kazakhstan proceeded along several paths, such as the development of the state programme for training people abroad, the introduction of international sponsorship for local students to study and research abroad, the training of foreign students in the country, and the foundation of HEIs following international standards.

The process of internationalisation started with the launch of the International Presidential Programme 'Bolashak' in 1993, which aims to train Kazakhstan students worldwide through government funding, along similar line to programmes in other countries (Rumbley 2014). At the time, it was the only project of its type in the post-Soviet region, being followed by Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan.com d n.a.) in 2007 and Russia in 2014 (GlobalEdu 2014). The initiative came out of the recognition that the country lacked the know-how and language skills necessary to participate in an international market (Koch 2015). At the start, Bolashak scholarships were initially provided to 300 people per year, yet, since 2005, there has been an expansion of the funding to provide 3000 scholarships annually (Damitov et al. 2009).<sup>xiv</sup> Yet, due to the lack of foreign language competency, a number of scholarships remain unclaimed each year (Oralova 2012). To enhance the number of the potential students for the programme, more places have been allocated on English courses.

The lack of foreign and, above all, English language proficiency among academics can be seen as the main obstacle preventing internationalisation and academic mobility in Kazakhstan education.<sup>xv</sup> While the Bolashak programme is aimed at developing internationalisation, academic mobility in Kazakhstan is supported by Erasmus Mundus, Fulbright and similar programmes. As statistics from international agencies show, the number of Kazakhstan citizens awarded a grant to study or research abroad is low. For example, of 10 applicants in 2014-15 only 3 grants were awarded, while in the year 2013-14 of 9 applicants, 2 were selected for study and research programmes by the Fulbright Foundation (Fulbright d n.a.). Similarly, only 4 of 162 applicants for Erasmus Mundus Master's

Programmes were awarded funding in 2013-2014 and none of those who applied for doctoral study (COMM 2015).

Another route of internationalisation is the foundation of international-standard HEIs. There are three such universities currently in operation in Kazakhstan: Nazarbayev University, Kazakh-British Technical University (KBTU) and Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Planning (KIMEP). The latter is specialised private institution formed under the standards of North American education programmes and managed in line with these and the state requirements of the Ministry of Education. Nazarbayev University is a distinct case, which claims to be an analogue of Western HEIs with a wide range of programmes and full academic freedom. It was founded in 2010 on the initiative of the Kazakhstan President as a National HEI. Its partners are leading world establishments, such as the UK's UCL, Warwick University and Cambridge University and the USA's University of Wisconsin, University of Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania University, among others. It is an English-speaking University with approximately of 70% its academic staff from US and UK universities.<sup>xvi</sup>

## **2.5. Reform at the institutional level**

This section examines two key areas of reform, directly related to education as a social institution. These are the implementation of a credit system (sub-subsection 2.3.1) and of a three-tier programme structure (2.3.2). Both are new to the post-Soviet education system and have replaced Soviet education structures, such as the linear system and the Soviet three-tier programme of qualifications. Each of the sub-sections is constructed not only to explain the differences between the two systems, but, above all, to explain the challenges that post-Soviet practice faces in implementing these reforms. The discussion of these two issues here is necessary to support further understanding of the context for the discourses that are analysed in Chapters V-VII.

### **2.5.1. The introduction of the credit system**

One of the requirements for post-Soviet states to participate in the Bologna Process is the introduction of the basics of the Western education system, which were in operation at the time of the Soviet Empire's existence. These include the *credit* system, which started in Europe in the 1980s within the Erasmus exchange programme (Ulicna et al. 2011), prior to the launch of the Bologna Process. Yet, in Kazakhstan, and other post-Soviet states, transfer to the credit system started at the same time as implementation of the requirements of the Bologna Process.

In post-socialist states, the credit system replaced the *linear* one formed within the Soviet education system. The linear system is based in organising study through a series of compulsory disciplines, organised in a consistent order from simple to complex (in a linear way), with a fixed number of hours spent on lectures, seminars and practical classes in each discipline studied in a particular academic year or term. The lectures constitute the main contact hours in terms of the time given spent on them and so they are the main mode for delivering knowledge. Usually students spend approximately 30 hours per week in academic classes, which consist of at least three so-called *pary* ('pairs'), a 'doublehour' (of two 45 minute sessions), and eighty-to-ninety-minutes of lectures per day, five days a week (Umland 2005). Consequently, the linear education process predominantly focuses on the acquisition of knowledge rather than on the development of skills and competencies, and the ability to apply knowledge.

Two features of this system are crucial. First, it does not allow students to build an individual learning pathway because of the absence of electives, and second, independent learning is limited to the revision and memorisation of what students were taught earlier in the class. I see these as the main differences between the linear and the credit systems, as in the latter the number of classes is reduced in favour of increased independent learning, and electives give students the possibility of forming an individual pathway through the leaning process.

The credit system makes up the basis of the Bologna Process, which is premised on the academic mobility of students and academics between universities within the EHEA. This mobility, that initially operated within the Erasmus program, created the need for a universal system of transferable units, which could make mobility between HEIs possible (Clark 2015). While it constitutes the contemporary education system in Europe and works across the EHEA, "the practices in defining and awarding credit still vary, in particular when it comes to using learning outcomes as a basis for credit allocation" (Ulicna et. al. 2011: 50).

The credit system varies across different national education practices, sometimes with substantial differences between them (Abdygapparova et al. 2004). Kazakhstan in particular faced the challenge of selecting which credit system to follow in making the transfer to a credit system. It is notable that, while they are going to become a part of the European education system, Kazakhstan chose to implement the US credit system (USCS) (ibid.). One reason for this choice is that the ECTS (the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) mostly works to enable the convergence of diverse education systems, because in one European country the curriculum may differ from that in another, given the existence of

national traditions of education content and the modularisation of programmes (Ulicna et. al. 2011). Another reason for the choice of the USCS is that it calculates credit hours based on the time spent in class only. While independent learning time is implicitly assumed to take twice as much time as that spent in class, it is not counted in the credit units. On the contrary, a European credit hour covers both the contact hours in class and beyond it, those spent on independent learning (Abdygapparova et al. 2004; Ulicna et. al. 2011). To make the credits transferable, Kazakhstan policy makers applied a coefficient or multiplier to each credit unit. In this way Kazakhstan is different from its post-Soviet neighbours (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), as Kazakhstan's 'coefficient' system is incompatible with ECTS (Isaacs 2014).

The implementation of the credit system in Kazakhstan was carried out in three phases. It started in 2001, when three HEIs were involved in a pilot scheme. One of these Universities (CU1) is included in the current study. The next phase, in 2004, covered 40 HEIs, and was followed by the final phase, in 2008, when all HEIs switched to the credit system (Zhailin 2008). Yet, while on the surface the credit system is fully implemented in Kazakhstan, in practice there remain difficulties. My analysis of the interviews with Kazakh academics in Chapter VI shows these.

### **2.5.2. Changes to the three-tier structure of higher education**

One of the pillars of the Bologna Process is a unified three-tier structure of programmes, Bachelor-Master-PhD, and consistent with this of degree qualifications. In the post-Soviet literature it is often stated that transfer to the Western system means introducing a three-tier structure, implying that Soviet education was based on a single-tier or two-tier system (Abdygapparova et al. 2004; Batanina 2008; Kanter 2011). I would relate this to the broader confusions and misinterpretations of Western education standards and argue for the existence of a three-tier structure in both systems, with the differences being in the number of years involved and the qualification standards at each level. I choose to call them Western and Soviet three-tier systems.

One of the main differences in teaching programmes between the two systems relates to the length of study. Overall the Soviet HE system consisted of five years of undergraduate specialist higher education, followed by three years for the aspirantura, a postgraduate programme leading to the completion of a Kandidat thesis, and finally, a Doktorantura programme, called doktorantura<sup>xvii</sup>. The reforms required the introduction of a four year Bachelor's programme, a one or two year Master's programme and a three to four year PhD.

One might suppose that, since both systems are similar, the transfer from one to the other through a reduction in the years involved at each level would be easily achievable.

Yet, when this imagined similarity was used as the basis for transferring from the Soviet to the Western system, in practice it turned out to be a challenging and, in some cases, even impossible task. It was achieved at the level of undergraduate study, where the transfer to the Bachelor's programmes was made by simply shrinking five years of specialist study into four years. While the standards of Bachelor's programmes, as they operate in the Western system, have not been fully understood and implemented, the formal transfer was made. Hence, in the views of many post-Soviet people a Bachelor's remains "the same specialist, but without one year of study" (Pravotorov 2012).

Much more substantial differences exist at the level of postgraduate study between the two systems. In theory, it would be easiest to equate the second level of the Soviet system (aspirantura, a Kandidat degree) with the second level of Western system (a Master's programme/degree) and similarly to match the doktorantura and the PhD. Yet, the two Soviet scientific degrees, the Kandidat Nauk and the Doktor Nauk, do not equate to a Western Master's and PhD. The existing differences between them mean a simple match is impossible, as they are distinct in their outcomes, quality and content.

There are some distinct features to highlight. One is that Soviet postgraduate courses, such as the aspirantura and the doktorantura, are research-only programmes and lead to the research degrees Kandidat Nauk and Doktor Nauk respectively. In other words there are no professional or taught Master's and doctoral programmes/degrees in the Western style and it was only with the transfer to the Western system that professional Master's and doctoral programmes/degrees were introduced.

Another point to address is that a Kandidat thesis is a longer scientific work than that which is normally produced in Western Master's programmes, but shorter than a Western PhD thesis. Similarly the Dokorate thesis is not comparable to the Western PhD thesis. A Doktor Nauk thesis is a detailed scientific research report of about 300 pages which can be classified as a significant new achievement in a field of knowledge. The main results of the research must be published in a separate monograph or through leading professional journals before the defence (Akimov and Chistokhvalov 2004). For these reasons, attempts to simply equate a Kandidat degree with a Master's and a Doktor Nauk degree with a PhD were unsuccessful. It was then decided to formally equate a Kandidat Nauk with a PhD, and thus to match the

second Soviet level to the third Western one. In turn, there are no Western matches for the Soviet doktorantura and Doktor Nauk (ibid.).

However, with the formal equivalence of the Kandidat Nauk and PhD degrees, the issue of quality arose. Personally, as someone who has produced and defended my first thesis for the degree of Kandidat Nauk<sup>xviii</sup> within the framework of the post-Soviet academic tradition and is currently conducting a PhD at a Western University, the differences are obvious and salient. In the Western tradition, specific and high criteria and standards for PhD level work have been developed and applied; in the post-Soviet systems, there are only general ones. In local practice, those PhD theses currently being produced in Kazakhstan are of lower quality than those produced in the West, as there is a gap between the two research traditions. By lower quality I mean, among other things, that the academic writing style contains a substantial amount of irrelevant material and numerous deviations from the main topic (Gonerko-Frej 2014). The distinctions in quality between the two systems are particularly obvious in the social sciences and humanities. The historically strict ideological control over intellectual thought in Soviet society, which I highlight throughout this thesis, influenced the formation of these fields leading to poor quality research, such as, for example, a lack of methodological elaboration (Stern and Husbands 1989). Another weakness is the historical isolation of Soviet science from practice in the rest of the world (Andreeva 2009) and hence a lack of familiarity with contemporary research theories and methods among post-Soviet academics. This is complicated by the lack of English proficiency. In other words, the quality of post-Soviet PhD theses cannot be equated with those produced in Western HEIs. Indeed, local PhDs are sometimes at an even lower standard than those Kandidat theses produced in the Soviet tradition. That is why the formal equivalence of Kandidat and PhD degrees has generated a strong resistance among those academics who obtained their Kandidat degrees in the Soviet and post-Soviet period and now find this has lowered their status (see Chapter VII).

Nevertheless, Kazakhstan was in the vanguard of post-Soviet transitions to the Western three-level education system of degrees, as the Soviet models were completely removed from practice by 2010. This is in stark contrast to other post-Soviet countries, such as Russia, Ukraine, Armenia and Azerbaijan, where Soviet patterns continue to coexist with Western ones. Hence, in these countries, there are programmes of specialist undergraduate, Bachelor's, aspirantura, Master's, doktorantura and PhD study with a parallel range of degree qualifications. I understand the drastic transformations that took place in Kazakhstan as part of a post-colonial syndrome, where breaking the ties with the Soviet past is critical. The

attitudes of Kazakhstan academics to these changes are discussed in the analysis in Chapter VII.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have considered the context of Kazakhstan by highlighting what is distinctive in the country's geographical location, historical and cultural heritage, and the political trends that led to the education reform process. The overall argument for this study is that the country's pro-Western turn in education did not happen in a single moment and by chance, but rather was stimulated by geography and history. My other argument is that the education reform process in Kazakhstan happened at the structural level, meaning that all parts of the system and even processes beyond education became subject to change. This in turn, as I argue, makes Kazakhstan different from other Central Asian states and closer to other post-Soviet members of the Bologna Process.

In particular, in section 1 I have examined the main aspects of Kazakhstan which separate this country from its neighbours in the region. First, I focused on the country's unique geographical Eurasian location, which preconditioned its membership of European associations. Next I concentrated on the cultural features of Kazakhstan, such as its open-minded approach to the wider world, formed from its nomadic past and moderate Muslim religion which follows the middle path in Islam and thus values tolerance to other cultures. Additionally, I pointed to other unique characteristics of Kazakhstan, such as the effect of the Western-oriented Kazakh intelligentsia at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, who were formed under Russian colonial influence and became a means for transmitting European civilisation values to the Kazakhs. I have seen these features as the premises for the formation of Kazakhstan's current pro-Western orientation, which was officially proclaimed in the doctrine of Eurasianism after the fall of the Soviet Union.

In this chapter I gave particular attention to the main trends of reform under European education standards. I highlighted the complete restructuring of the system, dividing the changes into large-scale reforms which affected the socio-cultural level and small-scale reforms within the education field itself. At the socio-cultural level, I examined the restructuring of the science and research system along international lines, the introduction of the trilingual Kazakh-Russian-English politics in education and the state's moves towards internationalisation which began straight after gaining independence. At the institutional level, I focused on the changes and challenges involved in the transformation to a credit system

and to a European three-tier structure, which were made by totally eradicating the practices of the previous education system. Throughout this study I argue that Kazakhstan engaged in a radical process of reform by fully adopting Western educational norms and eliminating those from its Soviet past. While this was different from the processes in other post-Soviet states, a crucial argument is that this radical reform in Kazakhstan is a post-colonial move, and it is this that lies behind the reforms. This is one of my overall arguments that I develop throughout this study. With this I complete my examination of the Kazakhstan context, which is important for understanding the discourses, revealed in the interviews and analysed in Chapters V-VII. The different discourses, such as nostalgia, modernity and progress, and chaotic reform, found in the empirical chapters, can now be understood as mental reflections of the specific context within which post-Soviet academics operate today. This specificity of the context is generated from the Soviet heritage, on the one hand, and the challenges of the post-Soviet reforms, on the other.

In the following chapter I move to the next stage of the research, and turn to an account of the theoretical framework for my study. It is based on the theory of educational policy borrowing, and grounded in the need to engage with the distinctiveness of Kazakhstan which I have examined in this chapter.



## Chapter III. Theoretical framework

In the previous chapter I considered the cultural, historical and political features that shaped the general basis for Kazakhstan's movement to integrate with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) under the Bologna Process. The aim of this chapter is to examine the theoretical approaches to the phenomenon of educational transfer found in the literature on comparative education and on educational policy borrowing in particular.

In this chapter I discuss the core theoretical issues of policy borrowing in education. These include: an examination of the features of educational borrowing and its distinction from other types of educational transfer; the propriety of the socio-cultural logic over the new-institutionalist one in considering educational borrowing; and above all, the considerations of educational borrowing by the post-socialist states found in the literature with a view to decreasing the gap in existing literature on this issue.

My examination of those theoretical issues derives from the necessity to shape the overall framework for explaining why and how educational policy borrowing happens in post-socialist states and in Kazakhstan in particular. I argue that those theoretical provisions applied to educational policy transfer to the Third World are not always applicable to Second World countries, where the reasons for educational transfer are different. I argue here that the implicit willingness of these countries to move away from the influence of Russia should be considered as a core cause for the pro-Western orientation of these states. Thus borrowing was not in fact undertaken solely for resolving inner political or societal issues or to fulfil an aspiration to be educationally modern.

This argument is made of three sections. **Section 1** examines the theoretical foundation concerning the *terminology* of educational policy transfer and borrowing and the existing *theoretical models* for analysis of the process of educational borrowing (Phillips and Ochs 2003, 2004). **Section 2** explores the *methodological approaches* and *conceptions* for the study of educational borrowing (Schriewer and Martinez 2004; Steiner-Khamsi 2000, 2006, 2012a). Overall this section is constructed on the argument that educational borrowing is rationalised by internal national socio-cultural and political logic rather than by the logic of globalisation. This argument constructs the main methodological framework for the study of educational policy borrowing (subsection 2.1). Furthermore it brings into consideration the core questions on educational policy borrowing and how these relate to my study (subsection 2.2), the causes that generate educational borrowing by developing countries (subsection

2.3), and the application of the theory of externalisation to educational borrowing (subsection 2.4). Finally, **in section 3**, I focus on case studies of policy borrowing in post-socialist countries and the Central Asian region in the context of educational reforms (Silova 2002a, 2005; Steiner-Khamsi et al. 2006). It considers how Kazakhstan *is framed* in the existing literature on educational borrowing and what *the limitations of this framing are*.

### **1. Educational borrowing as a voluntarily undertaken phenomenon**

The application of the theoretical concepts of educational policy borrowing creates the possibility of studying and understanding the adoption of borrowed patterns in the target context. It uncovers how the logic of deployment of this process matches to the principal provisions of this theory.

The phenomenon of educational transfer, used here as a general term for all types of educational exchanges, is one that historically took place in the world within general cultural exchanges between countries. The growth of academic study of the phenomenon of educational transfer led to the formulation of educational transfer (borrowing/lending) into a particular branch of comparative education, drawing on the research traditions of both comparative education and policy studies (Steiner-Khamsi 2012a, 2012b). Currently it is a popular direction for educational research, with the main theoretical positions being shaped by the works of Steiner-Khamsi (2000, 2006, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c), Phillips and Ochs (2003, 2004), Ochs and Phillips (2004), Schriewer (2000, 2009), Silova (2002a, 2004, 2005, 2011b), and others.

Within comparative education, educational transfer has mostly been considered as a transfer of educational practices from the capitalist countries to their former colonies, or from the First to the Third World (Carnoy 1974; Cowen 1994). An extension of this happened relatively recently in the 1990s with the emergence of the post-socialist world, “the Second World”. While the literature paralleled the Third and the Second World states imagining them as developing in relation to the First World, the relationship between the first and the Second World is not post-colonial nor one between a sovereign state and its provinces. That is why educational policy flow into the Second World cannot be considered as merely importing or lending, as it was when taking place between the Western world and its former colonies. I would suggest that educational borrowing is a better metaphor when it comes to many post-socialist countries which willingly adopted international educational practices for their own reasons. This is not contradicted by the fact that many educational initiatives were initially

introduced by international agents. For, as Heyneman states “International organizations are good for one thing, and that is helping to suggest the direction of reform. It is the why but not the how ... How changes should come about and the sequence of change are all under the purview of local experience” (2010: 82-83).

As previously mentioned, educational policy borrowing has traditionally considered educational transfer as the process of movement of ideas, structures and practices in education policy from one national context for their adaptation in another (Alexander 2001; McDonald 2012; Ochs and Phillips 2004; Perry and Tor 2009; Phillips and Ochs 2003, 2004). One broad definition identifies educational transfer as:

all those forms of borrowing and lending of education, of forcible, colonial transfer and of co-operative transfer (e.g. between the Arab states), or international agency intervention, which move education systems, or parts of education systems, and especially the “cultural messages” of educational systems from one country to another. (Cowen 1994: 26)

Educational policy borrowing inherited some theoretical conceptions from the field of comparative education. First of all it takes from the existing literature a variety of titles for the different forms of educational transfer and consequently for the transferring of policy. There is policy borrowing/lending, transfer, importing and learning, which can each be used depending upon the particulars of the case. Other related notions are policy adoption, policy implementation, policy diffusion and policy convergence (Jakobi 2012: 394). It often depends on an author’s conception which title is to be used. It is true that “transfer is fundamental to our episteme” (Rappleye 2012: 67), when it comes to generalising the phenomena. Yet, there is a need to distinguish between these notions in a case study, as the language used frames the way that educational processes are understood in any particular case. In this thesis, I choose to talk about educational *borrowing* in the context of Kazakhstan’s voluntary membership of EHEA and its adoption of international patterns of HE in its own national context.

Here the theoretical model by Phillips and Ochs, an “Oxford model” (Rappleye 2012), is helpful. They introduce a model of educational transfer, in which policy can be transmitted in different ways and with different motivations (Ochs and Phillips 2004: 9). “The continuum of educational transfer” (ibid.: 8) represents a scheme with five stimuli for this. At one extreme is “an imposed educational transfer”, emerging from totalitarian or authoritarian rule; at the

other, is a way of adopting foreign educational policies, which are identified as being “introduced through influence”, that is, as happening under a general influence of educational ideas and methods (ibid.: 8). As an example of imposed policy, the authors cite the British colonies in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, where educational systems were created based on the British approach to education and in order to meet the needs of the British economy (Ochs and Phillips 2004). In between these two extremes there are the following: “required under constraints”, taking place in defeated or occupied countries; “negotiated under constraints”, being conducted through bilateral and multilateral agreements; and “borrowed purposefully”, which is an intentional copying of policy or practice observed elsewhere (ibid.: 9). This framework is useful for the case of Kazakhstan’s educational reforms that are the focus of my study. However, its usefulness is limited as the authors only offer detailed explanations of two stimuli, namely, those by “imposed transfer” and “introduced through influence”. The other three in-between positions are underdeveloped, which in turn limits out understanding of these stimuli.

Nevertheless, despite this limitation, the crucial point of Phillips and Ochs’ discussion that “an imposed policy is not a borrowed policy” (2004b: 775) finds validity in a number of case studies (Noonan et al. 2006; Spreen 2004; Swanepoel and Booyse 2003). A point to note from this scheme is that the criterion of voluntary/involuntary participation is of significance here. So that the authors distinguish between borrowing, “which presumes one country’s interest in foreign practices and policies”, and imposing, where the “involuntary reception of a foreign ideal” takes place (Ochs and Phillips 2004a: 10). In the case of post-socialist states, where, as I argue, the adoption of international educational practices is made outside of a post-colonial agenda, educational borrowing is the appropriate term.

## **2. The theory of educational borrowing in the post-Soviet context**

### ***2.1. The significance of the socio-cultural and political over globalisation in educational borrowing***

In this section I argue that various forms of educational borrowing were initiated with the appearance of the post-socialist world, which brought about a different type of relationship between the formerly-opposed Western and post-socialist worlds. This variety in the forms of educational transfer, following the collapse of the socialist system, sheds new light on one of the principal theoretical issues of educational transfer, whether it occurs due to forces of

globalisation or due to internal necessities on the part of borrowers (Steiner-Khamsi 2012b; Waldow 2012).

One of the generally accepted perspectives is that educational transfer is a part and a consequence of the process of globalisation. This approach has been developed by those scholars who align themselves with the new-institutionalist theory such as Meyer (Meyer et al. 1997), Ramirez (Ramirez et al. 1979), Drori (Drori et al. 2003) and Schofer (Schofer and Meyer 2005). They emphasise that the modern dissemination of highly rationalised models of education and society supports hypotheses about global effects, as well as some national effects deriving from those global ones (Schofer and Meyer 2005: 904). According to the neo-institutionalist approach in education, the role of professional educational research increases. Its influence will spread through the professional activity of researchers, advisers, experts, and media communicators and through dissemination of teaching methods and other educational models, which will impact on decision-making in education (Schriewer and Martinez 2004: 30). In short, this ideology affirms aspects of educational policy and practice that are seen as universal and these are promoted by developed countries to applied by others. A global convergence occurs through the unification of different patterns in educational organisation and school curricula, with “patterns of expansion taking place on all levels of educational systems” (ibid). In particular, academics working within this approach conclude that:

Beyond the national factors affecting educational expansion that are normally discussed, global factors are obviously involved. They impact educational growth in every part of the world, driving massive expansion. The result is a highly expanded, and essentially global, system of higher education. (Schofer and Meyer 2005: 918)

Following educational comparativists (Schriewer and Martinez 2004; Silova 2005; Steiner-Khamsi 2012a, 2012b), I would argue that, while usefully highlighting global patterns, globalisation fails to explain much of the detail of educational policy borrowing. Indeed, local educational practices and case studies of particular educational reforms show that such changes in national contexts do not always happen because of the forces of globalisation. Recognising that globalisation is the main force driving the increase in educational transfer worldwide, Steiner-Khamsi et al. focus critically on the neo-institutionalist assertion “that there is an international convergence of educational reforms” (2006: 239). She points out that this neo-institutionalist approach cannot serve as a comprehensive theoretical approach for

researching educational transfer because, according to the neo-institutionalists, the issue of **context** is irrelevant: the neo-institutionalists generally ignore any differences between borrowed policies and practices and their implementation in a different local context.

Scholars with a new-institutionalist worldview tend to draw on a large number of cases, countries or institutions, over a long time period (50-150 years), but only a few variables, to draw conclusions that there is nowadays a shared global understanding of particular beliefs such as social justice and equity. Decision-makers align the national with the educational and promote educational practices that are in line with this shared beliefs and global standards ... In fact, a loose coupling is a metaphor frequently used by scholars in institutional theory and organisational sociology to denote the discrepancies between the various levels or activities of an organisational field. In comparative and international education, Francisco Ramirez (2003) and David Baker and LeTendre (2005) revert to loose coupling as an explanation whenever they encounter profound differences between a universal standard ... and its local manifestation. (Steiner-Khamsi 2012b: 270)

A similar argument can be traced to earlier works by Jurgen Schriewer (1990; Schriewer and Martinez 2004). He suggests that the findings of the neo-institutionalist approach “may have their value for fields such as the economics of education and educational planning, but their argument hardly can be integrated with the results from the comparative history and sociology of the social sciences” (Schriewer and Martinez 2004: 31).

I argue here that for the countries of “the Second World”, their moves to Westernise within education had their own causes rather than being reducible to a consequence of globalisation. That is to say that the end of the socialist era pushed most post-socialist societies to be closer to the European and world community and stimulated them to establish contacts with the free world as a counter-reaction to what they had experienced on the other side of the “Iron Curtain” under a totalitarian regime. While it is obvious that globalisation and the collapse of the socialist bloc occurred simultaneously, “it is a matter of a separate discussion to examine whether the process of globalization and the collapse of the Soviet Union were merely coincidental, or are related in some manner” (Yechury 2006: 121). So, rather than being an impact of globalisation, the collapse of the socialist bloc played an important role in educational transfers to this part of the world. The case of Kazakhstan here is considered as part of this trend.

## **2.2. Core questions of the theory and how they relate to this study**

The new-institutionalist approach to educational transfer also limits our knowledge of how locally borrowed policies and practices appear. Instead it is mostly oriented toward identifying *what* has been selectively borrowed from one system to another and exploring *the impact* of imported educational reforms on the borrowing countries (Steiner-Khamsi 2003). However, one of the main effects of educational transfer is that there is a considerable difference between adopted and implemented reforms: “large rifts yawned between what was initially announced in public, subsequently enacted on paper, and eventually implemented in practice” (Steiner-Khamsi 2005: 148). Research on education policy has identified three contexts of policy-making: the context of influence (the arena of public debates, discussions, struggles and policy initiation), the context of policy as text (the stage of policy-text production in official documents and its public representation by officials or politicians), and the context(s) of practice (the implementation of policy and its effects on education) (Ball 2006; Bowe et al. 1992).

Based on evidence of the differences between the initial and the final stages of policy change, the principal questions for educational policy borrowing are *why* educational borrowing happens and *how* it plays out in the target context:

In contrast to the neo-institutionalist approach, we are in the business of understanding the “how” and the “why” of policy borrowing. Thus, an investigation of how a borrowed reform is interpreted, locally adapted, or re-contextualized is of heightened research interest for this particular line of thinking. (Steiner-Khamsi 2012a: 36)

These core questions of the theory of educational policy borrowing are the ones which I address in my research. Given that Kazakhstan’s practice of borrowing the Bologna Process generally fits into the domain of policy borrowing, I intend to investigate *how* this takes place in the local Kazakhstan context. For this, I focus on investigating the context of this post-socialist country which determined the implementation of the borrowed international practice. In particular I explore *how* the settled mental patterns of local academics, namely their beliefs and knowledge, which constitute the post-Soviet context, shape the implementation of the borrowed policy.

One of the theoretical tools for the study of educational borrowing (its “why” and “how”) is offered in another Oxford model of Phillips and Ochs, in which they schematise the overall process of educational borrowing drawing upon the findings of numerous case studies.

There are four stages in the model: cross-national attraction; decision-making; implementation; and internalisation or indigenisation (Phillips and Ochs 2003). According to this scheme, there are two motives initiating the first stage, **cross-national attraction**, which are *impulses* and *externalising potential*. By *impulses* they mean the preconditions for borrowing and the motives of those involved in the political process. For example, such impulses might include:

1. internal dissatisfaction with the existing educational system originating from parents, teachers, students or inspectors;
2. systematic collapse, when some aspects of the educational system are inadequate;
3. negative external evaluation, for example, provided by widely recognised international studies such as TIMSS or PISA;
4. economic change and competition;
5. political change and other imperatives;
6. novel configurations, new world, regional and local configurations affected by globalising tendencies, effects of EU educational policy, various international alliances;
7. innovation in knowledge and skills (Phillips and Ochs 2003).

As can be seen from the above list, political changes are often the stimuli for educational changes, such as was seen in the post-World War II period, and in post-apartheid South Africa (Ochs and Phillips 2004). The collapse of the socialist bloc can be included in this category as well. Yet, I would add here the stimuli of the post-colonial agenda, taking place in Second World states, which, as I argue, is commonly ignored as a consideration in the academic literature.

The usefulness of this model is twofold. It identifies typical patterns in the borrowing process, and covers entirely the existing diversity of educational policy borrowing. This is done through the range of aspects indicated for each of four phases of the process, also resonating to the educational reforms in post-socialist world. For example, in the course of this research, the argument that post-socialist educational borrowing is undertaken as part of a post-colonial



agenda, can be related to Phillips (2000) contention that policy borrowing is politically motivated.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that in distinguishing four aspects of the second phase, **decision**, which initiates the process of educational borrowing, the authors point to reforms in the post-socialist bloc as an example for one of these. These four aspects of decision making are “theoretical”, “phoney”, “realistic/practical” and “quick fix” (Phillips and Ochs 2003). Phillips and Ochs point to the quick fix as the one taking place in the post-socialist education reforms:

The emerging democracies of the former Soviet bloc have also suffered from quick fix solutions, often promoted by foreign advisers with a pet enthusiasm. On the larger scale, enthusiasm for the novelty of a market economy has transferred too to the education sector, where the operation of market forces has been regarded as a positive release from the restrictions of close state control but where uncertainty and insecurity have resulted, together with much inequality. Faith in the promise of privatisation has simply produced elites whose money could buy the advantages that particular educational provision might bring (foreign language instruction, business courses). (Phillips and Ochs 2004: 455)

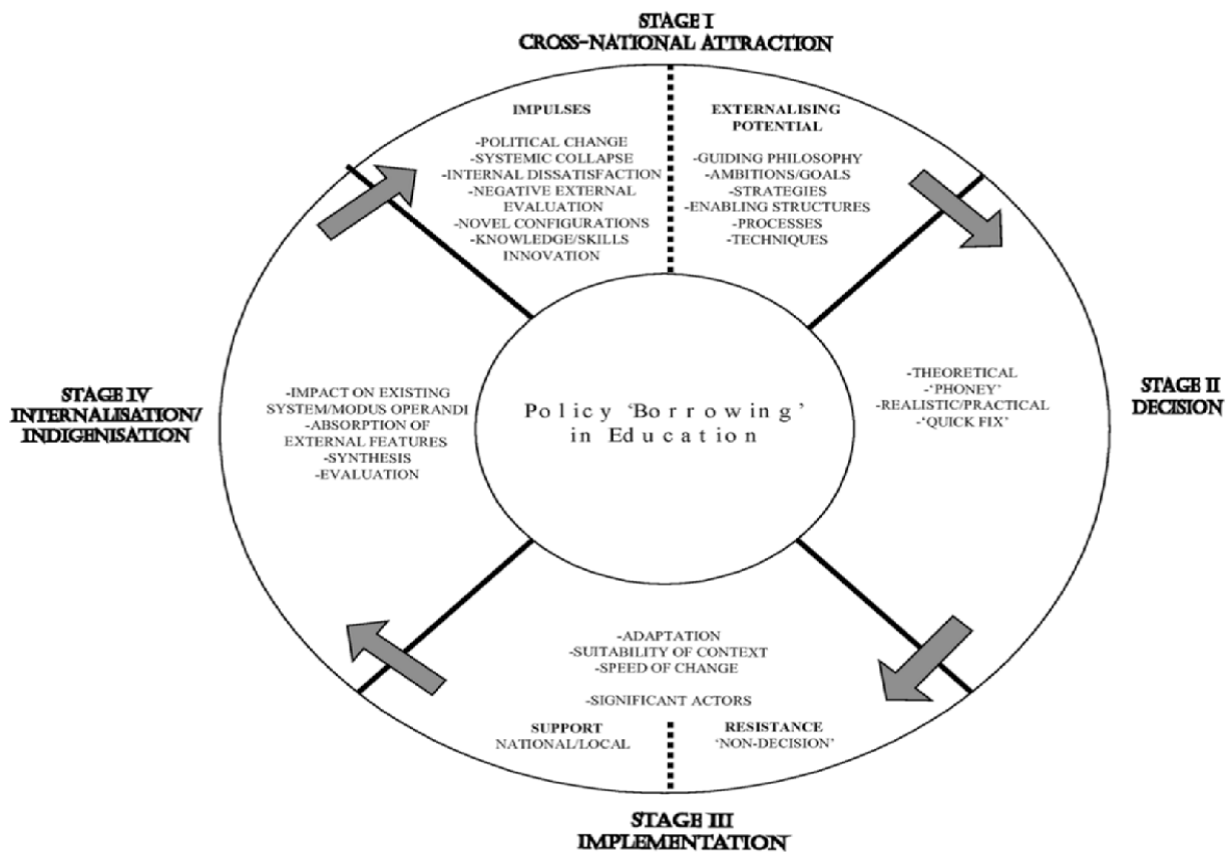
This authors' remark can be attributed to those educational initiatives in the post-socialist states which are small scale, such as the implementation of business courses and courses on management. But I would suggest that this also fully applies to large-scale reforms, such as systematic changes under the Bologna Process, where indeed the decision was undertaken primarily for political motives rather than educational ones. In the three data analysis chapters (Chapter V-VII), my discussion of the participants' interviews shows that the way of reforms in Kazakhstan, for example, have been undertaken to pursue political goals, often by any means and at the expense of education itself. The decision stage in Kazakhstan's case was relatively quick and without substantial consideration of the local appropriateness of the borrowed practices, something that was again caused by the political motivations of the adopters.

The third stage, **implementation**, is about the adaptation of an alien educational practices put into the context of the borrower's education system. While adapting borrowed practices, three factors are influential: the number of contextual factors, the speed of change and significant local actors (Phillips and Ochs 2003: 455). The latter group can be divided into

those in power, who receive national and local support through encouragement or financial incentives, and those who resist through non-decision, where the motives for this non-decision are to subvert what they regard as an alien policy.

Yet, I do remark here that the distinction between these two groups of actors cannot always be understood in terms of their attitude to the borrowed practices. It may depend on their positions in the official education hierarchy, where those who are decision makers dominate those who are not. Thus the power relationships between both groups should not be ignored. This is especially apparent in societies where there is an established top-down command style of management, and where the implementation of the borrowed policy turns into a top-down imposition onto the lower level of direct actors, who are, in this case, the teaching personnel in the educational institutions. Thus their resistance may occur as a response to this power dominance or, as it can be seen in the case of Kazakhstan and the further analysis in this thesis (Chapters V-VII), this resistance can be caused by the mode implementation and adoption. In other words, resistance is not necessarily resistance to the introduced policy itself.

**Internalisation/Indigenisation** completes the process of policy borrowing, when the borrowed policy becomes part of the educational system in the target country and it is now possible to evaluate its impact on the education system and its ways of operating (Phillips and Ochs 2003: 456). While it constitutes a particular phase in the model I argue that it is often best understood in combination with implementation.



**Figure 1: The model of policy borrowing in education: composite processes (Phillips and Ochs 2003).**

### **2.3. The factors behind educational policy borrowing: a liberating agenda?**

The critique of theorisations of globalisation, which I considered above (in sub-section 2.1), requires a closer examining of the next principal issue of the theory of policy borrowing: why policy borrowing happens in education. This relates to the issue of the motives which stimulate educational borrowing and which lie behind any educational changes and what is described as the impulse for cross-national attraction in the model of Phillips and Ochs. Overall, when research addresses the causes of educational borrowing, two key reasons are found in the literature: political and economical factors (Steiner-Khamsi 2010).

It is stressed within this theoretical approach that a political agenda is often tied to the process of educational borrowing. Underlying the political legitimacy of educational borrowing, Steiner-Khamsi (2003) points to this as a *significant point* in the interpretation of educational policy borrowing and sees this as a new focus in educational transfer, where the *politics* of borrowing, its adaptation and implementation, come to replace the *policy* of educational borrowing. In this Steiner-Khamsi (2006, 2012a; Steiner-Khamsi and Quist 2000) follows the tendency of educational comparativists, such as Phillips and Ochs (2003, 2004)

and Halpin and Troyna (1995), who constantly emphasise the political agenda lying behind educational transfer. She states that educational researchers “should dismiss educational transfer as a form of system learning, and instead examine how educational borrowing serves as a powerful means to displace contested educational reforms” (Steiner-Khamsi 2003: 170). In this context “displacement” refers to political displacement, where transfer of educational models from one context to another is done for political reasons (Steiner-Khamsi 2003).

Politically, borrowing often has a salutary effect on protracted policy conflict, because it builds coalitions. It enables opposed advocacy groups to combine resources to support a third, supposedly more neutral, policy option borrowed from elsewhere. “International standards” have become an increasingly common point of reference in such decisions. (Steiner-Khamsi 2012a: 5)

In this approach two important points are worthy of note. First, in the views of such scholars, political factors are considered mainly in relation to the desire of the borrowers to resolve internal political issues through attracting educational practices from elsewhere. Steiner-Khamsi (2000: 277) points out that “borrowing, thus, reflects issues of political legitimacy within a system”. In short, three political impulses are distinguished: the need for reform, the legitimisation of policy solutions, and the building of policy coalitions (Lao 2015). Second, for such scholars, political legitimisation is often viewed as inseparable from cultural factors. For example, the mobilisation of ideas of “best practices” or “international standards” often serves as a political manoeuvre to support contested reform agendas (Steiner-Khamsi 2012a: 9; Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006). This again is based on a concept found in comparative education, where the enlightenment agenda with its idea of “being modern educationally” (Cowen 1996: 157) is considered as the main driver of the modern education flows in the world.

Yet, these stimuli for educational borrowing, while they are evident in a number of post-socialist cases (Silova 2002a, 2005; Steiner-Khamsi et al. 2006), are not complete without considering the political aspiration of post-socialist states to distance themselves from the imperial properties which are associated with post-soviet Russia. I link the exclusion of such political factors from the attention of the scholars to the settled approach in comparative education, where “the characteristics of becoming modern educationally can be sketched without placing at the centre of the analysis distinctions between socialist and capitalist

countries or between developed and underdeveloped countries” (Cowen 1996: 157). This approach serves as a guide for other researchers, such as Rappleye (2012), who extend Cowen’s perspective of transcending political and economic distinctions in research on educational transfer, and use it as a key point for framing their own studies. As Rappleye (2012) states such an overarching approach implicitly structures both debates on globalisation and research agendas in comparative education as a field.

While this approach is seen as helpful at the level of theoretical debates, I argue here that, even if in some cases the distinction between developed and developing countries is of little importance, in others it plays an influential role and is vital to understanding the motives for educational borrowing. The specificity of educational policy borrowing in the states of the Second World and their address to international (Western) practices is generated not only by their desire to be modern educationally, but, through being integrated with Europe, to be closer to a *free* world. The overall picture of the post-Soviet world shows that in some cases the motives for the educational reforms taking place under Westernisation are more explicit. For example, the leitmotif for the Baltic countries was a “return to Europe” (Silova 2002b, 2011b), most likely voluntarily, where integration with the West seemed logical due to their shared European values and cultural similarities. Likewise, this can be attributed to the re-integration of the Eastern European post-socialist countries with the West.

What I would identify as missing from the literature is the significance of the post-colonial move and the associated desires to weaken ties with Russia. As I argue throughout this research, this factor plays within all post-socialist states, albeit to different degrees (see Chapter I). There is a recent example of how the quick adoption of international educational policy can be an implicit political game related to the new Russia-West opposition. This is Belorussia’s rapid joining of the Bologna Process in May 2015. Remarkably, Belorussia, unlike Kazakhstan, become a member of the EHEA without any long-term changes in its education system despite there being norms to fulfil prior to joining the EHEA (Kalinkina 2015; SBIO 2015; Vorobei 2015). In this move I see a political turn by Belorussia to distance themselves from Russia’s post-imperial politics, which have become more explicit in recent years. Thus, the role of post-colonial motivations should be taken into consideration within the post-Soviet world.

Economic factors, which also lead to a country’s interest in educational policy borrowing, result in less sustainable policies than do political factors. They also bring short-term reforms and randomness. Steiner-Khamsi (2010) traces the role of economic factors in the case of

poorer countries, such as Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan. Pointing to these as the main reason for borrowing, Steiner-Khamsi answers the question she considers one of the central ones in understanding policy borrowing, namely, why are practices that poorly fit the local context borrowed. She states that the failure of reforms reflects the fundamental contradictions that arise when solutions are uncritically borrowed from educational systems where the problems are entirely different.

In connection with this, an example of misplaced reform in a local context was explored in Kyrgyzstan (Steiner-Khamsi 2006, 2010; Steiner-Khamsi et al. 2006). There teacher shortages are extreme along with the problems of low teaching quality, low salaries and the teachers' need to compensate for their low incomes by working second jobs as street vendors or farmers. One of the borrowed initiatives, among others, was the attempt to enhance teacher performance through the introduction of professional-based salaries or bonuses. The pilot project, where teachers were encouraged to work harder, showed the unsustainability and impossibility of continuing this initiative due to its cost. Concluding this example, Steiner-Khamsi states that, in developing countries, borrowed practices can be understood in economic terms and that such economic policy borrowing can be seen as a temporary and "transient" phenomena existing "as long as external funding – contingent upon the import of a particular reform package – continues" (ibid.: 5). The example of Kyrgyzstan shows that educational reforms there are possible only through external financing, while in neighbouring Kazakhstan the reforms are funded internally.

#### **2.4. The theory of externalisation and the role of context**

As I mentioned above, the new-institutionalist approach does not have much support among educational comparativists for explaining the causes of educational policy change and borrowing in particular societies. It is mostly oriented toward *what* has been selectively borrowed from one system to another and exploring the impact of imported educational reforms on the borrowing countries (Steiner-Khamsi 2003: 164). In other words it does not help to answer questions such as: Why did transfer occur? How was the transfer implemented? Who were the agents of transfer? (Steiner-Khamsi 2003). These questions are the basis for the main methodological approach in the theory of educational borrowing and are the starting points for exploring the gap between "a global rhetoric and local practice" (Steiner-Khamsi 2012a: 37).

The existence of a discrepancy between the global and the local is a common feature in educational borrowing and is found in many examples (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006;

Steiner-Khamsi and Quist 2000). It is evidenced that borrowed educational policies play out differently in local contexts than how they are initially intended and thus outcomes in target locations are unpredictable (Steiner-Khamsi 2005; Steiner-Khamsi and Quist 2000; Steiner-Khamsi et al. 2006). A similar effect of dissimilarity between local practices and how the borrowed policies operate in their home context is apparent in the adaptation of Western policies to Kazakhstan. In the following chapters of this research (Chapters V-VII) I analyse how and why these international patterns are practically re-interpreted within Kazakhstan.

As I argue throughout this study, the efforts to introduce the standards of the EHEA into Kazakhstan were generated by internal demands, a combination of political, geographical and cultural factors. Similarly educational comparativists argue that policy borrowing itself, and consequently reference to external models, occurs out of local demands and the nature of the local system itself (Steiner-Khamsi 2005; Steiner-Khamsi and Quist 2000). They refer to the theory of “externalization” and they postulate that education itself is a contested phenomenon, both concepts taken from Jurgen Schriewer’s theory of externalisation and Niklas Luhmann’s theory of self-referential systems (Steiner-Khamsi 2000, 2003, 2006). From this position education is a self-referential system, being determined and formed within varying contextual conditions and through particular problems and issues, and by the distinct intellectual traditions and value systems characteristic of its respective system of reference and its related context of reflection (Luhmann and Schorr 1979, cited in Schriewer and Martinez 2004).

In a like manner I apply the same approach to the study of educational reforms in Kazakhstan, where the education system, while it is a core object for the study, is still a reflection of underlying political, ideological, cultural and other agendas. The passage of reform within the local Kazakhstan context offers practical support for the theory’s statement that reform is based on the logic of “externalization” and “self-referential” systems. The theory identifies that, while policy makers are actively and enthusiastically engaged in policy borrowing, they mostly do it selectively and in a highly rhetorical manner, coming out of their local political or national interests (Silova 2005; Spreen 2004; Steiner-Khamsi 2012a; Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006). For example, Silova, referencing Luhmann’s theory of self-referential systems, states that, in regard to post-socialist nations, “educational borrowing is not necessarily imposed, but can be used by the local agency as a mechanism for meeting its own needs” (Silova 2004: 76). She also concludes that the local agency is not a “helpless victim”, controlled by global forces; instead they pursue their own interests by manipulating global forces. This point is repeatedly found in all of her case studies (Silova 2002b, 2004,

2005). Also, stressing the role of self-referential regulation in those countries, she goes further, pointing out that often reforms are borrowed not only to replace old structures, but to legitimise the maintenance of “old” institutional structures and their use for “new” purposes in a post-socialist context, rather than replacing them (Silova 2004: 76).

Finally then there is the significance of the conception of context within this methodological approach to education as a self-referential system. The degree of elaboration of the conception of context is understudied, despite the crucial importance of it for educational borrowing. The Oxford model by Phillips and Ochs (2003) is the only existing guide for this, and the authors themselves recognise the difficulties of theoretical explication of this concept. Their typology offers an initial approach to this, where they identify five contextual forces which cause borrowing. They are the forces that affect the *motives* behind cross-national attraction, act as a *catalyst* to spark cross-national inquiry, and affect the *stage* of the policy development, the policy development *process*, and the potential for policy *implementation* (ibid.).

The meaning of re-contextualisation then obtains an important role. As the theory states, the externalisation to global practices is generated by internal conditions, thus pointing out the influence of the local factors on the decision-making. As Steiner-Khamsi states: “Indeed, it is the social, political, and economic conflicts, the power differentials and the legitimacy issues within a particular context, country or case that facilitate the circulation of global education policy.” (2012b:271). Surely, that the internal context becomes even more influential in how the borrowed practices are changed, interpreted, and re-contextualised in the local practice. To this I would add that, beyond national contexts, a supranational context is important when it comes to the Second World. Further empirical chapters investigate the supranational socialist context’s impact on borrowing in Kazakhstan.

As I argue, post-socialism is a specific and until recently a separate part of the world, where the context is a matter for careful examination. It is also quite different from the third, or post-colonial, world and thus the characteristics of educational transfer in the latter do not always resemble those in the post-socialist states. The *major feature* differentiating these two worlds in the sense of context is that while the Third World states did not have any educational system prior to their educational borrowing/importing from the developed world, all countries of the “Second World” inherited an already immensely developed educational system. Thus their motives, methods of implementation, the already existing educational practices and resources, as well as the challenges they face are different from those in the Third World.



Further, the specific ideological legacy of Soviet control represents a crucial facet of the post-socialist context and is in focus in this study (see Chapter IV, and section 1.2). The matter of ideology can hardly be omitted from any study of the post-socialist states, because they were primarily unilateral highly ideologically guided societies.

### **3. Positioning the case of Kazakhstan in this research**

Other work on post-socialist countries and Kazakhstan is of particular interest in the course of this research. The importance of this literature relates to the issues of how educational policy borrowing in these countries is studied and the necessity of discussing some of the established approaches within it. As I argue, some of these approaches are based on ignoring some of the objective and logical conditions of the actual education reforms in these states. The works by Iveta Silova, especially her publications on Central Asian educational reforms, are relevant to this study, as she is one of the first scholars to contribute to the field of educational policy borrowing in the post-Soviet area.

The post-socialist area covers a quite diverse set of national cultures that have a shared past of development under the Soviet regime. On the one hand, the educational systems there can be considered as a single monolith when it comes to the study of education in the past or of those common inherited features of the system that are manifest in today's practice. Obviously, education reforms in the entire post-socialist space "assumed striking similarities across the region" (Silova 2011b: 9) and practically actualise what can be labelled as a post-socialist education reform package (Silova and Steiner-Khamsi 2008). This package includes: the extension of the curriculum to eleven or twelve years of schooling; the introduction of student-centred learning, electives in upper secondary schooling, and standards and/or outcomes-based education (OBE); the decentralisation of educational finance and governance; the privatisation of higher education; the standardisation of student assessment; the liberalisation of textbook publishing; and the establishment of education management and information systems (ibid.). Yet, on the other hand, given that each newly independent state undertook its own path to social and political development after the collapse of the entire political system, a distinctive approach to educational reforms in each particular case is needed.

First, this implies an overall approach that gives "serious consideration to the uniqueness of the historical, political, social, and cultural contexts and carefully discerns the multiple (often overlapping) reform trajectories" (Silova 2010: 9). Recognising as an obvious fact the

diversity of the post-socialist countries and the Central Asian ones in particular, Silova and Steiner-Khamsi (2008: 18) point out, on the one hand, that while “features vary from place to place, they do exist (at least discursively) in most countries of the region”. They reference Samoff’s method of international, regional and national focus while acknowledging that accepting this diversity as a “starting point of comparative analysis” undermines the established Western theoretical framework (Silova 2010):

Notwithstanding the claims of global convergence, post-socialism remains a space for increasing divergence and difference, where complex interactions between the global and the local persistently undermine all linear predictions. ... when we take divergence and diversity as a starting point of comparative analysis (leaving convergence theories behind), westernization frameworks lose their explanatory power, failing to recognize sufficiently the essential ambiguity of post-socialist change. (ibid.: 8-9)

The best methodological approach to the study of educational processes in those countries I see is a combination of socialistic supranational and local national properties. Socialistic supranational properties are understood here as the shared characteristics inherited by the countries from the socialist past, when they were developed under one unified political and social system. National properties instead surfaced after the collapse of the system, when each of the states followed their own path of development. In other words, it is to these national properties that we should pay particular attention if we want to understand the real processes happening there.

In this regard the consideration of some specific characteristics of Kazakhstan is needed in order to explain the relation of Kazakhstan towards the West and Westernisation. It also needed because they are missing from the views of the Western scholars who, as I argue, misplace Kazakhstan in relation to other post-Soviet states. Three points to address here are: the geographical location of the country, the character of the reforms in it, and the matter of internationalisation.

The geographical location of the country is unique and, as I discussed in Chapter II, Kazakhstan is the only country among its neighbouring states in the Central Asian region that has an Asian-European location (Chapter II, section 1.1). I suggest that this is the main factor which determined Kazakhstan’s joining the EHEA and that make it different from its neighbours. Yet, this is commonly omitted from the views of scholars, who then misinterpret Kazakhstan’s membership of the Bologna Process (Tomusk 2011).

I argue also that the general understanding of Kazakhstan and its educational reforms within the Central Asian regions is misleading (Tampayeva 2015). It is a common approach in the literature, when educational reforms in Kazakhstan are studied to do so in the context of other Central Asian states, represented by Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Mongolia (Heynemann 2010; Silova 2005, 2011a; Steiner-Khamsi 2006; Tomusk 2011). There is an established cliché of perceiving Central Asian countries as somehow being one common body (in the geographical sense too). Yet, because it is the only Central Asian EHEA member, Kazakhstan carries out its education reforms differently from its neighbours, in working to meet the requirements of the Bologna Process.

The logic of the reforms taking place in Kazakhstan, as I argue, is closer to those in post-Soviet states, such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine, among others members of the EHEA. This closeness is seen in the similarity of the structural changes in the education systems in these states (Glonti and Chitashvili 2007; Soltys 2015). As educational reforms in Kazakhstan and the Caucasus states show, the focus on external educational standards, while initially for political reasons, also had a more profound target - to use them as a model for the total reconstruction of the national education systems. The systematic reconstruction of Kazakhstan education included the creation of a legitimate basis for the reconstruction of the entire programme structure under European standards, encompassing all parts of the state's policies (OECD 2014; UNESCO/IBE 2011; TEMPUS 2012). I would argue that it is inaccurate to interpret the educational reforms in Kazakhstan as random and as a trajectory of unrelated borrowing of international models or to see it as a single movement, as Silova (2005) does. The similarities between Kazakhstan and other Bologna Process members in their development are stipulated in European Union policies as well:

European Union (EU) policies triggered the structural adjustment of the educational systems in Kazakhstan and the Caucasus, as illustrated in the extension of the school year from ten to eleven or twelve years of study, and structural changes within the higher education systems known as the Bologna Process (that is, introducing a three-level higher education program including bachelor, master, and doctoral degree programs). (Silova and Steiner-Khamsi 2008: 26)

The important point which can contribute to understanding the systematic rather than random nature of the reforms is one related to the funding of the reforms. The reforms under the Bologna Process can be made only in the states with internal state funding. In other words,

long-term systematic reforms cannot be realised on the basis of external financial support as the latter is commonly allocated only for particular education projects. Where this takes place, as in Kyrgyzstan (Steiner-Khamsi 2012, see above; Merrill et al. 2011), the reforms becomes possible “only to secure external funding from donors and only for the duration that such funding remains available” (Steiner-Khamsi 2012c: 46).

Kazakhstan in turn supports the reforms from its own national budget and thus constitutes a distinct example in comparison with other post-Soviet states:

This, however, contradicts the deal with international aid in Kazakhstan, which in 1999 turned to financing education and health sector reforms with internal resources and announced a substantial reduction in the number of loans from international donors. This made Kazakhstan one of the most donor-independent countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus. As a consequence, the influence of international financial institutions on the government has also declined (Kalikova and Silova 2008: 138)

Further, one point that is consistently omitted from the academic literature on contemporary education in Kazakhstan is its purposeful internationalisation. The country is the only one in the post-Soviet area, not to say in the region, which launched a state scholarship “Bolashak” for training its students abroad, functioning since 1993, almost straight after the collapse of the previous system (Bridges 2014; Maudarbekova and Kashkinbayeva 2014; Tassimova 2013). While this initiative again can be funded only from internal resources, its underlying aim is to enhance the number of Western-educated young citizens in Kazakhstan. However, it also sends signal about Kazakhstan’s political priorities and its post-colonial aspirations.

In fact Kazakhstan students’ choices of their country for study are mostly for English-speaking nations rather than Russia. Yet, there is some evidence of undifferentiated evaluation in this regard ignoring the reality in Kazakhstan, as in the following remark:

In particular, Russia remains the first choice destination for many Central Asian students, although an increasing number of students (especial those with English language ability) choose to study in Western Europe or North America. (Silova 2011b: 11)

This statement over generalises, as the number of Central Asian students studying abroad differs considerably between countries. While there has been a general increase in this

number, the largest growth is due to students from Kazakhstan. In fact, Turkmen students choose Russia as a key destination for their education, but only 30% of study-abroad Kazakhstan students do. There are statistics showing the destination countries for Kazakhstan state scholarships in the period of 1994-2010, giving the following numbers: 2,666 students in the UK, 2,135 students in the USA, and 676 students in Russia (Export.Gov. 2011). Additionally, the number of Turkmenistan students studying abroad under state scholarships is made up of 2460 people in the academic year 2012-2013 (Bulychev 2013); in the same period the overall number of Kazakhstan students studying abroad was 30,000, of which 10% are by state scholarships (Bazmuhametova 2013).

As can be seen from the above examples, uninformed interpretations of educational processes in Kazakhstan have a prominent place in the literature. The country's real context is neglected in favour of a simplistic equating of distinct developing states on the sole basis of their geographic proximity. While this issue may seem less important within a general approach to the entire post-socialist bloc in the existing literature, it is crucial to the study of Kazakhstan. This is not said with reference to the quality of these reforms, which is the subject of my analysis in the empirical chapters (Chapters V-VII), but concerning the foundation and rationale for them.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I examined educational policy borrowing, which I choose to be a theoretical framework for my research. As I stated, the study of educational policy borrowing is a branch of the wider comparative education field and thus it follows the main theoretical conceptions of the latter. Here I considered the main methodological conceptions of educational policy borrowing in relation to the ideas and arguments which are the basis for this research. One of these is the existence in comparative education of a variety of terms for educational transfer which scholars employ depending on their own preferences and the studied cases. One of my arguments throughout the research is that the motives for Kazakhstan's move towards the EHEA lies in a liberating post-colonial agenda, within which cooperation with the West is seen as a desired path for development. Following this, I choose to employ the term educational *borrowing* for the transfer processes in Kazakhstan's education policies.

Another methodological approach inherited from the comparative education field and maintained in the study of educational policy borrowing relates to the prevalence of the theory of externalisation over the new-institutionalist theory. Externalisation approaches

postulate that educational changes happen in a national location for varied internal reasons, depending on national political, cultural, economic and other factors. This methodological tool supports my main argument in this research that in post-Soviet states, such as Kazakhstan, their involvement in the process of educational borrowing is motivated by internal political reasons, such as being free from the post-imperial influence of Russia. In this regard globalisation theory has little power to explain such processes within the post-Soviet area.

The next theoretical drive of the theory of educational policy borrowing relates to the main questions of why educational borrowing happens and how it plays out in a given national context. For this I introduced the model by Philips and Ochs (2003, 2004) which conveniently outlines the overall process of educational borrowing and thus serves as a universal scheme for my analysis. Yet, I would add to this model the impulse of the post-colonial and liberating agenda which, as I argue, are evident in the practice of the post-Soviet states.

My critical evaluation of the theory of educational borrowing is based on the existing dominant idea that educational borrowing internationally happens with the aim of being modern educationally, and thus Western patterns serve as resources for progressivism and modernity. Following this, I nevertheless also argue that post-colonial trends should not be underestimated, especially in the case of those states that are under imperial Russian influence.

The final issue I addressed in this chapter relates to the position of Kazakhstan in the existing literature on educational policy borrowing. I argued that the general consideration of this country in the context of the Central Asian region does not help us to understand the education reforms taking place there. Instead I pointed to the closeness of these processes to those in other states of the post-Soviet area which are the members of the Bologna Process and suggested we consider Kazakhstan in that context. I argued that misunderstandings about Kazakhstan primarily derive from ignoring its specific characteristics. These are the uniqueness of its geographical location and its joining of the EHEA. The latter has resulted in system-level reform of education similar to other members of EHEA and to pursuing internationalisation within education.

Following the theory, educational policy borrowing is driven by internal contestation. Thus, I was curious to study how such borrowing is reflected within education reforms. For this, the next step in my study was to interview local academics. In the following chapter I unpack the methodological instruments that I used for data collection and analysis, along with the challenges I faced with on my researcher journey.

## Chapter IV. Methodology

In the previous chapter I focused on the theoretical framework of policy borrowing, which serves as a basis for this study. In this chapter I start by unpacking further theoretical perspectives, focusing on the ontological and epistemological approaches which underpin my choice of methods. The ontological perspective is grounded in the specificity of the environment, which is a post-socialist world, within which I concentrate on the meaning of the ideological beliefs there and their distinctness from those operating in Western social sciences. I argue that these ideological beliefs constitute one of the properties of the post-socialist reality and cannot be ignored when it comes to the study of the Second World. My epistemological paradigm derives from this and is enacted in my interpretation of the academics' accounts through the prism of their ideological beliefs and the gaps in their knowledge which appear in the recontextualisation of the borrowed patterns in the academics' contexts. I also define my insider researcher's position and develop the rationale for undertaking this research.

My other goal here to disclose the practical steps I undertook in collecting data and how I engaged with it afterwards. In other words I turn to the consideration of the methodological tools, which I used to conduct my project and I justify their use. I disclose in depth the process of preparing for data collection, the fieldwork itself and the obstacles I faced during this. I provide theoretical discussions of the processes of translating, transcribing, coding and organising the data, as well as of the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This methodology is applied to address the main research question of this project, which is: how do Kazakhstan academics respond to the reforms of higher education (HE) carried out as part of Europeanisation?

The chapter consists of three main sections. Section 1 is devoted to outlining the overarching philosophical paradigms of the research, and consequently I unpack my positionality, and my ontological and epistemological perspectives in corresponding sub-sections. Section 2 explains how I dealt with the data collection procedures. It starts with an explanation of the methods used for data collection, followed by a discussion of the criteria applied for selecting participants and fieldwork sites, the process of access to these sites and the data collection methods carried out there. Section 3 explores the procedure for handling the data. I deal in turn with interview transcription, translation and coding; organising material; and the justification for CDA as the main data analysis tool and how it was deployed.

## 1. The research paradigms

### 1.1. *Researching from the inside*

It is right to say that my research dealt with a very familiar environment for me, one where I positioned myself as a clear insider researcher. Such positioning is explained by several reasons. First is the mere fact of my biography, where I worked for one of Kazakhstan's HEIs and that is why I implicitly consider myself as one of their academics. As I already mentioned in the introduction, the whole idea of this research came out of the professional compassion I have towards my colleagues in Kazakhstan, who I found to be very stressed under the education reforms carried out in the country's HE system. I was wondering why it was so painful for people to accept and adopt the new requirements and on what they based their attitudes. Having a good awareness of the post-Soviet education system, I came to suspect that the implementation of the borrowed educational patterns in Kazakhstan is affected by the available knowledges, experiences, belief systems and social backgrounds of their adopters.

My shared languages with the participants also contributed to my insider role. For researchers who do not speak the dominant language in a country, "the idea that language is power is easy to understand" (Temple and Young 2004: 164). Shifting from Russian to Kazakh and vice versa enabled me to gain a better understanding of people's thoughts and avoided situations that could lead to misunderstandings. As Barrett stated, researchers "have accepted to varying degrees the view that meaning is constructed in rather than expressed by language", and this is one of the central ideas of CDA. (Barrett 1992, cited in Temple and Young 2004).

However, following the statement that "we are all multiple insiders and outsiders" (Deutsch 1980: 123), I appeared as an outsider at the same time. This happened due to the fact that I was a doctoral student at a foreign university, and so was seen by the participants as a carrier of a different professional knowledge, one which they may not have. On the one hand, this created a distinction between me and the interviewees, while on the other hand, it contributed to establishing relationships of trust, because it gave them the opportunity to gain more professional knowledge.<sup>xix</sup>

Despite this insider-outsider binary (Eppley 2006), the insiderness of my position was strengthened by the objective fact of my sharing some general characteristics, such as ethnicity, language, race and identity, with my participants (Coloma 2008; Kanuha 2000). Belonging to that culture, I also inherently carry the experience and knowledge of that world,



which is called both a socialist and post-socialist one, within me. This includes awareness of: the post-socialist mentality, the way that the social system functions, different ways of interpreting 'universal' conceptions, Kazakhstan's distinctive style of life and work, and the country's social and personal values and goals, among other factors.

This surely gave me many advantages of which an outsider may be deprived. It also was helpful for reducing barriers between me and the participants. As other researchers have stated, the key advantages of being an insider researcher are: having a superior understanding of the culture being studied, the ability to interact freely with the group and its members, and a previously established, and therefore greater, relational intimacy with the group (Bonner and Tolhurst 2002, cited in Breen 2007). From another perspective, participants are typically more open with insider researchers so there will be a greater depth to the data gathered (Dwyer and Buckle 2009).

Being an insider may also have disadvantages, such as making assumptions based on the researcher's prior knowledge (Hewitt-Taylor 2002; Unluer 2012). Yet, in my case this played a limited role. This was due to the fact that my prior knowledge is limited to the previous education system as, since 2008, I had been outside of this educational environment and so had little awareness of the actual practical reforms. This 'outsiderness' which was lucky for me, happened due to my having lived and been educated and socialised during this period of my life in the West, a life experience that most Kazakhstan academics do not have. I could learn how the post-socialist world is distinct from the Western one more easily, for we can only 'see' the 'specificities' of own culture if we assume an observer's point of view and view it from the 'outside' (Vermeer and Witte 1990, cited in Witte 1996).

I argue that the post-socialist world remains a specific phenomenon, as in Silova's (2010) precise expression: "post-socialism is not dead"<sup>xx</sup>. I also argue that it cannot be easily interpreted using a generic approach and it is because such an approach is often taken by Western scholars that some trends within post-socialist countries' pro-Western reforms remain ignored. For example, it is one of my main arguments in this thesis, as elaborated in the last chapter, that pro-Western reforms in the post-Soviet states are generated by a liberating and post-colonial agenda, an idea which I suggest is often overlooked by comparativists in relation to the post-Soviet states.

These reforms cannot be seen in isolation from the people who implement them. But it is also clear that these people are the carriers of particular values, beliefs and patterns, both personally and socially shaped during their prior life experience. In particular, the reforms

take place in cultures where substantial experiences and norms about education and society are settled and rooted in the previous period of development under Soviet control. Next I outline how I constructed the study's ontological and epistemological perspectives drawing upon the specificity of the post-socialist world.

## ***1.2. Knowing the post-socialist world***

Post-socialism being a legacy of socialism represents a particular phenomenon, which is characterised not only by a particular social and political formation, but by a particular belief system. Despite its fall as a social formation, it is still alive in people's minds and determines their world of view. Thus a consideration of the pre-existing environment, from which the modern post-soviet consciousness comes, is helpful.

During the time that I have been living in the West, I have noticed a particular perspective in the views of Westerners, both scholars and members of the general public, on the post-socialist world and socialism. This perspective appears correct in many senses, but fails to fully understand that world. Many Western scholars disregard the significance of the particular mentality of the post-Soviet peoples, "in part due to the fact that they place upon the phenomenon of Soviet society criteria of Western societies, which are alien to the Soviet society" (Zinoviev 1985, cited in Sunic 1989). I use the concept of mentality here to encompass a combination of imposed societal patterns of behaviour, thinking, world-view, actions, and attitudes, which shape human identity.

The Soviet mentality was shaped through the cultivation of a new type of person, a Soviet human, who was deliberately created within the Soviet system. In the literature the title *Homo Sovieticus* (after the Latin "Homo Sapiens") is commonly used as a satirical name for this Soviet mentality, having been initially employed by Joseph Novak in 1962 (Willemans 2000: 3). In short *Homo Sovieticus* is a human who is passive, submissive, and lacks creativity and responsibility. "Any activity he [sic] undertakes is motivated not by his own intellectual choices or emotional needs but by profound conformity, the wish to adapt to, and merge with, the majority" (Tyszka 2009: 508). The Soviet mentality was forged during many decades under societal institutions, such as education, media and culture, and the pressure of the Soviet ideological machine. In the course of my research the conception of ideology is central in its application to the study of the post-socialist world.

Ideology as a concept has different meanings and uses in Soviet societal society from those in the West. In this regard I concur with the position of William Bercken who points to the

generally accepted assumptions that Soviet official ideology played only a supporting role as propaganda in the political system as opposed to being a policy-determining factor similar to that found in Western political systems. He states that these views “arose from a fundamental misunderstanding of Soviet ideology. This ideology should not be considered in the same way as the ideologies existing in the West” (Bercken 1985: 270).

I would argue that this misunderstanding arose due to the rapid adoption of some Western values, such as consumerism, market economics, business relationships and new technology. But while these are visible on the surface, beneath this people’s mentality changes more slowly and maintains much from the socialist system. This is not a single totality, as the mentalities of people depend on their personal experiences and way of life. While there are various mentalities in post-socialist societies, those people working for state rather than commercial institutions or those with mixed international staff are the most conservative in carrying mentalities from the past. Academics in state universities are among them. The survival of the socialist mentality derives from the historically rooted specifics of the Soviet ideological dictatorship, which represented an ideological monoculture (Bercken 1985). The main features of this are, in short: it was a state official ideology; it was autocratic and thus did not recognise any alternative or competing ideologies; it regulated personal and social life, and the rules and standards for social behaviour; and, it had a monopoly on the intellectual life of the society (ibid.).

One of the characteristics of the modern post-soviet mentality is a lack of critical and analytical thinking, as well as of creativity, whether in the production of goods and services, management and organisational culture, education, the natural and social sciences and the humanities, or personal and social development. I see this as a consequence of a long-term suppression of free thinking and creativity, as these did not conform to the official ideology: “In an ideological dictatorship the citizen is deprived not only of his [sic] political rights, but also of his intellectual autonomy. Man has to relate his views of life, his ethical, epistemological, and aesthetic systems of values to the interest of the state” (ibid.: 271).

This is obviously different from the existence of a pluralism of views in the West, where, while there are ideologies, their critique and reasoning through alternative arguments is normal. Although this is understood as part of the way ideology functions by Western leftist intellectuals such as Pilger (2004) and Halliday (1994), in totalitarian regimes the pluralism of views is much more limited. Indeed, Soviet ideology had to be taken for granted, with its validity not determined by scientific arguments or objective facts (Bercken 1985). Any

questioning of this would lead to intellectual pluralism and be considered as destroying the essence of Soviet ideology (ibid.). Surely, “It is in this respect that it differs from western ideologies, whose authority derives from the strength of conviction of their advocates and the individual approval of their adherents” (ibid.: 271). Overall, Bercken rightly states that:

An ideological dictatorship resists a pragmatic explanation of its politics, resists the neutral presentation of news and “objectivisation” by the social sciences, resists the autonomy of art and the independence of the church, resists independent jurisdiction and a neutral stance of the citizens against the state. That means that the objectivity of his [sic] scientific work, the truth of his journalistic activity, the beauty of his artistic creations and the recognition of his moral objections is dependent on the authority of the state, or, in actual fact, upon the civil servant or party functionary concerned. (ibid.: 270)

It is interesting then to compare this with the views of van Dijk on the concept of ideology. Ideologies, he argues, are typically defined for social groups and thus “it would be strange if we would also define them for whole societies and cultures” (van Dijk 2000b: 37). In his approach ideologies make sense within and between groups and not at the level of society as a whole, otherwise “if there is no conflict of goals or interests, no struggle, no competition over scarce resources, nor over symbolic resources, then ideologies have no point” (ibid.). Van Dijk refers to the idea that cultures may have a shared Common Ground, of values and norms, yet not a generally shared ideology, as it is commonly defined in Western social studies (ibid.). Yet, he also proposes that this shared ideology could emerge from competing cultures as they “interact and vie for power”, and would then be defined in terms of political or religious ideologies, rather than “cultural ideologies” (ibid.). Fairclough in turn rejects the conception of ideology as an abstract system of values, as it is articulated by Marxists (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002): “I do not therefore accept the view of ‘ideology in general’ as a form of social cement which is inseparable from society itself” (Fairclough 2010: 67).

In relation to this, the Soviet political ideology can be understood as a cultural ideology, that is opposed to, and may be was even created in opposition to, the entire Western world. I acknowledge that a few marginal ideologies did exist within the socialist society, such as those of Soviet dissidents. Yet, they were marginal individuals rather than a social group of opponents within the totalitarian society and this is accepted by the dissidents themselves: “nobody needs us. ... Our influence is zero” (Williams 1997).

Being societies that, in the past, were highly controlled by state authorities, the post-socialist states continue to develop following this pattern. The autocratic regime and management governing the post-socialist education systems is a reality. This in turn contradicts the democratic foundations on which European education draws and thus creates further tensions between the two systems. Nevertheless, what is important for my research is that the conception of ideology operating in the post-socialist societies differs from that found within Western social sciences and I found this misleading when I began my engagement with CDA. After all, being a carrier of the Soviet interpretation of ideology, I found myself struggling as I started to apply CDA, as in my understanding only those in power are in a position to set up and hold an ideology. Such differences in conceptions between the two worlds also had an impact on my epistemological paradigm, as I discuss in the next section (1.3).

Another specificity of the Westernisation of Second World states' education systems also derives from the objective fact that these countries have inherited a highly developed education system from the past. Among others features this includes: a particular structure of the system itself, a qualification system of degrees and teaching programmes, traditions of research and science, disciplinary curricula that different from those adopted more internationally, a particular method of counting teaching loads, and patterns of teacher-student relationships (Holmes et al. 1995; Ivanenko 2014; Kogan et al. 2008). Therefore, the introduction of international educational patterns becomes a re-modelling and re-structuring of the former system, which in turn brings out the tensions between the two.

This account of socialist reality is helpful in providing a sense of what Soviet social heritage post-socialist people carry in their minds today. Surely, the ideological bombardment of people for decades and across generations cannot be easily or quickly disappeared and, while it is less significant than in the past, it is still influential. There are two consequences of the past that I see as particularly influential in relation to post-socialist academics. First, Soviet and socialist features remain the primary point of reference and measure for comparison for academics regardless of whether they like that past or not. This is because they do not have other experiences or frames of reference. Second, for some academics Soviet means the best, whether in social life, education or value systems. Thus, their socialist heritage is a source a pride for some post-socialist academics, and this inevitably influences their attitudes to, understandings of and practical implementation of the reforms taking place under Westernisation. Having identified the specificity of studying post-socialist societies in this sub-section, I now focus on how I approached obtaining knowledge.

### **1.3. My epistemological approach**

The implementation of the borrowed education practices can be explored from different perspectives. For example, one way is to explore the adaptation of the new standards at the level of the system. Yet, the reforms can be viewed also on a micro level through the particular pre-existing values and norms which people carry from their practical experience and knowledge. Indeed as I have been arguing, the education reforms in the post-socialist states cannot be fully understood in isolation from these inherited beliefs and from the scope of socialist heritage as the latter has always shaped human and societal practice there.

In this research the academics are viewed not merely as the implementers of the new standards in education practice. The reality of the reform process in Kazakhstan is constructed not only by the introduced education policies, but also by the existing context and meanings, including the subjective experience, knowledge and mental patterns of the adopters. I primarily see academics as agents of the education reforms operating within their pre-existing scope of knowledge, formed in the past system, and thus they are historically and socially contextualised subjects (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012).

In turn their attitudes, understanding, and consequently actions under the reforms are determined by their prior knowledge, which becomes a mediating factor in sense making (ibid.). Whether it derives from education, training, experience, or some other part of their personal background, it plays a central role in sense making and is inevitably present in their accounts (Yanow 2000). In the wider sense this is what constitutes the post-socialist context and its significance for those studying it (see section 2.4 in Chapter III).

The interpretative approach undertaken in this research understands that the social world can be seen from different individual perspectives. So knowledge in this research then is obtained through my interpretations of the views of the participants and thus it is “subjective” (Yanow 2000: 10). It is also relative for the participants and is shaped by my prior knowledge and experience of post-socialist education systems. Yet, it is also limited, as I mentioned above. My position is that the post-socialist and the post-Soviet world is a specific phenomenon, and the social processes within it can only be understood by taking into account its peculiarities, which are the ideological experiences and mentalities of the people in that world. The knowledge in this thesis is formed through my conscious and intellectual interpretation of these multiple individual perspectives, through using reasoning and logic to place them into that context.

Yet, while the accounts of the academics carry a particular set of beliefs, they also are shaped by the oppositions Soviet/Western, past/present, old/new. The research question itself implies the involvement of these two worlds, as it involves studying how the inhabitants of one world adopt and interpret patterns from the other world. This in turn presumes the existence of a gap between the two available knowledges. So, my epistemological perspective is based in an acceptance that my research project is itself constructed through the involvement of two worlds: the post-Soviet and the Western ones. Consequently, it was part of my task to identify the gap and the differences between the two worlds, to offer “insights” for me (Trede and Higgs 2009: 16). The identification of these differences and their further interpretation within the context together formed my knowledge about the reality.

My chosen method of data collection draws upon the stance that research needs to facilitate the free expression of meanings and personal views by participants. As my research question focuses on the examination of academics’ attitudes to and evaluations of the reforms, the individual interview was considered the most appropriate tool for this purpose (as I elaborate in section 2 of this Chapter). Given that the prior knowledge and ideological beliefs, inevitably existing in post-soviet academics’ minds, colouring their identity, world views, and actions, they also often remain implicit in their speech. Thus, I use an interpretative approach to the discourse analysis because people’s meanings can only be understood through contextual, analytical and critical work.

As Bracken (2010) stated, this epistemology necessitates the use of methodologies which allow for a tension in the research process between inductive and deductive strategies, and tools should be developed to elucidate the subjective world of the participants leading to a representation of their conceptual understandings. For this aim, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was applied as a relevant method here (see section 3.5, this Chapter). CDA offers the possibility of analysing texts at both macro and micro levels, including cultural, historical, social and political contexts at the macro level and close textual analysis at the micro level. In this regard van Dijk (1993: 253) states: “Critical discourse analysis is far from easy. In my opinion it is by far the toughest challenge in the discipline. ... it requires true multidisciplinary, and an account of intricate relationships between text, talk, social cognition, power, society and culture”. Yet, in the case of my analysis the application of CDA also required the operating across two cultures (post-Soviet and Western). This needed “intellectual flexibility” (Bracken 2010: 6) and an ability to switch between the two, constituting a sort of bi-cultural experience that I now track through the data collection and analysis process.

## **2. Collecting data on academics' accounts of the reforms**

### **2.1. The data collection instruments**

Given my focus on the lived experience of academics, I decided to use interviews as my main source of data, following the pattern in contemporary social science where interviews “are increasingly employed as a research method in their own right” (Kvale 2007). As my research question is to explore Kazakhstan academics' individual responses to the reforms taking place under Westernisation, the use of this technique allowed a level of personal communication and freedom in the expression of participants' thoughts that could not be achieved in a questionnaire.

My semi-structured interview, understood here as “a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions” (Kvale 1996: 124), consisted of 18 questions, divided into three groups. The first group asked for general information about the participant and their attitude to reforms as a whole. The second main group of questions focused on particular parts of the reforms, such as the three-level education system, the new credit technology, increased academic mobility, and changes to the teaching activity, research activity, and the testing system under the new conditions. The final part of the interview was devoted to participants' evaluations of the two educational systems and whether they would support a return to the Soviet educational system if this was a possibility. (The full interview schedule can be seen in Appendix 2.)

From the very beginning of data collection I aimed to conduct face-to-face interviews, but, in practice, this was not always possible. In such cases people were offered the chance to answer the questions in a written form, something which I had not previously planned. The questions in both types of interview were similar. All oral interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and translated (as I discuss in detail in sub-sections 3.1-3.2 below).

The interviews were conducted in two languages, Kazakh and Russian, depending on the preference of the interviewees. On the whole, language should be taken into account by any researcher who deals with people, and particularly those working in the sphere of education in the post-Soviet countries. This is because, after the disintegration of the Soviet empire, language became a tool for dividing cultural and educational spheres, and national languages became the new means of instruction (Fireman 2005; Pavlenko 2013). As a result, teaching staff in Kazakhstan educational institutions are divided into monolinguals and bilinguals, where the first group is largely made up of ethnic Russians. This reflects the



general situation in Kazakhstan, where bilingual Kazakhs make up approximately 75% of the Kazakh population, while bilingual Russians make up less than 9% (Komarov 2012).

Most ethnic Kazakhs use two languages, but some of them choose to operate solely in the Russian language. Usually, this is dictated by their educational background, as they were taught in Soviet schools and higher education institutions, in which Russian was the dominant language of instruction. Nowadays, they face a problem of language at work, and this is a challenge for many of them. On the whole, about half of the Kazakh participants preferred to be interviewed in the Kazakh language, while the others were interviewed in Russian, including some who are monolingual Russian natives. In particular, 10 interviewees were non-Kazakhs of different ethnic origins who used the Russian language, 28 participants were Kazakh, of whom 11 preferred their mother tongue. (A table of participants including their interview language is given in the Appendix 3.)

Overall I conducted 33 oral interviews and received five written answers, although this number could have been higher if five participants had returned their forms as promised. The average length of an interview was around 60 minutes, with 45 minutes as the shortest and 75 minutes as the longest session. They were from a range of universities, with 18 participants from capital universities and 20 from regional universities. I now explain the selection of research sites and participants further.

## ***2.2. The selection of research sites and participants***

### **2.2.1. The selection of universities**

Being aware that Kazakhstan Higher Education is a diverse system (see Chapter II), I faced the issue of how to cover this diversity in order to gather reliable data. Two factors are of importance when discussing HEIs in Kazakhstan: the location of the institutions (in the capitals or in the regions) and the type of ownership (state or private). These features needed to be taken into account, with my research initially intending to include both public and private universities in the capitals and the regions. I had no doubts regarding the location criterion, but the question of whether to cover private universities emerged as my research goals were sharpened. The key reasons I excluded these are that the private sector is a rather changeable, mobile and transient element of Kazakhstan's HE landscape, and the provision of professors and teaching staff in private universities is largely achieved by attracting teachers from public universities (OECD 2007).

In Kazakhstan, 'capital' universities refer to HEIs in two cities – Astana as the new capital and Almaty as the former one – which remain the largest educational and cultural centres of the country. In Almaty (in the southern region) are found the oldest education establishments in Kazakhstan, Kazakh National University being the first of them, founded in 1928. It is the leading HEI in Kazakhstan, and the largest in the country (Naribayev et al. 1994). It has been a pioneer in implementing educational reforms in the country since 2000. This fact was of importance for my decision to include it in the research. The next option was the National University named after Gumilev in Astana, which I included based on the criterion that it too is an institution of national status, but in another region of Kazakhstan. It is the largest institution in the central region of Kazakhstan, founded in 1996 through the merging of two local institutions. The selection of these two universities, the largest establishments with national status, was dictated by my intention to study the implementation of the reforms in contrasting national establishments. The National University in Astana has approximately 11,500 of students, while in the National University in Almaty there are around 20,000 students.

As for regional institutions, my choice was guided by a clear principle that they should be in different parts of Kazakhstan, and have sustainable educational traditions, teaching staff and histories. These HEIs usually have a leading position in their region; commonly in Kazakhstan there is one such establishment for each geographical region. They are state universities in the sense that they are publicly ownership and are funded from state resources. Again, two institutions were selected that were of an equal weight, but different in the scale of their activity compared to the capital universities. These were the regional institutions in the western and eastern parts of Kazakhstan, which each had an average number of 10,000-12,000 students.

Another criterion associated with my choice of research sites was a focus on multidisciplinary universities instead of those with narrow profiles. In Kazakhstan there are 15 public multidisciplinary and 25 public specialist universities. The focus on multidisciplinary universities allowed discussions with professionals in various scientific fields, which could not be achieved in institutions with narrow profiles. Indeed, after my interviews in three such universities, I identified that professionals' attitudes to the education reforms varied from one department to another, and appeared to depend on their disciplinary field.

My purpose was also to select universities that met different quality standards, which we find in regional HEIs, although the national institutions traditionally have high ratings. So, the two

national universities lead the annual rankings, while the two regional institutions selected have a medium and low position, 7 and 17 respectively, among the 17 public multidisciplinary universities, according to information from 2012 (NKAOKO 2012). Overall four public HEIs<sup>xxi</sup> in four different regions of the country participated in the study, of which two are regional institutions and two are capital ones. My next concern was to select participants.

### **2.2.2. The selection of participants**

The identification of the criteria for the selection of participants was the next step in my preparation for data collection. The criteria for the selection of participants were as follows: age, position, academic experience, and type of employment. In attempting to conduct a piece of qualitative research, all of these criteria were considered important for developing the most valid group of participants, following the idea that “the success of a qualitative research project depends on the quality of the respondents that are recruited” (Kaplan 2013).

Initially, I intended to work with professionals of all age groups, which in Kazakhstan HEIs ranges from 24 to 63 years, where 24 is the minimum age for starting a teaching career and 63 is the age of retirement. But this theoretical idea differed from what I discovered in practice where ages ranged from 30 to 70 years old, with teachers of around 30 representing only a small group of staff, and most professionals being aged between 43 and 58. This situation has developed as a result of the ageing of teaching staff, where the average age of those with Doktor degrees is around 56, Kandidats Nauk, 46, and teachers without any research degrees, 39 (Tleptayev 2012).

For my own research question, this situation was helpful, because professionals of 30 years old and over will have studied or worked in the pre-reform Soviet period. In many cases, this means that they have, to various degrees, experienced two education systems, and participants who have then experienced the new reforms directly will sense the difference between the two systems. This led them to frequently compare their current activity to previous work, for example, saying, “In the Soviet time we did this or that...”. Such comparisons offered important insights into their way of thinking, while their evaluations of the Soviet education system varied.

Another crucial aspect was the duration of their academic experience, as this also indicated the participants’ awareness of the reforms. In most cases, the duration of academic experience corresponded to the degree of participants’ knowledge on the education reforms. In contrast, the link between the age of the teachers and their academic experience was not

always obvious, because they could have started their teaching activity in HEIs much later than their scientific work. For example, it relates to those worked for research institutions within Akademia Nauk prior to being engaged in teaching in HEIs. Thus the academic experience of the participants ranged from five years up to a maximum of 42 years.

As for the criterion of their position, following the research question, the views of teaching staff were my primary focus. Administrative members of staff were not included in the interviewees' group unless they combined their administrative activities with teaching. The reason is that administrative positions are usually temporary, while teaching is an ongoing activity. So the interviewed professionals had teaching as their main current duty, including leaders of sub-faculties, which in Kazakhstan HEIs is the principal position within each professional subdivision.

The possession or not of a scientific degree was not a criterion for inclusion, because there were roughly equal numbers of teachers with and without degrees, so neither group could be excluded from participation in the interviews. According to the statistics, in Kazakhstan HE those with scientific degrees make up 45.5% of teaching staff (Tleptayev 2012: 15). But scientific qualifications played a crucial role in participants' answers, leading them to identify the problems with education reforms in different ways. Owing to the diversity of scientific degrees which has arisen in current Kazakhstan HEIs, the participants interviewed could be divided into the following groups: Doctors Nauk (a traditional Soviet degree), Kandidats Nauk (a traditional Soviet degree), doctors with PhDs awarded under the new education standards, those with Master's degrees, and people without any scientific qualification. As for the type of employment, all of the participants were full-time professionals in these universities, as is the norm for state universities. Part-time professionals are a very mobile group often employed on a temporary basis, so they were excluded from the focus. With the selection of HEIs and potential participants my preparation for data collection had ended and I moved to begin my fieldwork. In the next section I describe how I gained access to my four research sites.

### ***2.3. Access to post-socialist spaces***

More complicated than selecting sites was the task of being accepted through the administrative bureaucracy, bearing in mind the specifics of the administration of Kazakhstan HEIs. I had a rationale for my choice to start interviewing at the capital universities, then moving to the regional ones. First, pragmatically, there was the geographical location of the institutes I had selected for this research. Kazakhstan is a vast country and all of the regions are a long distance from each other. So primarily the visits were planned according to the

proximity of the universities to my permanent location, Almaty city in south Kazakhstan, and the convenience of physical visits. Thus, Kazakh National University in Almaty was the first that I attended, followed by the Eurasian National University in Astana, then East Kazakhstan University in Oskemen and ending with Aktobe State University. (The location of the cities I visited for data collection are indicated on the map in the Appendix 1.)

Another reason for this order is that the reforms in Kazakhstan higher education chronologically started in the capital HEIs and then extended to the regional HEIs, albeit with some specificity (for example, East Kazakhstan University was one of the first to pilot Master's programme together with another seventeen universities). But in general, the reforms were initially adopted at the level of the national universities, particularly the national university in Almaty. This direction of implementation can be justified by the fact that the national universities are the leading establishments in Kazakhstan HE, so they pioneered the process to serve as examples to the others.

The process of gaining access to research sites and participants is worth considering in detail. It offers a picture of how things operate in Kazakhstan HEIs in the sense of their bureaucracy, on the one hand, and their existing attitudes towards external researchers, on the other. It also shows some of the psychological features of the post-Soviet people, the mentalities of those people formed within a strict ideological society, and the hold that these old patterns still have, especially when it comes to those in administrative positions.

The first difficult situation I faced was in a national university (CU1), when I attempted to contact staff having gained institutional approval to conduct my research in a letter from the vice-rector. But this approval did not have any effect on one of the department deans because his name was absent from the letter. So I was advised to obtain another letter from the vice-rector addressed specifically to this dean. Being disappointed with this outcome, I decided not to return to the vice-rector again, as this would take too much time and not be easy to do. Thus I faced a situation in which none of the teachers in this dean's department could be contacted by me.

Then I decided to explore information about this dean and, on the website of the Ministry of Education, I found details of a staff appeal regarding the above-mentioned department and its dean: a complaint about her arbitrariness in ruling the department had been published online a year earlier. This should not be considered as an extraordinary example, as such matters occur often in many other organisations worldwide. But this was of some significance for my research, because it indicated that the personalities of some officials should be taken

into account when I next talked to administrative personnel. I considered this refusal as a personal factor, an individual manner of governance, which “could thus be true in terms of representing his [sic] fantasy image of himself being a leader exercising leadership” (Sveningsson and Larsson 2006: 216). The overall outcome for me was that I did not interview staff in this department and instead went to a different one.

The next difficult situation happened in one of the regional universities (RU1), which was added to the research sites later than the first three. This addition was made in order to obtain more reliable data on regional universities and to balance the capital HEIs. As this was a late addition, I did not have an approval letter or agreement in advance to research there, as I had in each of the other three universities. Notably, I had never visited this part of Kazakhstan before, which also increased my interest in this institution and region. The access process started at the vice-rector’s office. After acquainting himself with the papers and interview questions, he concluded that the interview questions were provocative and he could not allow staff interviews and recommended another institution. However, the interview questions had not previously been seen in such a way and appeared routine to participants in other universities. To resolve this situation I mentioned that I hold a government scholarship and work on research approved by a sponsor. After this dispute, I was guided to the rector of the university to obtain his permission first. This was received, however with some conditions (see below).

Later, when discussing with members of staff this strong anxiety around information security in their university, they explained this as a normal mode of control while agreeing that it could appear unusual to outsiders. I had never met such behaviour in other places, so I concluded that this is a local phenomenon, rooted in the specifics of the region. The locals explained this specificity, ironically naming their province ‘The Red East’<sup>xxii</sup>, a new expression for me, which indicates a local mentality based on control and authority, that existed in the Soviet era and is still alive after twenty years of independence.

I observed that this control and direction was associated with particular people’s behaviour. Those working in administration demonstrated a caution around talking freely, fearing that something undesirable might happen. The vice-rector and his subordinate did not dare take responsibility for giving me permission to carry out interviews, so he transferred this responsibility to his line manager. I did not see this as the manifestation of someone’s personal feelings, as in the national university, but as a consequence of a local culture. Moreover, I was asked to fulfil some conditions before gaining approval to conduct the

research, conditions which seemed impossible. For example, they wanted to have copies of the interview transcripts. Obviously, this would undermine the confidentiality of my participants, guaranteed in the consent form, and go against ethical guidelines. I was not certain how this information might be used in relation to the participants. It was a challenge for me to persuade the institution not to request the audio-recordings of the interviews I intended to conduct, as I could not lose the chance to carry out interviews in this institution either. After some discussion, it was agreed that they would be sent a summary of the findings after the completion of the study. Their other precondition was that the people I interviewed be recommended by those working in governance. I suppose this was designed to demonstrate to me, as an outside visitor, that the university's staff are at the appropriate academic level, but also to direct me to people who are loyal to the administration. To some degree I followed their recommendations, as I did not know the staff there at all. Yet, this list of recommended people was modified, because not all of the academics were available.

As for the willingness of teaching staff at this university to answer the interview questions, this was similar to all of the other places. Rarely were refusals given, and the real motives for these cannot be assumed. Possibly there were some instances, invisible to me as an outside observer, of fear of the administration's control. But I tend to think that this was not the case. My impression of the staff was that the people were open to this conversation and ready to be interviewed, more so than I had expected after the disputes with their administration. It is possible that the caution of the university's leaders was caused, to a great degree, by their concern to avoid making mistakes and to have predictable results of everything they do. If something does not offer this guarantee, the best option is to avoid it. What I found there was a piece of the post-socialist reality that I discussed in section 1.2, pointing to the continuing significance of the ideological patterns in the mentalities and actions of post-Soviet people that are inherited from the past. The bureaucratic challenges I faced with the administrative staff in these two institutions ended there. Now I describe in detail the data collection process.

#### ***2.4. The data collection procedure***

As I did the interviews, I noticed differences in people's motivations for giving their time to share their opinions on the education reforms. First, in several cases, while introducing the theme of my research, participants signalled their approval of the study's focus, which the staff viewed as having importance and impact. So, many of them wanted to be heard on their professional issues, and this motivation was a leading one. Indeed in Kazakhstan, staffs'

opinions on the reforms in higher education have never been studied before in depth, for the simple reason that there is a lack of investigation of the educational reforms inside the country. Participants' readiness to be interviewed was supported by the guarantee of confidentiality in the consent form, which allowed them to feel free from unnecessary obligations such as the need to explain to any third party at the university their personal choice to be interviewed.

In the cases where I knew who would participate in the interview, the interview questions, information sheet and consent form were e-mailed in advance. Unfortunately, that did not necessarily help people to feel ready for the interview on the actual day as few had looked through the questions. Only two participants spent their time in preliminary reading of the questions. But, on the other hand, their 'non-readiness' was useful in other ways as it allowed a more spontaneous and free sharing of their thoughts and avoided stock answers.

Two people, while supporting the topic of the research, decided not to be interviewed because they were only able to be critical of the reforms. They explained their reasoning thus: "I'm very critical of the current reforms, and I have nothing to say that is positive. I do not want to show myself as a critic". Such a position could derive from the common view that being critical and negative is not good. However, I did not know whether this was the real reason for their refusal, or just an excuse for not participating in the interviews. Another motive for refusing was that some professionals positioned themselves more as researchers than teachers and admitted that they were not knowledgeable enough on the issues associated with the education reforms. In some cases such professionals' lack of knowledge was tied to a lack of teaching experience, owing to their young age or to their having had breaks in their professional career. For others, the issue of the reforms was not of any interest to them, and they admitted this openly. The most popular reason was lack of time. However, on all such occasions people were very friendly and helped in other ways, for example, by putting me with an appropriate alternative colleague.

During the interviews, the open and relaxed atmosphere in the vast majority of sessions was noticeable. The participants seemed free in their talk as well as in their behaviour. I expected this from the beginning and had little anxiety about it. My confidence derived from two points. First, academics, owing to the nature of their vocational activity, are very sociable and communicative people. Second, as they teach others, they are used to expressing their thoughts freely and expansively. Thanks to these features of academics, the task was much easier than if the interviewees had been drawn from a more vulnerable group of people. My



talks with teaching staff mostly concentrated on the discussion of the problem itself. They were enjoyable and relaxed as they did not carry the behavioural and psychological difficulties of my interactions with members of the administration.

The way that each participant answered was individual and I chose to follow their preferences rather than impose my own way of running the process. According to Kvale, in semi-structured interviews, “there is openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the specific answers given and the stories told by the subjects” (Kvale 1996: 124). I intended not to disturb the flow of thoughts, because the participants preferred a free manner of conversation. This approach allowed me to receive valuable insights into the research problems, which appeared sometimes at the end of the interview or even when the recorder was turned off. In such cases, I made a note of what was said immediately after the interview. Indeed some insights were announced purposefully after I switched off the recorder.

The tendency of almost all sessions was that the more the participants were involved in the process, the more thoughtful and useful information and examples appeared. In other words, following the preferences of participants was productive, although it could take longer. In many cases, the participants’ concentration on professional discussions helped to uncover some hidden aspects of the reforms, which I had not considered in setting the questions. For example, the need for payment for publication in international journals and the introduction of additional contact hours were new issues for me.

In two cases, participants talked about their own concerns rather than answering the questions posed, even after I had repeated the questions. This occurred while interviewing two professionals from the Department of Arts, and their monologues were more spontaneous than logically connected. It is likely that they wanted someone to hear their professional issues, as such an opportunity is rare. These two sessions had only some relevant content, while the interview length was the same as in other cases. Overall, there were no withdrawals or unfinished sessions, but there were a few short breaks because of mobile phone calls. In such cases, the participants notified me in advance that they were going to be available for students or colleagues because all of the interviews were held during working hours.

Before each session I gave a summary of my professional experience in Kazakhstan HEIs and of my present doctoral student experience. This helped me to establish rapport with the interviewees. Also it gave them confidence that they would be understood, and sometimes

this was confirmed by them saying “you likely know this yourself” or making similar comments. In other words, these interviews were an “interpersonal situation, a conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest” (Kvale 1996: 125).

Their understanding of my intention, namely collecting data to conduct research and finally to write a doctoral thesis, was dictated by their personal knowledge of what it is to do research. They were very supportive not only in sharing information, but also in their attitude to my work, often wishing me good luck and a successful defence of my thesis. Our professional cooperation was long term as I intended to maintain contact with them in the future. In some cases I would require later clarification of meanings that were unclear to me at the time. This possibility was mentioned after interviewing them, and I was impressed that people were prepared to help in the future, and so were willing to share their email addresses.

In all cases, their engagement varied based on participants’ professional backgrounds, given that not all of them held a research degree. Overall, those with scientific degrees made up about 85% of the participants. In some cases, participants provided irrelevant material in answering my questions about scientific activity and the difficulties that people encounter in this area. They could alternatively ignore these questions, saying that it was not what they worked on or not an important part of their job. Obviously, they considered themselves as teaching professionals first of all. It should be said that in some Kazakhstan education institutions, mostly those in the regions, it is still common practice, inherited from the Soviet past, for those without academic degrees to work in HEIs, even for a long time and frequently without gaining a research degree until the end of their working life. After completing the data collection, my next concern was to handle the material collected. In the next section I describe data processing and analysis.

### **3. Data processing and analysis**

#### ***3.1. Interview transcription***

Transcribing interviews was the first stage in the process of data analysis. Initially, I endeavoured to perform all the transcription myself, but hiring a freelancer seemed necessary due to how time consuming this was. A transcriber carried out transcriptions of the interviews in Russian, which were then proof-read and checked against the audio-recordings by me. I transcribed all the interviews in Kazakh. Obviously, in many cases participants’ speech was not as coherent as I had expected, as they repeated words and ideas several times, left their thoughts unfinished, or used non-words like “mm”, “um”, or “uh-huh”. There

were also several outside interruptions, such as mobile calls and intrusions by colleagues, during the interviews and they all complicated and lengthened the transcription process.

When choosing a type of transcription, I – in my own transcriptions and when giving instructions to a transcriber – was guided by the focus of my research questions and the type of data analysis I intended to apply (namely, Critical Discourse Analysis, CDA). Oliver et al. (2005: 1273) distinguish two modes of transcription practice: “naturalism, in which every utterance is transcribed in as much detail as possible, and denaturalism, in which idiosyncratic elements of speech (e.g. stutters, pauses, nonverbals, involuntary vocalisations) are removed”. These two ways of transcribing correspond to particular methods of data analysis, where a “naturalised” approach is required for conversation analysis and a “denaturalised” one is considered most suitable for grounded theory, ethnography and Critical Discourse Analysis (ibid.). The choice of approach is also linked to the research focus, whether the focus is on studying “how?” or “what?” or in other words “this is a difference in research objectives — an interest in meaning or mechanics” (ibid: 1278). However, in some approaches, such as discursive psychology, the use of fine-grained analysis requires naturalised transcriptions (Richardson et al. 2011). There the nuances of the speech, such as inflections, pauses, laughter and other non-verbal features, are important as they convey meaning for example by indicating what things are difficult to say.

A denaturalised transcription does not have much interest in depicting accents or involuntary vocalisation, rather it focuses on the meanings and perceptions created and shared verbally during a conversation (Cameron 2001, cited in Oliver et al. 2005). In turn, as Oliver et al. (2005) argue, for CDA a denaturalised transcription is typically the chosen method. This is grounded in Fairclough’s view that “a fairly minimal type of transcription ... is adequate for many purposes. No system could conceivably show everything, and it is always a matter of judgment, given the nature of research questions, what sort of features to show and in how much detail” (1993, cited in Oliver et al. 2005).

Oliver et al. (2005) admit that these two methods of transcription are not mutually exclusive and that which approach is used is based in from the goals of the analysis and the choice of the researcher. Such flexibility helped me in my transcribing. Focusing on *what* the participants say about the reforms and *what* are their reactions to them, and aiming to apply Critical Discourse Analysis, I chose the “denaturalised” type of transcription for the interviews. However, some verbal details such as repetitions, parasite words and pauses were kept in the transcribed texts, when they were influential in conveying the meaning of the talk, while

other details, such as non-verbal utterances like “hm”, “mm”, or coughing, were omitted. Any involuntary pauses and gaps in utterances are indicated by three dots in round brackets (...). After completing the transcriptions, my next job was translation them.

### **3.2. Interview translation**

While translating the transcribed texts into English I faced some challenges. I did the translation because a translator needs to be “in the theme”, that is, to be familiar with the field of education reform in Kazakhstan, and a user of the Kazakh, Russian and English languages. In two interviews there was a combination of Kazakh and Russian used, and so I needed to code shift rapidly during the interview.

The most challenging part of translation is the task of make translated texts understandable to readers. Initially I thought that this would be achievable through the detailed translation of each text, aimed at conveying the meaning as literally as possible. The response of my first readers, who were my two supervisors, was a useful step in this sense as it showed me how far the translated texts could be understood and indicated how future readers would respond to these. As their reactions showed, literal translations are not effective as many things in the texts were misunderstood (Schaffner 2004). This especially relates to the exaggerations in the participants’ speech. For example, the expression “*fundamentalnoe obrazovanie*” (*фундаментальное образование*), was used many times by participants. If literally correctly translated from Russian into English, it means ‘fundamental education’, yet, in fact this is confusing. What the participants meant by this expression relates to one of the key elements of Soviet education: “*fundamentalnoe*” means profound or thorough, an aspect that many participants felt had been lost in the education reforms. On the contrary, fundamental education in English corresponds, among other uses, to ‘basic education’ an education which is aimed at helping those people who lack access to or have been unsuccessful within formal education (Beiter 2005). Consequently, in this case, as in many others, a literal translation is inappropriate.

Also, it was challenging to translate words that had no equivalent concept in English. Mainly this applied to the titles of scientific degrees and training courses in the Soviet and post-Soviet education system. For example, these are *aspirantura*, *doktorantura*, *Kandidat Nauk*, *Doktor Nauk*, and *Akademia Nauk*, which I chose to transliterate into Latin characters rather than to translate.

Two further points became obvious to me for orienting the translation process. The first was that word-for-word translation is inappropriate for the type of analysis I was going to apply (CDA) and hence a dynamic approach to translation seemed preferable. This type of translation incorporates necessary transformation in source and target texts and is common practice in critical/political discourse analysis and translation studies (Bánhegyi 2014; Schaffner 2004; Valdeón 2005). For example, Valdeón (2005) with regard to the adaptation of source texts, distinguishes between processes of selection, reproduction, summarising and local transformations in texts. Under the latter category, he includes another four strategies: omissions, additions, permutations and substitutions. Based on this, he (ibid.) offers similar types of strategies applicable to text transformation: adaptation, substitution, omission and addition. Yet, as Valdeón (2005) further states, in translation, these strategies are applicable to both source and target texts, noting these as transformative acts.

Some of these strategies I have used quite often in the translation. For example, additions were applied in texts when there were missing words in the source languages (Russian or Kazakh), without which the sense of the sentences could not be understood in English. Such added words are placed in square brackets ([ ]).

Another factor, which was important for me to bear in mind, was “that the target text is produced for the needs and purposes of others” (Schaffner 2003: 96). In other words, my translations should be targeted to an audience with a limited knowledge of the cultural and social context of the source environment and the issues raised in the source texts (Schaffner 2004). As a result, in some cases I had to provide explanations of the concepts used by the academics, which are easily understood in the context of a post-Soviet academic tradition but not in a Western one. For example, while in the latter the term ‘academic publication’ defines a particular type of paper published in an academic journal, in the responses of the post-Soviet academics, this term encompasses quite a wide range of academic papers, in particular, including conference papers. In the interviews, the meaning of the term within the tradition of Soviet and post-Soviet social sciences is intended, and hence it needed an explanation.

Overall, translation turned out to be an ongoing process, because making corrections and improvements in the translated texts happened all way through my writing and the analysis of the data. I now focus on that data analysis process, beginning with the first stage: coding.

### 3.3. Coding

Coding was the next step I undertook after finishing the transcription and translation of the interviews. Generally, the methodological literature classifies codes into three types (Boyatzis 1998; Crabtree and Miller 1999; Creswell 2009; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2011). These three types of codes are “developed a priori from existing theory or concepts (theory-driven); they can emerge from the raw data (data-driven); or they can grow from a specific project’s research goals and questions (structural)” (DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2011: 137). Following these, I used a combination of both structural and data-driven codes. The structural codes, which were predetermined ones, were derived from my preliminary knowledge of the research question: how do Kazakhstan academics respond to the reforms of higher education (HE) carried out as part of Europeanisation? This preliminary knowledge was incorporated into the interview questions.

The interview questions were initially devised to cover different aspects of Kazakhstan higher education that have been impacted by the reforms. However, as the interviews were semi-structured, some new themes appeared during the conversations, which I had not expected. One example of this related to how, when answering questions on the difficulties of publishing articles in international journals, many participants stressed one and the same difficulty: the need to pay to publish. Another emerging code concerned the lack of textbooks in the Kazakh language. Again, such a problem was outside of my own experience in higher education institutions due to the exclusive use of the Russian language for instruction there.

Also, there were cases when an interviewee touched on several topics at once so that information on different themes was combined within one answer. This happened in cases when people suddenly remembered additional information on a question they had already answered, or when they tied one theme to another in their own way. The challenge here was to separate this combined information into the different thematic codes, hence the logic of coding by grouping themes built into the interview questions and themes that popped up during the interviews.

Overall, the following groups and sub-groups of themes were identified: **participants’ attitudes to the reforms** (subgroups: negative, positive, neutral); **three-level education** (subgroups: correspondence to programmes in the Soviet education system; correspondence to research degrees); **credit technology** (subgroups: attitude to the credit system, mismatches in credit hours and credit transferring, mismatches in disciplines between the Western and post-Soviet education systems); **academic mobility** (subgroups: the challenge

of English competency, financial obstacles); **changed teaching activity** (subgroups: excessive teaching loads, non-payment of newly introduced contact hours, problems with independent-learning); **research activity** (subgroups: poor information and training provision, English competency difficulties, payment for publication), **the testing system** (subgroups: corruption, low efficiency, oral versus written forms of examination) and **comparisons with the Soviet education system** (subgroups: for the restoration of the previous system, for further development under Europeanisation, for preserving some properties of Soviet education in the current system, management and governance problems). Once the coding was completed, as I explain in following section, I needed to select texts for analysis.

### ***3.4. Selection of texts and material for analysis***

The reader should understand how the selection of the texts for the analysis was made, which can be a question for those readers who may see the texts included into the analysis overly formulaic. I based my approach to the method of CDA and its application in the thesis on the principles found in existing theory, namely in the works by T. van Dijk and N. Fairclough. These theoretical principles state that only particular texts are eligible for CDA analysis. The main features of these are the presence of ideology and of power relationships, as the criteria to apply CDA, yet these may not apply to all available texts. In this Chapter (section 3.5) I explain the differences between ideological and non-ideological discourses, and the appropriateness of the former and inappropriateness of the latter for CDA analysis. Similarly, the importance of power relations and power abuse is explained (section 3.5). This is consistent with the statement that “Critical discourse analysis is [therefore] engaged in a politics that privileges the analyst’s viewpoint” and “what counts as obvious [in CDA] depends on one’s point of view” (Bucholtz 2001:168). Therefore, CDA can be applied only to those texts which contain ideological discourse and power relationships and any data without such properties should be excluded from the analysis.

These theoretical bases, in turn, affect the limited number of texts selected, the criteria for their selection and the particularity of their content. It also means that the criteria seen as norms for conversation and thematic analyses such as the quantity of data, range of opinions or focus on dissenting views are not applicable in the case of CDA: rather than diversity of opinions, CDA is “especially relevant to the detailed analysis of a small number of discourse samples” (Fairclough 1992:230). It should be understood that CDA is not a form of thematic or conversation analysis and if the full range of opinions on an issue is desired, then this should not be sought using the framework of CDA.

This may cause dissatisfaction in readers, which is understandable as it reflects existing criticism of CDA as a method. A helpful resource identifies this discontent and the principles of the selection of texts for CDA, is Machin and Mayr's (2012: 207-218) "Doing Critical Discourse Analysis and its Discontents". Others are Bucholtz (2001) and particularly, the extensive debate on CDA and conversation analysis by Billig and Schegloff (1999). The possible anticipated criticisms of the analysis made in this research are very likely to relate primarily to this methodological weakness of the CDA method, yet, as something which cannot be 'improved' by combining it with the other qualitative techniques. Any attempt to 'improve' the analysis by showing a range of opinions would destroy the flow of arguments and analysis throughout the thesis, specifically because not all of the opinions contain ideology and power relationships and thus are not all appropriate to be included in an analysis using CDA.

The interview questions were open-ended, which meant that I could not anticipate what the responses would be. For example, when the academics talked about the implementation of the testing system in the humanities, this issue was not included in the interview questions, rather it appeared during the conversations with participants. This means that the same question could produce very diverse replies in terms of the aspects discussed. Thus, the replies mostly depended on the individual's experiences, concerns and preferences, and what they considered to be most significant in their teaching role. For example, for some academics the important topic was the irrelevance of using testing in the humanities, while others focused on the efficiency of using testing for mass assessment seeing it as a time-saving tool, and a third group spoke about the dis-empowerment of teachers when testing is used for assessment. In this example the discussions on testing as a time-saving tool and on teacher dis-empowerment do not directly relate to ideological conflict or power relations in Kazakhstan education, rather they relate to the effects of testing as a technical mechanism. This means that while the accounts may be diverse in the sense that different aspects of an issue are discussed, they are not necessarily diverse in the sense that they give different positions on ideology and power relationships, the two main criteria of the CDA analysis adopted for this research.

In the analysis I was faced with a problem of organising the analysed material. As I found from Fairclough and other authors who apply CDA, this method is "especially relevant to the detailed analysis of a small number of discourse samples" (Fairclough 1992: 230). In my case with a comparatively large number of interviews (38), the first challenge therefore was to frame them, through analysis and interpretation into a smooth story. I found it challenge to



balance the need to use long interview extracts as CDA requires for its expanded analysis, and the impossibility of doing so because of the large number of the texts involved. Therefore, another problem arose of selecting the extracts for discourse analysis. I found a way to do this by selecting extracts on the basis of their problematic content. This criterion is derived from Fairclough's recommendation:

One selection strategy which has much to recommend it is to focus on what I earlier called "crucies" and "moments of crises". These are moments in the discourse where there is evidence that things are going wrong: a misunderstanding which requires participants to "repair" a communicative problem, for example through asking for or offering repetitions, or through one participant correcting another; exceptional disfluencies (hesitations, repetitions) in the production of a text; silences; sudden shifts of style. In addition to the evidence of the text and of the participants' conduct of the interaction, one might again use panel judgements or participants' retrospective judgements about points of difficulty. Such moments of crisis make visible aspects of practices which might normally be naturalized, and therefore difficult to notice; but they also show change in process, the actual ways in which people deal with the problematization of practices. (Fairclough 1992: 230)

Following this recommendation to resolve both problems, I primarily selected two or three, depending on their length, typical examples from a group of texts and then analysed them according to the process described in the next section.

However, in order to provide greater diversity in presenting the participants' responses, a separate section at the end of each main section of analysis is included. This will help readers to see the diversity in the answers. Yet, these accounts are not linked to each other through their ideological closeness. Rather, they show different aspects of the same issue. They also run in parallel to the overarching arguments which I develop throughout this research and the criteria and method of CDA analysis, which are explained in this Chapter, section 3.5.

As I state above, CDA is not appropriate for the analysis of all available texts and when it comes to examining a range of views and a diversity of voices, another method is needed. Therefore, thematic analysis is applied to the additional texts as the most suitable approach, because it does not require any "explanatory meaning framework for human beings' experiences or practices" (Clarke and Braun 2013:120) as CDA does. In particular, thematic

analysis “is essentially a method for identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data” (ibid.), where the patterns relate to themes within the data. Following this approach, here I move away from identifying ideologies and discourses and focus on the range of themes voiced by the participants. Because of this they are excluded from the main body of analysis and are set out as separate additional sections, at the end of each analytical section in Chapters V-VII. I now turn to a consideration of what CDA is and why and how it was adapted to my study.

### **3.5. Applying Critical Discourse Analysis**

The method for data analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), was chosen based on the research question I put forward for this research, which is: how do Kazakhstan academics respond to the higher education reforms under Europeanisation? I chose CDA as a method given the focus of this research but also for many other reasons. In the literature CDA is not just a common method of analysis, it is a *critical* approach to analysis from a particular position of solidarity with those who are oppressed or dominated in society and in opposition to those who abuse power (van Dijk 2001a). Thus it is analysis with “an attitude” (van Dijk 2001a: 96).

So, being someone with a professional compassion towards those under the pressure of the reforms, made CDA an appropriate analytical tool to examine the academics’ responses to them. In a methodological sense, the choice of CDA was determined by the way it enables a deeper analysis of texts, exposing implicit and hidden meanings. It also focuses on disclosing the hidden tensions which are inevitably present in all discursive texts.

The most crucial feature of the CDA, which made its use possible in this research, is that it understands texts in relation to particular social conditions. These conditions cover: addressing social issues and practices, the existence of two opposed groups – the dominant and the dominated, the power relations between them, and the abuse of the power by the dominant group, which commonly results in dominance, inequality, denial and other social practices (van Dijk 1993; Wodak 2001). These conditions correspond to the context of this study. Higher education and the educational reforms are social practices marked by the presence of two opposed groups: educational governance, on the one hand, and the academics, on the other hand.

CDA assumes that texts are objects offering a discursive view on social life. Discursive practice is an agent through which I try to analyse, in the texts (the interviews), the social

relationships behind existing problems between the two sets of actors in the reform process, the academics, on the one side, and the power, on the other. It was very significant for me to discover what academics thought about the reforms, how they expressed their thoughts through words, and the vocabulary they used in their answers. As Fairclough states:

Different discourses are different perspectives on the world, and they are associated with the different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in the world, their social and personal identities, and the social relationships in which they stand to other people. (Fairclough 2003: 125)

The role of language is in turn considered “as a form of social practice, rather than a purely individual activity or a reflex of situational variables” (Fairclough 1992: 63). CDA seeks to understand not just “the text”, nor the texts that constitute the prior text or shape interpretation, “but also those other texts which interpreters variably bring to the interpretation process” (Fairclough 1992: 85). While Fairclough is the protagonist of linguistic analysis in CDA with an accent on textual analysis, he also points out that this “does not mean a concern with the detailed analysis of texts” (Fairclough 2003: 124-125). Instead, CDA relates to “the analysis of how texts work within socio-cultural practice” (Fairclough 1995: 189). He distinguishes between linguistic and intertextual types of textual analysis, emphasising that intertextual analysis draws “attention to the dependence of texts upon society and history in the form of the resources made available within the order of discourse” (ibid.).

The focus on socio-cultural context in CDA is developed in van Dijk’s approach, one upon which I draw here. A wide contextual analysis is required especially when it comes to a world where the mental models and societal properties are different from those of the Western world. The post-Soviet academics’ accounts are projections of the particular beliefs and knowledge formed by them in a Soviet social and education environment, and thus their opinions are specifically culturally and socially constructed.

Ideology is one of the crucial terms of CDA (see section 1.2, this Chapter), the presence of which in a discourse forms an *ideological discourse* and, hence, the opportunity to apply Critical Discourse Analysis. My understanding and ensuing analysis of the ideology in a discourse were based on two approaches. First, there is van Dijk’s notion of ideology, which is defined as the social beliefs shared by members of a social group. Ideologies ground people’s knowledge and attitudes and define social representations of groups. These representations are the basis of discourses and other social practices and consequently are

largely expressed and acquired through discourses (van Dijk 2000a, 2001a, 2004, 2006a). Second, there is Fairclough's theory within which ideology arose together with the concepts of hegemony, power relations and hegemonic struggle (Fairclough 1995). As he argues: "Ideologies arise in class societies characterized by relations of domination, and in so far as human beings are capable of transcending such societies they are capable of transcending ideology" (Fairclough 1995: 82).

Using such approaches, *a particular type of discourse* becomes relevant. Within these, *the ideological discourse* and the conception of *ideology* became significant. While there are many discussions on the relations between discourse and ideology by Althusser, Pêcheux, Macherey, Badiou and others (Montag 2015), the important point is that not all discourses can be considered *ideological*; rather this point relates only to those discourses where an ideology expressed (Fairclough 1995; van Dijk 2004, 2006a). For the two above-mentioned notions of ideology, two views on *the ideological discourse* correspondingly appear, which in turn I applied to the selection of extracts for analysis. The first is van Dijk's approach, where he suggests that "if the underlying mental models or social representations of speakers are not controlled by some ideology, then by definition also the intentions and the mental model of the context, and hence the discourse cannot be ideologically biased" (2006a: 128). This was extended through Fairclough's view that "discoursal practices are ideologically invested in so far as they contribute to sustaining or undermining power relations" (1995: 82).

The ideologies and thus ideological discourses that I found were the discourses produced by the academics in this research. Much of what was voiced by the participants in this research was underpinned by the particular ideological beliefs they had inherited from the Soviet education and overarching social systems (I would call them Soviet ideologies). Yet, I argue that, given that Soviet society was a highly sophisticated ideological control entity which influenced and shaped specific people's mental models, it would be an extremely hard task to examine their accounts without CDA. Also note that, while I was a recipient of similar ideas and "knowledge of the world" (van Dijk 2005) to my participants, the challenge for me was to transmit these post-Soviet mental models and make them understandable to Western readers. It would be quite tricky to carry out this study without having a particular databank of knowledge about that source culture and the mental framework which post-Soviet people still bear in their minds, their 'context models' (ibid.). As I considered already in the section on my ontological perspective (section 1.2), post-socialist peoples came from a monolithically ideological society, which cannot be considered similar to the Western diverse ideological ones. Yet, this does not exclude the ideological nature of both worlds.

As I have already discussed in Chapter 1, the education reforms in Kazakhstan were triggered first of all by the political decision to join the European educational initiative, which was announced at a governmental level and where educational authority was exercised through the Ministry of Education representing the highest political will in the country. Also, as I argued, the reform's educational goals took second place to reinforcing the power relations between the Ministry of Education and the academics in HEIs. The analysis in this study shows that, while there is a dominant against dominated relationship between the Ministry of Education and academics, this is also a political versus educational opposition, and hence conflict between them is inevitable. To study the responses of academics to the education reforms, in fact is to study their attitude to that power relation, which the application of CDA allows me to uncover in the underlying accounts implicitly offered by the academics. So, the presence of such power relationships is another pre-requisite for the application of CDA. I again follow Fairclough's approach:

A primary focus of CDA is on the effect of power relations and inequalities in producing social wrongs, and in particular on discursive aspects: of power relations and inequalities: on dialectical relations between discourse and power, and their effects on their relations within the social process and its elements. This includes questions of ideology meaning, understanding ideologies to be "meaning in the service of power" (Thompson 1984): ways of representing aspects of the world, which may be operationalised in ways of acting and interacting and in ways of being or "identities", that contribute to establishing or sustaining unequal relations to power. (Fairclough 2013: 20)

Overall in the analysis I have developed my own algorithm, which I found helped me to answer the research question. As applying CDA to the analysis of even one text can be a very long process, it would be impossible to apply this systematically to all the texts. So instead, I focused on particular positions in the texts and chose to find my own way through the analysis, following the recommendation that "the particular selection of methods for a particular research project depends upon the objects of research which is constructed for the research topic" (Fairclough 2013: 19). In my analysis each text is considered as a unit of the whole, and the steps of analysis are applied in a particular order.

**First**, I start with the identification of the key features of a discourse, which constitute the repetitions of the same points in a group of texts with similar discourses. For example, in the

discourse on the attitude to the reforms, I identified the following three features: a. the reforms are welcome; b. the reforms are chaotic; c. the management is poor. Within each sample included in the empirical chapter these key features are indicated with the letters a, b and c. **Second**, I focus on the presentation of both sides of the reform process, the educational authority and the academics. Here, according to the strategy of van Dijk, normally the opposition between the two sides of the process is articulated as “us” vs “them” with on the one hand, the academics, voiced through “we” and “our”, and on the other, the educational authority, voiced through “they” and “their”. In such a presentation “our good” is normally opposed to “their bad” (van Dijk 2006a: 126). **Third**, I analyse the language through the identification of the pronouns and metaphors used in expressing the speakers’ attitudes to the reform process and in describing the actors in this process. **Fourth**, I analyse how a speaker identifies himself or herself. What the criteria are that he or she draws upon through which his or her attitude to the reforms are expressed In this way, different types of identities are expressed by the participants, such as professional, ethnic or Soviet identities. **Fifth**, I highlight the belief (or ideology) of the speakers. Some examples of such beliefs are: there was a strong education provided through the previous system, and this prepared broad-minded students. **Sixth**, I identify the discourse transmitted in the beliefs expressed in the texts. As I outline in Chapter V, the key discourses are: chaotic reform, nostalgia, and progressiveness and modernity. The **seventh** step is to identify the overarching discourses throughout a group of participants’ texts. The **final** stage is to consider the context of the issues, beliefs, and discourses.

These stages applied to data under CDA outline the main principles I applied in the data analysis. In some cases a variation in the sequence of the stages is possible as well as omitting the linguistic analysis (the third step), depending on the length and features of the texts. The results of this analysis fill the remaining analytic chapters of this thesis.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I considered the theoretical and practical foundations underpinning my methodology, from establishing the broad philosophical paradigms to describing the micro steps employed in my data analysis.

As I explained, one of the basic paradigms of the research is grounded in the specificity of the post-socialist world (section 1.2). This is characterised by the existence of a particular post-Soviet mentality among the Kazakh people, which was formed under the heavy

ideological pressure of the Soviet period, and firmly regulated personal, social and intellectual life in that society. While this feature of the socialist and post-socialist world is obvious to an insider researcher, it nevertheless is missed by many Westerners, who prefer to look at the Second World from the same positions that they have towards the West (section 1.2). My argument in this thesis is built on the idea that the accounts of the post-Soviet academics are shaped by this mental baggage, and their actions under the reforms are conditioned by their inheritance from the Soviet past, their pre-existing practical knowledge and experience in education. The selection of the methodological instruments, and the methods both for data collection and data analysis, was defined by these perspectives.

Next, in section 2 of the chapter, I described the procedures I undertook in the data collection process. I showed that the process of gaining access to my research sites and dealing with the administrators in some HEIs was challenging. I argued that these problems exemplified the specificity of the post-Soviet mentality of people, which I discussed in section 1, and found in practice during my fieldwork.

In the final part of the chapter (section 3), I focused on data processing and analysis. As the data were collected in languages other than English, translation became an important and challenging stage in the research journey. In particular, I had to address the mismatch in meanings of some education conceptions in Russian and English. Further, in this section, I gave a rationale for the application of CDA as the interpretative approach to the data analysis and outlined the scheme of analysis applied.

With this I finish the theoretical explications which are necessary prior to moving to the empirical analysis. In the next chapter I turn to my data analysis and interpretation. As I draw out the focus on ideologies and discourses, in the next chapter, I identify a particular set of post-Soviet ideologies. Each (set) of these forms a discourse, of which three main discourses can be distinguished: the discourses of nostalgia; progress and modernity; and chaotic reform, each analysed in a separate section.

## **Chapter V. The academics' responses to the reforms: discourses of modernity, nostalgia and chaos**

In the previous chapter I outlined the methods of analysis that I use in the empirical chapters. I also described why CDA is used as the main analytic tool in this research. This is because the focus of my thesis is the academics' responses to the educational reforms, which reflect their reactions to the imposition of politically-driven reforms in educational practice. I apply CDA in the following three chapters (V, VI, VII) to analyse the discourses which the academics reproduce while responding to those changes. In these three analytical chapters I am answering the research question for this study: how do Kazakhstan academics respond to the reforms of higher education (HE) carried out as part of Europeanisation? Each chapter is devoted to the analysis of a particular set of themes: Chapter V studies the participants' accounts in response to general questions about the reforms; Chapter VI looks at their viewpoints on specific questions regarding innovations in teaching, learning and assessment; and Chapter VII focus on their accounts of the research process, publication and foreign language competency.

In this first chapter I explore general topics regarding the transformations in Kazakhstan education under the move to European standards. As I mentioned in the methodology chapter, the interview questions (see Appendix 2) were divided into three parts, and the questions in the first and the last parts covered generic topics, which are the focus for my analysis in this chapter. The opening questions covered participants' understanding of the need for the reforms in Kazakhstan HE and the overall difficulties in implementing the European innovations. The concluding questions explored participants' evaluations of their present experience in comparison to the previous one under the Soviet system and their feelings as to whether they would want to restore Soviet education if this was a possibility. In their answers to these questions, participants drew upon three particular discourses, which were found to recur in other parts of their discussions, and thus form overarching discursive patterns.

One of my arguments is that the reforms have generated a complex of discursive interrelations between academics and the educational power. Academics' attitudes to the reforms often reflect their relationships with those in power. Another key argument is that the



academics' responses to the changes are based in the pre-existing beliefs and knowledges that they carry out from their previous life and work experience, and which are particularly influential when it comes to post-Soviet people (see Chapter IV). In turn, their implementation of the reforms is also coloured by these previous patterns and mentality. Therefore, their views take the form of particular discourses, which can be divided into three main ones. These are: the discourse of progressiveness and modernity; the discourse of nostalgia, accompanied by its variant, the discourse of loss; and the discourse of chaotic reform, which includes different aspects, such as, poor reform management, institutional ignorance, and lack of care for education. Thus, this chapter consists of three sections, each of which focuses on a different main discourse. In the first section the participants' accounts are grouped around the discourse of progressivism, which is identified in participants' talk about their understanding of the necessity of the reforms in Kazakhstan and their accounts of the restoration of the Soviet education system. In the second section, my focus is the discourse of nostalgia found in the theme of an imagined return to the Soviet system and the desire to preserve Soviet educational patterns. The third section is devoted to the discourse of chaotic reform, which repeatedly arose in the talk about the poor governance and management of the reforms.

I argue here that, despite the challenges of the reform process in Kazakhstan and some nostalgic feelings, the academics show their commitment to making progress towards the Western system, understood as the appropriate way for Kazakhstan to develop in education. Nostalgia can be best understood as expressing a sense of loss of orientation and consistency within the current reform chaos and in comparison to what people had in the past. Thus, I suggest that, if the management of the reforms was more consistent and rational, academics would express less frustration. This shows the importance of how borrowed patterns play out in the local context, according to local conditions which shape their local recontextualisation (Steiner-Khamsi 2000; Schriewer 2000). Overall, I point to the significance of management and governance as the factors which determine the academics' attitudes to the reforms.

### **Personal reflection**

The interview questions on the general issues, which opened and closed the interview, were included with a particular purpose, which was to learn about the overall level of the academics' awareness and knowledge about the reforms and their general feelings about the reform process. It needs to be understood that as the post-Soviet area is a specific space in

the sense of information production, manipulation and circulation within it, the overall world view of the people is mainly shaped by the information flow provided by the local media and state ideology. It is also affected by the separateness from the rest of the world primarily because of the language difference. The space is dominated by Russian media, and often followed by local Kazakh media. Similarly, the people's knowledge is mainly formed by these sources, which are transmitting their interpretation about the world and the West in particular.

To my view the information transmitted by the post-Soviet media about the West is rather partial and specific, which especially very noticeable in neighbouring Russia and lesser in Kazakhstan. However, as the people's world views are formed by the local media, they have some particular premises about the Western world. In fact it is only by knowing and operating with foreign languages, primarily English, and knowing the western world from one's own direct experience, that one's world view can be expanded and changed. It is what I personally discovered in my own life experience and explained earlier (Chapter III, section 1.2). Both of these conditions, namely competency in English and direct knowing of the western world, are not easily accessible for most locals. I would say that local academics are seen differently from their colleagues, say from the Eastern European states, who after the collapse of the socialist system merged closer with the Western academic community and may know it directly.

The reforms in Kazakhstan for the local academics are different from Western reality. What the academics know about the Western education standards is what is provided to them by the Ministry of Education and thus it is somehow second-hand information. The analysis in this study supports that the reforms in Kazakhstan education are politically-driven and imposed from above (as explained in Chapter II). By this I am asserting that Kazakhstan academics operate in a specific environment, where they are struggling with issues which they have never before dealt with and have a somehow partial and indirect knowledge about. This is characteristic of this reform process.

Being aware of this, I was interested to know the participants' accounts of the reforms were going. I intentionally included provocative questions in the interview, remembering the existing pride about the best Soviet education reflected within general public view. The questions were provocative in the sense that they aimed not only to reveal the academics' attitude to the reform as such, but their attitudes to the West in general, which they do not know directly. They were also provocative because, as I suspected, the participants might be challenged because of a reluctance to show themselves as non-progressive people, as in

their general view the West is associated with progress and modernity. The fact that I am doing a research degree in a western University might also have a bearing on their replies. Also, they might see me as an outsider and therefore would not like to show themselves as not being loyal to the reforms, as the latter were imposed by the government. So the participants might prefer to show their loyalty to the reforms, for reasons of security. All these factors could contribute to the degree of openness in the participants' replies, where I would not neglect the so-called "impression management" (van Dijk 1992:89), which usually people undertake towards something that they see as somehow higher, better or powerful, and thus disclose their views accordingly.

### **1. The discourse of modernity and progress.**

The interview began with two questions relating to the participants' general attitudes to the education reforms and what they think about the need for them in Kazakhstan. The main discourse expressed here was that of the globalisation of education, modernity and progressiveness. I see the concepts of modernity and progress as ones that cannot be separated from each other. As Brown states "modernity is not only premised on the notion of emergence from darker times and places, it is also structured within by a notion of continual progress." (2001: 6). Both these concepts are widely attributed to Western European history, where the European Enlightenment and then the industrial and scientific revolutions brought about rapid changes to these societies and people's lives. They are also used in contrast to 'backward' and 'autocratic' societies, often geographically located in the eastern and southern parts of the globe.

Modernity and progress became a common ideology, associated with the modern Western and European world. In this common view, any relations and movements towards the West are understood as a move towards progress and modernity and thus the West and progress are often used as synonyms. So, it is through this that the accounts of the local academics can be understood, where their arguments for the need for Kazakhstan to join the EHEA are connected to the ideas of progress and modernity. The similarity of the ways that they draw on ideas of modernity and progress in their answers offers further evidence of the common sense status of this ideology.

The discourse of modernity and progress explicitly appeared in the answers to two general questions. First, it was identified in the responses on the causes for and necessity, or not, of the reform of Kazakhstan education under Western standards. Second, it was expressed in

multiple ways in replies to the question of whether they would support a restoration of the Soviet education system if an opportunity arose. My aim for these two questions was to reveal the participants' general feelings regarding the education reforms in the country, as “the problem of meaning is central to making sense of educational change” (Fullan 2007: 8). The following two subsections are organised to track these two appearances of this discourse.

### **1.1. Participants' accounts of the need for the reforms**

In this subsection the academics' views on the need for and the reasons for the reforms in Kazakhstan education are analysed. Remarkably, almost all the replies (32 of 38) were identical in the sense that the participants foregrounded a single cause for the reforms. Yet, they were not united in positively evaluating the reforms. Instead, the responses were ambivalent, combining the dominant understanding of the need for the reforms drawing on the discourse of modernity, on the one hand, and, on the other, dissatisfaction with the way that they have been implemented. Thus, of the 32 participants in this group, 29 expressed such ambivalent attitudes to the reforms and 3 academics were completely negative, refusing any 'need' for the reforms. The key points of the progressiveness discourse, expressed by the largest group, are: a. Kazakhstan education needs to develop in accord with neoliberal values; b. the education reforms are welcome; c. they dislike the way the reforms have been implemented. Some typical examples of this are:

Urii N.: I am one of the optimists, so I think that the reforms are due to the fact that conditions change, it is a natural process. So to treat them with disrespect, to disregard them, is wrong. We need to welcome them and to continue with them. (b.) The need for reform is not in doubt. (a.) Yet, all these standards require better adaptation to our conditions, to our university infrastructure (c.) [CU2, management, 21 years].<sup>xxiii</sup>

Mark G.: My attitude is positive in principle, because, like anybody who is involved in the education system, I understand that it's a necessity which is dictated by external conditions. (a.) Kazakhstan is part of the international community, and so, it cannot stay outside this. (b.) Another thing is that I'm not completely satisfied with the way it's being adapted to our environment. (c.) [RU1, economics, 18 years]

Svetlana Z.: I believe that this is a necessary step, it's inevitable, because the process of globalisation is not only affecting economy, but also the fields of science and education, and it's necessary to form some kind of a shared educational and scientific space. (a.) My attitude to it is, let's say, to an inevitable process that stems from objective reality. (b.) But it is also ambivalent, how it is happening here - this is a separate theme. (c.) [RU1, history, 17 years]

At first sight, these statements reveal admissions of the necessity of the Europeanisation of Kazakhstan education and positive reactions to this. The use of words such as "globalisation", "international community", "shared educational and scientific space", and "inevitable process" indicate that they are operating within the discourse of modernity and progress, within which the reforms figure as necessary for the country. But these statements refer to the reforms as a concept, considered within the big picture (Fullan 2007), as we can see in phrases like "positive in principle" (Mark G.), "the need for reform is not in doubt" (Urii N.) and "objective reality" (Svetlana Z.).

While positive reactions to the concept of the reforms are one aspect of these accounts, another is their ambivalence. In particular, this appears through the use of the conjunction "but", "yet" or the phrase "another thing is" ("Another thing is that I'm not completely satisfied" - Mark G.; "But it is also ambivalent" - Svetlana Z.; "Yet, all these standards require better adaptation to our conditions" - Urii N.), where 'but' is used to express "non-satisfaction with possible, probable or necessary conditions" (van Dijk 1977: 82). The dissatisfaction implies here that the reform process has been unacceptable. So, while the reforms are welcome, as an objective necessity and as a concept, the majority of participants disapprove of the practicalities of the reforms.

In these extracts there are no direct references to conflict or explicit criticisms of other groups. This is unusual in this research, where, in the participants' accounts there is an absence of any opposition to or negative evaluation of the education authority. Following the theory of CDA here we are faced with a shared social belief, which is different from a group ideological belief. Van Dijk refers to this as cultural knowledge: "There is no difference of opinion, no ideological struggle, no opposition in this case. These are the basic beliefs of a culture, on which all others, also the ideological beliefs of groups, are based" (van Dijk 2009: 15). He states that cultural knowledge is the fundamental Common Ground for all other

discourses and, hence, presupposed by all discourses. Moreover, most of what is traditionally called “knowledge of the world” is cultural knowledge (van Dijk 2005: 80).

In their accounts the academics disclose a shared social identity as the members of the society where they live. That is why there is a dominant unanimity around the need for the reform of Kazakhstan education in the name of modernisation and progress, as a reflection of the shared cultural knowledge about Western modernity and progress, that exists as a common belief in Kazakhstan. So one can see that Kazakhstan academics share an overall desire for these reforms under Westernisation and align with the dominant politics. They express the wider pro-Western belief when they point to the need for the reforms as a public good. Yet, the adherence to the modernity and progress discourse can be a part of the professional value of the academics as a social group as well. As the participant (Mark G.) explains her position, she mentions this as “like anybody who is involved in the education system”, which probably can be attributed as a value for many of the academics. So I point here on the mixture of identities.

Yet, while the ideology of progressiveness and modernity is explicitly expressed, all conflict is transferred to the matter of the process of the reforms, which forms a separate discourse and is studied in section 3 below. The discourse of modernity and progress was also present in the responses that expressed an unwillingness to the return to the Soviet education system, so I focus on these in the next subsection.

### ***1.2. Participants’ views on an imagined return to the Soviet education system***

The modernity and progress discourse was also present in participants’ replies as to whether they would like to return to the Soviet education system if this was a possibility. This final question of the interview was provocative as it could force people to disclose their inner beliefs regarding the reforms. Across the dataset, three groups of participants with different positions can be distinguished, and who draw upon different discourses. The first group of interviewees, the largest one (25 of 38), are those who reject any return to the Soviet education system. As evidence for their position, they often stress the themes of modernity and progress, with which European education is associated, and the advantages this will bring for Kazakhstan education and the society as a whole. A combination of the following three key points characterises this group: a. they do not support a return to the previous education system; b. progress and new values are preferable; c. the Soviet system is too old for today.

Irina N.: To the Soviet system - no, of course not! (a.) Well now, I don't see that we have lost anything in the Bologna system. You see, when you look at the disciplines we study today, they are so close to practice. (b.) We moved away from ideology, it's superb and it's wonderful. We studied such pointless subjects, absolutely repugnant, the history of the party, political economy, agriculture. Why did we need them? (c.) [CU1, journalism, 25 years]

Galiya T.: Back to the [Soviet] system? Probably not, to be honest. (a.) Well, you know that system is already old. Now it won't work. (c.) The main task for pedagogy today is not to give someone a profession, but to train someone who can work in a team, make decisions, and take responsibility. (b.) This is the main goal now. I know some of our students who work, for example, in Coca-Cola.<sup>xxiv</sup> They were excellent students here, went to work there and got stuck in the lowest positions. They couldn't move to higher positions. Why? Because they don't have the skills to work in a team, make decisions. We didn't teach them. The current system is aimed at developing personal qualities. (b.) And what about the Soviet system? They graduated, there was a job guaranteed, they got a job, then after two or three years of experience, they moved further. (c.) But now it's a competition. (b.) [CU1, biology, 18 years]

Tatyana L.: No. Absolutely not. (a.) I've been working nearly 13 years, I see the advantages of the credit system, I see the pros of the European education system, their specialists are more adaptable compared to those in the Soviet education system. They have more applied skills, they are more narrow specialists. (b.) In the Soviet system, there were advantages, but the European, the Western education system is also appropriate for us. It is interesting from the point of view of the labour market, in terms of careers, even just from some personal interests. It is wonderful, and we are lacking this here. (b.) The best option would be if we could combine the two systems, to take the best from each. [CU2, economics, 14 year]

The overall underlying discourse behind this group of texts is modernity and progress, which seem the key factors that lead people to reject any return to the Soviet system. Through the progress discourse, they point to the changed times, and the inappropriateness of the old patterns for today's education, in which disciplines must be close to practice, there are advantages to the credit system, and education must produce adaptable specialists and

develop personal skills. Other ideas of progressiveness are indicated through the opposition between new and old education patterns. In these views, the Soviet education system is out-of-date, it is in the past, filled with pointless disciplines, and failing to develop personal skills, and so not suitable for contemporary life.

These academics project a professional identity, where progressiveness and development are commonly considered as a default norm for them. The mark of this professional identity is the construction of views around 'professional' notions, such as, the importance of being adaptable, of having applied skills, of orienting to the labour market, and cultivating employability in students through developing skills of team building and decision making, and personal qualities.

Yet, by pointing to the advantages of the European system and the disadvantages of the Soviet one, these academics implicitly distance themselves from the past. The discourse of modernity and progress expresses positive norms and values, and through adhering to this, the academics transmit a positive self-representation to the world. In this representation, there is a division between "Our good things and Their bad things" (van Dijk 2006a: 124), where "Our good" values align with European ones, and "Their bad" values align with Soviet ones. So, the ideological conflict of past/present, progress/regress, European/Soviet is clear here. Yet, here are the few cases in this study when the majority of the participants identify themselves with the European ideology rather than with the Soviet one. In this sense it is interesting to note that those who heavily criticised the reforms during the interview, at the end were those who did not want to return to the past system; and on the contrary, those who represented themselves as optimists and supporters of the reforms, were the ones who would welcome a return of Soviet education practices if this was possible. As van Dijk states, empirical studies often show that individuals express a wide variety of conflicting opinions about an issue and that, at the level of personal experience, people may be confronted by ideological conflict and confusion. Therefore, "there are no such things as stable attitudes or ideologies as people construct their opinions ad hoc, on the spot, in each context, and do so typically when talking or writing to other people" (van Dijk 2000b: 23).

These views are projections of the social values, which derive from Western ideology and are spreading through Kazakhstan society today. As I stated in the introductory chapter, the discourse of modernity and progress is an explicit one in Kazakhstan society and so it is unsurprising that it led to almost identical answers. Indeed, the ideology of progress and modernity can be considered as an official one in the local context. It goes back to the pro-



Western desires of Kazakhstan, which started after the collapse of the Soviet Empire, and is present within wider Eurasian politics (Chapter II). Obviously, the turn to European values in Kazakhstan's official position follows the worldwide ideology, in which "the West has been unproblematically presented as the embodiment of progress, whereas the East (and the South) emerged as underdeveloped, chaotic, and undemocratic" (Silova and Brehm 2013: 60). The existence of this as a common ideology I mentioned at the beginning of this section.

Yet, in Kazakhstan the ideology of progress and modernity was re-contextualised, where it was interpreted in relation to achieving a progressive nation, characterised by competitiveness and modernity. For example, in 2004 it was apparent in an official proclamation of the direction of development for Kazakhstan: "Towards competitive Kazakhstan, Competitive economy, Competitive nation" (Koshik 2004). Another ambitious strategy was announced in 2006 to try to become one of the 50 most rapidly developing states in the world. This programme promoted further modernisation in a range of social spheres, in order to, as it stated, bring Kazakhstan closer to the international arena (Men et al. 2013). In the same way, modernity and progress was built into the official programme "The Way to Europe", which I mentioned earlier (Chapter II). All these documents are in fact reflections of the official ideology which is very popular in Kazakhstan and which determines the overall direction of society. As I argue throughout this thesis, the post-colonial agenda is the other side of the discourse of modernity and the pro-Western ideology celebrated in Kazakhstan.

Thus, the discourse of modernity and progress found in the accounts of the academics is a reflection of the popular official ideology considered above. In this sense, the local academics identify themselves as members of the modern Kazakhstan society and implicitly show their approval of the dominant ideology of the country in which they live. In this regard the academics are transmitters of the state's ideology, whether this is done consciously or unconsciously. Being supporters of the state's ideology the academics may ignore other aspects of the political regime, which are hidden from public discussion. Yet, some participants do welcome an imagined return to the past and express this through a discourse of nostalgia. This is in the focus of the next section.

## **2. The discourse of nostalgia**

In this section I continue to analyse the participants' responses to their current experiences in the new education system in comparison to the Soviet one. As I state throughout this

research, the Soviet education serves as the main point of reference for Kazakhstan academics, when it comes to orienting their discussions of the current reforms. So, during the interviews almost all participants referred to the Soviet education system as a frame for comparison with the Western education system. As research shows, people's interpretations and reactions to present situations are determined by their experiences in the past (Irish 1997; van der Hoop 1999). However, whether this multiple referencing back to the Soviet education system was always associated with nostalgic sentiment, is hard to determine. Instead, two final interview questions were purposefully used to explore this theme, with one on whether academics would like to restore the previous education if there was a possibility of doing so, and another question asking if there was something in the previous education system they would like to preserve and employ in the current system.

I use nostalgia here as an appropriate notion to describe the feelings of many descendants of the Soviet Empire. Indeed the shift from Soviet standards to Western ones was not only about a cultural shift. To a large degree it was also a loss of the essential reference points which orient people's lives. As I stated earlier (in Chapter I), the Second World is a specific region, that is different from the rest of the world in many senses. It established a particular way of life and thinking, and created a particular type of a person, satirically called a Homo Sovieticus (Chapter IV). Yet, it also created a range of strong beliefs and ideologies set up at the top of the social hierarchy by the Soviet rulers. These were based on, among other things, the ideals of socialism and ideas of the best Soviet life which were internalised in people's consciousnesses and led to the formation of a specific mentality. After the collapse of the Soviet Empire, nostalgia for some post-Soviet people expressed itself in a longing for an imagined return to the old 'good' era and its values.

Yet, as the post-Soviet area represents quite a diverse entity, nostalgia has many meanings there, "offering multiple 'imagined communities' and means of belonging" (Boym 2007: 14). For some post-Soviet people, nostalgia carries a sense of a deep longing for the past great Empire, with the dominant status of Russian language and culture, and even a desire for its restoration (Ferretti 2007; Weir 2009). As Boym defines it, nostalgia is "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy" (2007: 7). For others, nostalgia is not directly linked to a return to the Soviet Union, rather it is attached to some of its properties, such as a 'better' education system, 'higher' education quality, and order and stability, among others.

In the section below I analyse the academics' accounts in which the Soviet education system is considered from today's perspective. I argue here that the overall discourse of nostalgia is the key one in these academics' accounts, even while it manifests differently in different statements. On the whole, while their nostalgic feeling is obvious, it takes on a greater significance in comparison with the current chaotic reforms and the lowering of education quality. Fourteen of 38 people expressed such nostalgic sentiments and thus manifested the nostalgia discourse. They divide into two subgroups. The larger group of 11 people would support a return to the Soviet system for educational reasons, pointing to the better quality of education in the past; they are discussed in subsection 2.1. For a smaller subgroup of four academics, a return to the Soviet education system appeared to be a synonym for a return to the Soviet way of life, where one is not separated from the other; they are discussed in subsection 2.2.

### ***2.1. Participants' views on the loss of the best of the Soviet education system***

In this subsection I look at how the participants spoke about the lack of quality in today's education, which in their views was much better in the past. One of the prides of Soviet education, was their thorough and wide approach to the disciplines, which gave students a broad world view. As can be seen from the extracts below, in the view of participants this is a characteristic of a 'good' education, which has now been lost through the reforms. This message was often connected to another pride of Soviet education, namely a widely held belief that Soviet graduates were the best and were in-demand across the world. Therefore the nostalgia discourse in the following extracts is manifest in two key features: a. the loss of the Soviet's systematic approach; b. the Soviet education system and its graduates were some of the best in the world. Eleven participants expressed such nostalgia for the 'better' Soviet education system, as in the following examples:

Galiya T.: Nevertheless, that education was more thorough. (a.) Due to that education many of my friends went abroad in the 90s, and with a diploma from the chemistry department of our University, they all found good positions in their speciality. All of them. In the pharmaceutical industry, chemical plants or other places. They all had their diplomas approved normally, without any problems, worked there and are working there now. (b.) Whether our current graduates can go there to live and work, in particular, in Germany, I don't know, I doubt. Now they don't have a database [of knowledge]. We no longer have the consistency of the Soviet system. (a.) Previously, in schools, they provided the basis, and when the students came here, in their first

year, we taught them simple things, and then more and more sophisticated things to build a system of knowledge. We have this. (a.) The foundations remain. Even if some things have been forgotten, I can recover them, I can work with the literature, I can open a textbook and see what's new there. Now students are different. They have no connections in their heads, even within their discipline. So from the Soviet education system, we have to maintain this consistency of knowledge. (a.) [CU1, biology, 18 years]

Elena H.: What the Soviet education system was proud of has suffered in the credit system. It is that our alumni have wider profiles and they can easily, very easily adapt to any sphere in their field. (b.) Today's graduates will not have the volume of knowledge, or interdisciplinary connections which, let's say, we had. (a.) I believe that the knowledge in the current Bachelor's is inferior to the erudition of former specialists. (a.) From the previous system, probably now nothing is left, because everything was wiped out, everything altered. Nothing is left from the former system. [CU2, biology, 24 years]

The first key point (a.) regards the earlier systematic knowledge, also referred to here as “thorough” or “foundations”, which provided the breadth of knowledge taught and a higher general level of graduate culture, which current students are seen to lack. This was one of the main characteristics of the Soviet system. It is seen as the greatest loss in the move to the current education system and causes regret among people. The other feature of Soviet educational excellence that participants praise is the demand for Soviet-educated specialists abroad.

Here again one sees an opposition between “Our good things and Their bad things” (van Dijk 2006a: 124), which the contradictory patterns of Soviet versus Western repeat. “Our good things” are transmitted through words such as “thorough”, “sophisticated”, “a system of knowledge”, and “wider profiles”. “Their bad things” are an inferior education, with a lack of “consistency”, “system of knowledge” and “foundations”. While there is no direct voicing of the features of the other side of the opposition, its negative evaluation is communicated through the focus on “Our good things” in implicit contrast to “Their bad things”.

I would point out that these participants disclose several identities at the same time. On the one hand, they present themselves as concerned with the quality of education, through the

use of concepts such as “speciality”, “system of knowledge”, “textbooks” and “interdisciplinary connections” among others. On the other hand, through their adherence to Soviet educational values, which they present as preferable, they project a Soviet social identity. Their choice of criteria for a ‘good’ education are identifiers of this Soviet identity. One can see here a mindset that holds the demonstration of these skills by students as a marker of good teaching, and more widely speaking of a good education. In other words, what these post-Soviet academics see as of value in the previous education system might be considered good only from their viewpoint, while in other education systems they are not. In particular, it relates to a nostalgic attachment to the Soviet idea of a ‘good’ education as producing a multi-disciplinary specialist who has a wide-ranging knowledge. In the following subsection, I continue tracking the discourse of nostalgia.

## **2.2. Participants’ views on an imagined return to the past**

A small group of participants (four people) constructed their replies around features of Soviet life and society, such as the strong social order, the predictability of life, and thus, its stability. Hence, the nostalgia discourse can be found in a combination of the following key features: a. welcoming the return to the Soviet education system; b. Soviet educational patterns and outcomes were better; c. nostalgia about Soviet life. Some examples of this are:

Bek S.: Of course, I would support it very much. (a.) There were great opportunities for each student. Every postgraduate could travel throughout the Soviet Union, collect data, or exchange experiences. (c.) [RU2, psychology, 10 years]

Iliya R.: Yes. (a.) I liked everything [from then] very much. The Party, Komsomol<sup>xxv</sup>, and I engaged with relish. I think I’m missing that time. (c.) No, I didn’t like to make notes on Lenin, Marx, to study Marxism-Leninism. But somehow it was all so ... there was no competition, we were confident about tomorrow. Today the competition forces us to change. (c.) Yes, it was pleasant, but I fully understand what it all led to. [CU1, journalism, 20 years]

Mark G.: What an interesting question! The conservative part of me wants to shout: yes, yes, I am for it! But another part of me, which is for the reforms, for more drastic measures to improve education, says no. Definitely to say yes or no is hard ... I guess I would say rather “yes”. (a.) That is, in the sense that the outcomes of the Soviet education were higher. (b.) [RU1, economics, 18 years]

In these accounts, the Soviet education system is constructed as an unfortunate loss, as it is associated with the stability, consistency, higher quality education, and better outcomes. These participants stress the advantages of Soviet life, beyond the education system, pointing to the confidence it guaranteed (Iliya R.), the non-competitiveness of the society (Iliya R.), and the opportunities for travel (Bek S.). Here an allegiance to the past, whether it is to Soviet education or Soviet life, is clearly present and reflected, again, through an opposition between “Our good things and Their bad things”. Emphasising the advantages of Soviet education and Soviet life in turn implies a negative attitude to current changes and is part of opposition to the reforms taking place under Western standards. Therefore, it constitutes a conflict of Soviet versus Western, past versus present.

Yet, we can see negative attitudes attributed to the Western way of life too. Remarkably competition is considered bad, and this judgement can in fact be understood as a reflection of a particular Soviet mentality, which was formed under submission to the state authority and the resulting passive way of life. In the Soviet understanding, stability means an absence of competition and in such a view, this is desired (“there was no competition, we were confident about tomorrow. Today the competition forces us to change” - Iliya R.). Similarly, the reply of another participant should be understood in light of this, when she said that she would support an imagined return to the past, because “there was a system and stability” (Maria A.). So, the Soviet past is considered as a period of stability and certainty, in contrast to the chaotic contemporary environment, and, hence, the tension between stability and instability is also relevant here.

Further, the four academics who pointed to the social benefits of the Soviet system, identified themselves with the Soviet social identity, which is collective and socialist. The need for individual creativity and initiative, which are characteristics of Western culture, is in contrast to Soviet collectivism, which is understood as a concept of unanimity, oneness and consensus (Mamontov 2014). It is also about the homogeneity of people. These are particularly the characteristics highlighted by Iliya R., where the collective Soviet identity is conveyed through distinct collectivist organisations (Komsomol, the Party) and symbolic socialist figures (Lenin, Marx). Hence, identification with the Soviet mentality and a strong nostalgia for Soviet values are crucial for him. Indeed, post-Soviet nostalgia becomes “a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an ‘enchanted world’ with clear borders and values.” (Boym 2007: 12). In comparison to this Soviet social identity, the analysed texts in the previous subsection from those 11 academics, who constructed their views around the value of quality (of research and education outcomes), transmitted a

professional identity. Focusing on the professional standard of quality is a characteristic of those who consider themselves as professionals: “Most professionals oppose ‘lowering standards’ or ‘mass universities’ and insist on a self-regulated threshold of access, such as special exams, in-house training or specialization” (van Dijk 1998b: 153).

The participants in both groups choose to use Soviet patterns as a frame of reference, citing the stability, confidence, opportunities, and guarantees, which helped people to live and to which they had become accustomed. This frame of reference formed the basis of Soviet society, where for decades, as Shelley (1994) argued, there was a contract between the state and its citizens who had a high degree of order and the social guarantees of full employment, housing, low-cost medical care and education, in exchange for their personal freedom. They associate themselves with the Soviet past, despite the collapse of socialism, which collapsed as “a social system, but not as a set of values” (Urchak 2003: 481).

The preference for Soviet values is also an indicator of adherence to socialist ideology, one aspect of which is a belief in Soviet education as the best. Thus participants’ talk of a preference for those educational models which are well-known to them, and thus provide professional certainty, derives from wider socialist beliefs. Hence, here one can see two features of one discourse, both nostalgia and loss, whether it is the loss of a particular way of life, education, or orientation, which they find lacking in the current context of chaotic reforms and instability.

The discourse of “nostalgic longing for the good old times” (Schaffmeister 2015: 184) signals that people have lost direction in contemporary life and work, and that is why restoring the Soviet patterns becomes desirable. Hence, the nostalgia discourse is expressed through a willingness to support an imagined return to the Soviet education system, and sentiments of loss of the better Soviet way of life and better education system, which trained the best graduates, who were in demand across the world. One can see here that the reform process under Europeanisation in fact serves as a pattern for constant comparison with the pre-existing knowledge and experience which people bring from the past. This reveals an opposition of Soviet education versus Western education, where the former is constructed as superior to the latter. This is an ideological opposition, where “Our good things” oppose “Their bad things” (van Dijk 2006a: 126).

Overall I find here a projection of the established Soviet ideology about ‘the best Soviet education’. This was a well-known belief among Soviet people that is still easily remembered. The belief that Soviet education is the best in the world was stated by Mikhail Gorbachev

when he boasted that the Soviet people were the best-educated people of the world (Blazer 1987). Another version of this is the belief that Soviet graduates were some of the best in the world and in demand from Western employers. This was probably derived from the reality that several waves of Soviet emigrants “to Israel, USA and other Western countries in the 1970s and 1980s revealed the relatively high level of Soviet education in mathematics and physics (an acknowledged area of Soviet brilliance)” (Babich 2011). Such beliefs could arise also from recognition of the achievements of the Soviet Union’s arts and sports education programmes, which impressed the worlds of international ballet, chess and athletics (ibid.).

However, in fact, there is no evidence when and how the statement ‘Soviet education is the best in the world’ initially appeared. While it is a very popular and strongly-asserted slogan for today’s post-Soviet educators, politicians and media commentators, especially in Russia,<sup>xxvi</sup> no one can explain the rationale behind it and what it is based on. As I mentioned already (Chapter IV, section 1.2), Soviet ideological statements were not objects for questioning, but for belief. They operated as axioms in line with the reasoning: it is so and that is all.<sup>xxvii</sup> This is what Bercken (1985: 270) means when says that Soviet ideology “differs from a scientific theory which is valid only as long as it does not conflict with the facts”. I see this belief, that Soviet education is the best, as an imposed one, an ideological cliché, which aligns with other popular ideological impositions, such as: Soviet means excellent and Soviet means best. This slogan was announced at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1961 (Dushenko 2011) and for decades, it was widely used in Soviet ideological posters.

Indeed, many Soviet ideological beliefs may not have any rational explanation or evidence, yet, nevertheless, post-Soviet people unconsciously hold them in their minds. Similarly, the references to Soviet education standards as better may not be supported by clear evidence. Yet, when it comes to immediate education practice, there are alternative views on these ideological positions, as in the following:

The Soviet education system rather successfully solved the task of transforming the Soviet people into pseudo-intellectuals who could talk on any subject for ten minutes. It produced wide specialists: physicists, who wrote poems, or poets, who understood what a synchrotron is. ... But when it came to the need to analyse, draw their own conclusions, to look for material and to deal with the outside world on their own, here the Americans instantly overtook graduates of Soviet schools, because that’s what this Soviet school did not teach. At some stage, critical thinking skills and the ability to find



information have become much more important than the amount of information that can be easily found in an encyclopedia or on the Internet. In this sense, Soviet education fulfilled one task, but it does not solve the other. (Zlobin 2010)

Thoroughness and a wider curriculum are features of a good education in the views of these participants. Yet, much of what was taught was not appropriate for work and did not develop practical skills. It can be said then that people's preference for the previous educational patterns is largely determined by the ideological setting, their pre-existing experience, and even a habit to think in a particular way, rather than following the evidence.

The nostalgia discourse overall was identified in the talk of 14 out of 38 participants, however, it is interpreted differently by them. For the largest group, nostalgia became significant in relation to the problem of the quality of education and its lowering in today's reform environment. Yet, it is unknown whether these people would support a return to the Soviet past as a social system and a way of life. In turn, only four academics said that they would support a full return to the Soviet way of life with a restoration of the Soviet education system. In other words, it can be said that just over one third of the participants would support the restoration of the past system to some extent. Setting these outcomes alongside those analysed in the first section that are shaped around the discourse of progress and modernity, 29 out of 38 participants showed an adherence to modernisation and progress as the desired route to further development. However, none of these participants were fully satisfied with the reform process. Instead, all of those 29 academics who constructed their views around the discourse of modernity and progress had ambivalent attitudes, stressing the highly complex and exhausting reform process. In the following section their accounts of chaotic reform are further analysed.

### **3. The discourse of chaotic reform**

As I already argued in the introductory chapter, the educational reforms in Kazakhstan were more a political than an educational act, and thus they were imposed on HE by politicians rather than educators. The staff then were positioned as passive receivers and implementers of the new requirements. While this can also be found in European institutions where reforms are carried out (Trowler 1997), in autocratic regimes there are specific features of the method of reform implementation. These are linked to the fact that post-Soviet states have a legacy of a top-down command approach in administration and organisation (Soltys 2015). This is characterised by strong administrative control from above operating without any questioning

of how things are realised in practice at the lower levels, ignoring initiatives and criticisms coming from below, and using any means to persuade people to implement the changes. Another feature of command-style management is the establishment of rules and resources, which guide the behaviour of others in the official hierarchy of power (Kennedy 2008). The other side of command-style management is that those in power, being the ones who have concentrated absolute power in their own hands, are seen to have sole responsibility for any failures and thus are blamed by those below them. That is why there were multiple criticisms of those in the educational authority in the participants' accounts.

In principle, as theorists of education management assume, the outcomes of education reforms are often unpredictable. This is the common problem of the difference between theory and practice. In relation to this, Fullan states:

In short, one of the basic reasons why planning fails is that planners or decision makers of change are unaware of the situations faced by potential implementers. They introduce changes without providing a means to identify and confront the situational constraints and without attempting to understand the values, ideas, and experience of those who are essential for implementing any changes. (2007: 110)

In the situations where people operate in a confusing environment, command-style management has mainly political effects, rather than supporting professionals. As Fullan states "Top-down change doesn't work because it fails to garner ownership, commitment or even clarity about the nature of the reforms" (2007: 11). This then becomes worse in situations where those in power do not have enough knowledge of the changes, as they are new to them.

As these international standards were borrowed by Kazakhstan primarily for political reasons, as I argue in this thesis, their appropriateness for local practice was not considered at the stage of borrowing or decision-making, as indicated in Phillips and Ochs' scheme (see Chapter III, subsection 2.2). Instead, their suitability (or not) for local practice became apparent during the process of implementation itself. Hence, in the post-Soviet reforms, two issues appear in relation to their administration: the use of a traditional top-down command-style management and the need to operate in a situation where there is a lack of awareness of the changes which are being implemented.

Personally I did not intend to raise in the interviews any questions about the management of the reforms, as I did not assume this to be important for participants. Despite this, it appeared in the conversations. These accounts formed an essential part of the interviews because of the frequency and intensity of participants' talk about it. People constantly returned to this discourse, either when they were talking about general difficulties of implementing the reforms or addressing specific questions regarding testing, teaching, academic mobility, and so on. Among 38 interviewees, 26 academics' accounts covered numerous facets of governance and management. The range of issues discussed was quite diverse: the chaotic management of the reforms, the lack of clear instructions, the absence of preliminary training for staff to operate in the new environment, the exactingness of the education authority's demands, the lack of skills and knowledge of how to implement reforms exhibited those in authority, and thus the overall exhausting reform process.

To structure this flow of texts for the analysis, I have divided them into two subsections. The underlying shared discourse is one of chaotic reform. In the first subsection (3.1), I analyse accounts of the chaotic governance of the reforms. In the second subsection (3.2), I examine accounts containing a shared discourse of institutional ignorance of the actors themselves.

### ***3.1. Participants' accounts of the management of the reforms***

The theme of the chaotic management of the reform process appears throughout the interviews. The key points of it are: a. the reform process is chaotic and lacks proper attention to the practice; b. the requirements change frequently and academics must continually rework the documentation; c. the people are compelled to obey the authority; d. such reform is exhausting.

Demey E.: The reform goes ... one may say chaotically. (a.) The problem is just that we are now engaged in permanent reform. Since I came here in '92, since then, permanent transformation and experiments never stop there. (b.) How many years have passed? Since '92, it's been 20 years already. No education will stand this ... Education cannot tolerate such permanent reform. (d.) We must have a long-term ... say, we have to make a plan for 10 years of reform. And it has to be worked out to the last details. (a.) Well, it is declared that we must move to the credit system, academic mobility, integration into the European system, but it turns out that each time the curriculum is changed, the standards vary. Every time it comes down to rewriting papers. It's just this: this is to be done, that's to be done, they say something today,

and then change everything tomorrow. (b.) It's a mess and because of this a person doesn't want to have to do with it, because it's clear that in a year everything will be cancelled and started anew. (d.) But in reality nothing has changed. Well, it is changing, with difficulty, but there are more minuses than pluses. [CU1, physics, 13 years]

Maria A.: I do not know what is happening in general in Kazakhstan, but we have a system of management which is carried out badly: things can change on the go. We may have to do some serious paperwork in two days. (b.) [CU2, philology, 30 years]

Elena H.: Do you know how we run any innovation psychologically? We have such a system. Here now we are going to move to some new system. It has not been fully thought out in the details. (a.) We are told: do it, make documents. (c.) We do what we can, our best, according to some crude methodical instructions, by trial and error. (b.) Then suddenly - oh , the administration or even someone above suddenly remembers that it needed to be done that way, not this way. Come redo it! (c.) We sit down again to redo this and we are just busy with revisions. Endless reworking and imperfections. (b.) ... It will kill anyone, surely. And because of this, there is no desire. (d.) Therefore, any reform instead of normal, healthy interest, often causes exhaustion and irritation for teachers, if you're interested in the psychological attitude. It's nervousness, it's not just stress, and it's super-stress (d.). [CU2, biology, 24 years]

All these accounts are negative and critical about the process of reform. Yet, as they criticise, they also implicitly blame those who are carrying out the reforms, who are by implication the Ministry of Education. This is transmitted through the oppositional pronouns "we" and "they", where each word implies one of two different social groups. The opposition between the power and the academics is explicit here. The Ministry of Education represents a power in education, which dominates others. It is not named directly, yet, it is often replaced by the pronoun "they" and elided through the passive voice: "it is declared that we must move"; "they say something today, and then change everything tomorrow" (Demey E.) and "we are told" (Elena H.). The absence of the direct naming of the Ministry of Education, is part of wider patterns of sense making. As Pennycook states:

This is where the notion of the "politics of the pronoun" arises, for what I want to point to here is that pronouns are deeply embedded in naming people and groups, and are thus always political in the sense that they always imply relations of power. (Pennycook 1994: 175)

There is a use of the strategic opposition "we are good" versus "they are bad". For example, the dominant power is represented as exacting, unprofessional and changeable in its demands. By focusing on this, the academics position themselves as the ones who suffering from the reforms, yet, they are also deprived of any rights to question them. As the Ministry is the one leading the process of reform and in a dominant position, the academics sees themselves as an ignored group because of the hardship of the everyday routine of reform. The reforms are exhausting and are robbing people of their desire for changes ("It will kill anyone, surely. And because of this, there is no desire" - Elena H.; "It's a mess and because of this a person doesn't want to have to do with it" - Demey E.).

Presented as passive actors in the process, where they are required to constantly redo documentation and to follow the unclear instructions of the dominant power, their accounts take the form of complaints against this power. The abuse of power here then is in the attitude to them as ones obliged to follow half-baked instructions and perform senseless paperwork without questioning. As van Dijk (2006b) states, recipients of manipulation, as an abuse of power, may be defined as victims. This means that somehow they can be defined as lacking crucial resources needed to resist, detect or avoid manipulation (ibid.). The vulnerability of the academics is determined by their lower social position, where they are dominated by the authority, which in turn places the academics into a position where they have to accept the discourses and arguments of elite groups (ibid.). However, the adoption of the position of sufferers and victims can serve as a means for positive self-representation (Sedlak 2000).

A common strategy for creating a positive self-representation is through contrasting a positive image of the one's own side ("we"), explicitly or implicitly, with a negative representation of the opponent's side ("they"). For example, the academics represent themselves as supporters of clear and consistent modes of management, and opponents of the chaotic approach of the Ministry of Education. Such a representation implies their adherence to the significance of quality, order, proper management, coherent reform, and clarity regarding the tasks involved in the reform process, which appear in their accounts as essential criteria.

Therefore, they identify themselves through the professional identity discussed earlier. Thus they construct a conflict between the adherence to professionalism by academics, on the one hand, and the amateurism of the authority, on the other.

The ideology of the academics is constructed around the message that the education authority is bad and unprofessional, yet, it is also authoritative. Another belief is that the dominant power does not care about education: its governance is harmful to education, which “cannot tolerate such permanent reform” (Demey E.). Therefore, we can see an ideological conflict between politicians and educators, where the former are chasing reform by any means and thus are pursuing political goals, whereas the latter are concerned with issues of education and its future.

The overall underlying discourse behind these accounts is of chaotic reform and poor governance of the reforms, which can be seen as the main discourse in the extracts analysed in this section. The other side of this discourse concerns how the reforms were implemented without any prior preparation by the actors.

### ***3.2. Participants’ accounts of the institutional ignorance of the agents of the reform***

As part of the discourse of chaotic reform, we can find accounts of institutional ignorance. Following Orr and Scott’s (2008) definition, institutional ignorance has two main aspects: a lack of knowledge about institutional factors and a reliance on previously-scripted mental models that do not reflect the new context. Parallel to this, two points can be found in the accounts of the academics. One is that there is an overall lack of knowledge about the changes among agents of reform on both sides. Another is the rigidity of those in power, which results from the traditional command approach to administration, and thus is a mental model inherited from the previous system.

The two key points of this discourse are: a. academics lack proper guidance and were not trained to operate in the new system; b. the administration demands academics follow their rules, while itself lacking knowledge of how to implement reforms. This discourse features in the interviews of 14 of the 28 academics. The next set of the extracts contain typical accounts of the managerial approach:

Svetlana Z.: Where does the misunderstanding come from? It is because the people, who are trying to adapt and implement this system, do not understand it themselves. (b.) Yes, they first have to understand it themselves before demanding it from us, (b.) and it turns out now that we run it ourselves. (a.) And because of this, in each

institution the understanding of the credit system is different. Between here and the nearby university, that's across the river, there will be a difference. [RU1, history, 17 years]

Urii N.: The staffs were not prepared enough for the transition to these standards. (b.) And maybe there's not enough training or re-training, so we have information either stripped-down, or incomplete, or unskilled and so our performance matches this. (b.) That is, if these are the standards, then they should clearly conform to the rules. Generally, I don't understand how we want to train specialists to a new level without training any of the people who train those specialists. (a.) And individual experiences, when someone is sent abroad, some separate initiatives are not helpful. [CU2, management, 21 years]

Elena H.: So if they would tell us exactly how we need to change. They don't know how we need to change. (b.) [CU2, biology, 24 years]

Zhanna F.: Sometimes we just have no explanation of what is needed and how it should be done, we are told - do this and all that. (b.) If at that moment we were well prepared, we would do it better. But at this moment we are not ready to do it, because we don't understand how it must be done. (a.) Even when different instructions are given, I always ask: Why is it necessary? Can we have it explained: Why is it needed? The ultimate goal is not explained, and it is very hard to operate in this way. (b.) For some reason they don't look closely at the work of teachers. They maybe don't know themselves or they incorrectly understand the standards. (b.) [RU1, mathematics, 26 years]

Again as in the analysis above, one cannot find here any direct naming of the Ministry of Education. It is replaced by the pronoun "they", which is used here as a hidden way of pointing at those in power. The overall message in these texts is that the reforms are being carried out in an environment not only of unclear goals, but also of total institutional ignorance. While on the one hand, it is an issue of lack of instructions, information and training for academics, on the other, it is an indication of the lack of the relevant skills and knowledge in the education authority itself. Some examples are: "It is because the people,

who are trying to adapt and implement this system, do not understand it themselves” (Svetlana Z.) and “They don’t know how we need to change” (Elena H.).

There is a mismatch between the two approaches, where the academics show their desire for transparent educational governance, and the impossibility of achieving this because of a knowledge and skills deficit. As such, there is an opposition between the negative representation of the dominant party, i.e. the educational authority, and the implied positive representation of the dominated group, i.e. the academics. However, the positive representation of the own side is relative because participants recognise their own incapacity (“how we need to change” - Elena H.; “we have information either stripped-down, or incomplete, or deskilled, so our performance matches this” - Urii N.). Yet, the incompetence on their own side is positioned as a consequence of the ignorance of those above, meaning that it is due to the authority’s prior ignorance that “we”, the academics, suffer. In both sections 3.1 and 3.2, the participants see themselves as suffering in the reform process and at the hands of those with educational power (Trowler 1997). So the power relationships are based on a conflict around the institutional ignorance caused by the education authority.

As the talk is constructed around the notion of professionalism and the criteria of quality, the academics identify with a professional identity. All their accounts come from a similar position of identifying particular models and criteria for how the things should be carried out (“they should clearly conform to the rules” - Urii N.; “if at that moment we were well prepared, we would do it better” - Zhanna F.). This indicates the presence of particular models of the past in their consciousness, within which the system of education was clearly organised and transparent. While in the texts there is no direct indication on the nostalgia discourse, through referring to the idea of known standards, likely inherited from the previous system, the standards of the past system is evident.

The overall discourse here is found in talk about the absence of preparation for the reform process in actors at all levels, and thus of institutional ignorance. It again goes back to the dominance of politically-driven goals for the reforms over educational goals. I would argue here that it is because the reforms are politically oriented that educational issues are not prioritised by the authority. The ideological belief of the academics is that the education authority is the cause of the reforms’ failure and the associated chaos. They respond with strong opposition and resistance to the reforms, citing the incompetence of the authorities on the one side and their inflexible management on the other.



I argue that there is a similarity between the education reform process in Kazakhstan and those in other post-Soviet countries which are the members of the Bologna Process. There are several aspects to this. First, the reform of post-Soviet education is carried out in an environment of wider ignorance both on the part of those who are low down in the process, i.e. the academics, and those who govern them, i.e. the education authority. This ignorance is mainly derived from the objective circumstance in which a lack of awareness of how to manage the reforms is a direct consequence of the lack of professionals with relevant knowledge and skills. Similarly, what the academics criticise about the educational authority is not only the drawback of power per se; rather it is a legacy of the Soviet past, and the absence of professional managerialism in education. Second, command-style management is inevitable, which again is a legacy of the Soviet totalitarian system. Many experts see the top-down command mode of governance as one which clashes with the democratic organisational culture out of which the Bologna Process was initially born. For example, Ohanyan (2011) points to this as one of the main things impeding the implementation of European standards in Armenian education. A similar view is stated by other Western experts: “The main problem for the former-socialist countries is that their traditional top-down and bureaucratic methods work poorly in implementing higher education reforms” (Soltys 2015: 180). This post-Soviet practice is ineffective when it comes to the dealing with the new reality. In its core this approach prevents open-mindedness, receptiveness to divergent views, and learning from the practice (Orr and Scott 2008).

In both subsections the overarching discourse is of chaotic reform, where the accounts of Kazakhstan academics are a reflection of the social practices within which they work. The discourse of chaotic reform combines factors shaped during the current reforms and those inherited as a legacy of the Soviet past. One factor is the lack of knowledge and skills of the actors in the reform process about the changes which are to be implemented to the local practice. This is a reflection of the objective fact that the borrowed patterns are new to all and thus these people are dealing with something unknown. Another factor which is a legacy from the Soviet past is based on a particular mode of governance that impacts on the indigenisation and internalisation of the borrowed policies. I would link this to the phenomenon of recontextualisation, which constitutes one of the basic conceptions of education policy borrowing and the theory of externalisation to which I refer in Chapter III. As Schriewer states, through being implemented in a local context, the borrowed patterns are “interwoven with previous layers of political behavior, social meanings and culture-specific patterns ... [that] change their significance and the way they function” (Schriewer 2000, cited

in Beech 2010: 282). The “socio-logic” of externalisation means that borrowing in each particular case develops out of internal social contests. Yet, they are also recontextualised in the local context according to its specificity. In the case of Kazakhstan, as I argue throughout this research, the externalisation of Western patterns happened due to post-colonial desires to distance the country from Russia and as such was a political move. Yet, at the same time, the implementation of the borrowed education policies in the Kazakhstan context clashes with specific post-Soviet features, such as command-style management and institutional ignorance, which transform the borrowed patterns locally and prevent their proper implementation.

“Chaos” as used in this thesis should not be confused with that originating from chaos theory and theory of complexity, which, according to Fullan, “are the same things” (1999:4). Yet, if one looks at the basic principles underpinning chaos theory, one phenomenon known as “the edge of chaos” has a particular meaning. It refers to the state of the system, which is balanced between over-control and chaos or perhaps more aptly put, it is balanced between too much and too little order (Fullan 2003:22). There are “elements of structure” and these include “the guidance of moral purpose, a small number of key priorities and a focus on knowledge and data arising from shared problem-solving and assessment of results” (ibid.). The absence of some of these elements it could be said appears within Kazakhstan’s attempts at reform.

If one were to look further inside the concepts underpinning chaos and complexity theory, the phenomenon of chaos is understood within a particular type of system, specifically “the fundamental properties of non-linear feedback networks and particularly of complex adaptive networks” (Stacey 1996b cited in Fullan 1999:5). Other propositions of the theory are helpful to understand this:

- All organisations are webs of nonlinear feedback loops connected to other people and organisations (its environments) by webs of nonlinear feedback loops.
- Such nonlinear feedback systems are capable of operating in states of stable and unstable equilibrium, or in borders between these states, that is far-from-equilibrium, in bounded instability at the edge of chaos (Stacey 1996 cited in Fullan 1999:4).

From this, one can see the significance of feedback and interaction. Similarly, this is followed by Shyder who states that changes in a system should be guided by feedback: “Feedback loops serve as the driver for this evolution of the system.” (2013:11). In other words, chaos

here is, by default, addressed to the system, where interaction between the agents of the system is considered as “a key element of moving towards order” (Fullan 2003:22), and thus operates within the stances of professional management and is solved by professional managerial methods. How the education system under reformation is understood in the chaos theory can be seen from the following:

Local knowledge must be blended with systemic goals, and new findings must be disseminated as they appear, which requires a strong centre to guide and co-ordinate reform as it rises through the system but a free hand at the local level to innovate and experiment with implementation. As a final step, policy makers must embrace the idea that they cannot do it alone and that every stakeholder must be taken seriously and viewed as an integral and valued part of the process. Each step of the design/implementation should be viewed as a learning exercise rich in opportunities to gather information, revisit preconceived notions, build multi-level connections and modify implementation as needed. (Snyder 2013:28).

Such an approach to the reform process in Kazakhstan would be desirable but hardly achievable, at least at this stage. The post-Soviet Kazakhstan system does not show, so far, possibilities for such an approach. The value of feedback, and thus interaction between elements of the system is negligible as there is only a top-down communication flow. The professional values, for example, of education in our case, matter only as long as they meet political goals. Therefore, such chaos is not generated as the result of professional approach only, rather by the interference of the political power, and thus it is a different type of chaos. It is specific and can hardly be explained by chaos theory, at least until the post-Soviet societal system becomes a self-critical structure, where it can “spontaneously reorganize itself to operate at a critical point between order and randomness” (Açıkalın and Bölücek 2014:41).

So, if chaos theory can be used to explain the challenges in reforming Kazakhstan’s social environment, its applicability is superficial. Chaos theory, in the way it is applied to education management (Fullan 1993, 1999, 2003; Snyder 2013), itself originates within the framework of practical management and studies chaos within particular organisational structures (Fullan 1999:24). Yet, it does not explain the chaotic phenomenon, which goes beyond a field and is formed as a result of global societal forces and a field: “Chaos theory with specific logical sequences and certain peculiar equations can explain social and political phenomena as far as modelling them within structuralist explanations.” (Açıkalın and Bölücek 2014:46).

## 4. Diverse voices

### 4.1 Participants' responses to the reforms

Three main themes can be identified within the texts, which are included below as diverse voices. The first group of texts take a positive attitude to the reforms, and suggests that they are necessary. This represents the largest group of eight people. The second theme comes from fewer voices and is desire to return to the past system (two participants). The final theme is the need to retain the patterns of Soviet education within the current reform (six participants). The full range of texts can be found in Appendix 4.1.

The largest group of voices (texts 1-8) repeats the same pattern of discourses as seen in section 3 – progress and nostalgia. One can see that the thing that unites this group of people is their positive attitude to the reforms, which is expressed in slightly different ways. This theme was expressed many times and thus formed a consistent pattern across different participants. Overall they clearly show support for the necessity of the reforms by pointing to the objective circumstances and the changed reality, which compels Kazakhstan to join international organisations. It is notable that they do not show any views that are different from the official and cultural ones circulating in the society in which they live in. Some examples of this are:

Berik K.: The entry of Kazakhstan into the European educational space is the next step in integration into the international educational space. Its main aim is to increase the competitiveness of Kazakhstan's higher education system, to bring it up to international standards, and to improve its quality. [RU1, psychology, 20 years]

Serik K.: They say that we needed the transition to European standards mainly because we to be integrated into the international educational space, so our students and academics have better opportunities, to travel, to study at foreign universities, to participate in various exchange programs. [CU1, chemistry, 18 years]

Three people (texts 1, 5 and 8 in Appendix 4.1) in this group discuss their unwillingness to return to the past system, so confirming their support for the reforms. The restrictions of the past system are contrasted with the benefits which the education reforms can bring to society. As above, the participants appeal to an objective sense, and the same pattern of argument is used here: these are objective changes in the world that reflect the need for the country to take on openness, integration and mobility within the larger international space. The following are examples of these views:

Svetlana Z.: I wouldn't want the past system to come back. Why? Because the world's changing, and as I said at the beginning, we need to enter into this system, this space, to take our place. That is, in this situation, keeping the old system isn't possible. As far as I know, in the post-Soviet area, only Moscow University tries to preserve anything, but sooner or later they too will have to integrate into the system. [RU1, history, 17 years]

Michael I.: In general – no, I wouldn't support the return: openness, mobility, and integration: these are the most valuable things. [RU1, psychology, 22 years]

As one can see, these examples repeat the country's dominant political ideology about the need for reform in Kazakhstan. If you look through the official documents issued in Kazakhstan during recent decades, openness and integration with the larger world is the main idea put forward (Cummings 2003; Nazarbayev 1997). These academics' views are in alignment with the following statement from Nazarbayev, who is seen as the main driver of the education reforms in Kazakhstan:

We, the people of Kazakhstan, select our path to integration into the world community, based on the ongoing process of globalisation, not because this road is absolutely perfect, but because for us in Kazakhstan it has more positive aspects and benefits than negative aspects and deficiencies. (Nazarbayev 2003:235)

From this point of view, it is hard to predict to what degree the voices of the academics in this group are individual and how far they are just repeating the ideology circulating in the society. I would point here to the existence of particular thinking, which was formed under the official politics in Kazakhstan and exists as culturally-dominant knowledge.

In opposition to this group, there are few people (texts 9-10 Appendix 4.1) who take a negative and critical attitude to the reforms. These texts should be seen as an addition to those analysed in section 2.2 of this Chapter. The participants explain their negativity giving different details. One of them connects the reforms to a lack of stability and of a systematic approach, while another talks about the superior outcomes of the previous education system. It should be clear also that one could respond in a contradictory way, being supportive of the reforms in one reply and then speaking of wanting to restore the previous system when answering another question (Andrei I.). Two examples from this group of opinions are:

Maria A.: My attitude is negative. The need - only alleged entry into the international educational space. Yes, I would support a return, because then we had a system and stability. [CU2, philology, 30 years]

Andrei I.: Well, I would support a return of course. You know, I'll tell you that if in the Soviet Union, I remember, and I know it, someone defended and got a Kandidat thesis, I was hundred percent sure that he knew his field very well. [RU2, psychology, 15 years]

The third set of texts (texts 11-16 Appendix 4.1) is devoted to the theme of the 'good' aspects of the past system and the desire to retain them within the new system. Here the participants note different aspects of the past education system, such as, linearity, oral examinations, staffing policy, and students' responsible attitudes to education. Some examples from this group are:

Zarina M.: My attitude to the reforms is neutral. It's necessary to keep a linear system of education, that is, not the parallel study of disciplines, but their consistent study. The length of training would be increased by six weeks in each academic year; there would be more contact hours with the teacher; students in arrears would not transfer to the next year. [RU1, sport, 16 years]

Saule H.: What was good about that linear system of higher education was that all exams were oral. And the student had a quality education. He could think, reflect, and build thoughts logically. So, my personal opinion is that that system of higher education was one of the best. I myself went through it: primary education, secondary and tertiary. [RU1, physics, 32 years]

In both groups, participants point to the Soviet education as their best experience. While these accounts, on the one hand, reflect nostalgic sentiments about the past (Boym 2001, 2007), on the other, they are a reflection of how this is people's only experience, so it is constantly used as a point of comparison with the European system. Therefore, their past experience is the frame of reference through which the post-Soviet academics shape their understanding of the current education reforms.

However, their preference for Soviet education patterns, which one can see above, does not necessarily mean they have a negative attitude to the reforms or see them as unnecessary. The same academics who favour retaining aspects of the Soviet system are among those who support the reforms. This shows us a contradictory or confusing attitude to the reforms,

which forms a separate theme and corresponds to the analysis in section 3 of this Chapter. This particular theme was taken up by many academics but to different degree.

#### **4.2 Participants' views on the management of the reforms**

These texts are about a critical evaluation of management and the institutional ignorance of the agents of the reforms. Two themes can be distinguished here. The first is shaped by an overall critical evaluation of the reforms, including a sub-theme on the frequent changes in the reform process and its lack of consistency (texts 17, 18, 19, 21, 24 Appendix 4.1). A sub-group of these texts feature specific details (texts 20, 22 Appendix 4.1), including dissatisfaction with the implementation of the credit system, poor management, and teaching loads. Below are examples of this:

Serik G.: I think we won't have anything good if we continue to experiment. That is, by constantly changing either the entry requirements to universities, or constantly reforming the school system, or changing curricula. Now we've moved to modular training, and students suffer even more, because every time they have to adapt to new conditions. We seem to be trying to work towards the European system of education, but despite that, we still have a lot of our own system. [CU1, chemistry, 18 years]

Iliya R.: Well, it's well known for a long time that education is one of the most difficult systems to be subject to reforms and, apparently, because of this introducing change is going to be so difficult. There were a lot of misunderstandings about how things should go. [CU1, journalism, 20 years]

Saule H.: If we have credit technology working as it does in Europe, so then expanding new horizons and obtaining new knowledge is possible. There are lots of its advantages to the new education system. But again, because of the fact that it doesn't fully work, if it continues to work as it does now, being honest, things will collapse. The Ministry is taking some steps and making an effort, of course. But it's necessary to have a very high level of quality in all organisational issues to a huge degree: comprehensive, in depth, breadth, to improve the quality of education. [RU1, physics, 32 years]

The second theme is separate from the previous one and is found in the talk of just one of the participants. He shows an overall satisfaction with the process, avoiding any criticism. From my point of view, this unique response is explained by the fact that the participant wanted to give a positive image of the administration, as he was head of department:

Erbol N.: In our university, I'll tell you, everything is run according to the shared regulations of the Bologna Process, which the Ministry imposes on us: we all adhere to and do everything. For example a university commission's been set up now and it checks every department looking for negatives in the organisation of the Bologna Process. You see? That is, we don't stand still; every time we're trying to do something new. [RU1, economics, 21 year]

This account is separate from the other views and does not form a particular group or theme to discuss in depth. Nevertheless, the inconsistency of the reform process in Kazakhstan is one of the main themes which occurred throughout the interviews. As I mentioned already, 26 of the 38 participants highlighted this, indicating that it was an important and painful outcome of the reform process for them. As these texts are a reflection of the reality of the local reforms, this is also an attribute of any reform process where changes are introduced without learning from practice, preventing open-mindedness and receptiveness to different views (Fullan 2007; Orr and Scott 2008). Inconsistency, therefore, may characterise most reform processes.

## **Conclusion**

### **Analysis of CDA discourses**

In this chapter I have analysed the academics' accounts of general topics, including: their views of the reforms and their understanding of their necessity for Kazakhstan education (section 1); their responses to the current reforms and their relation to the Soviet education experience that people had in the past (section 2); and finally, the problematic issue of the implementation of the reforms and their governance (section 3).

The analysis shows three key discourses, through which people respond to the reforms in education. One is the discourse of **modernity and progress**, which is constructed around support for the pro-Western reforms in Kazakhstan education, and was expressed by the majority of participants. This discourse functions as a common cultural belief (van Dijk 1998b) based on the common sense understanding of Western progress and modernity, publicly available in Kazakhstan and beyond. The analysis shows that, in relation to this, academics do not confront this political message on modernity and progress as conceptions, rather they support it. Another discourse is on **nostalgia**, which was significant for less than a third of participants. It arose in conversations about an imagined restoration of the Soviet education system. However, nostalgia played out differently among academics as, while the most of



them would support a return to the Soviet education system, few desire a restoration of Soviet life more generally. I argued that the appearance of the nostalgia discourse is a result of the existing ideology from the Soviet past, which people still carry in their minds. Also, it often appeared as a reaction to today's chaotic reform process and a sense of that this is lowering education quality, so that people prefer Soviet educational patterns to Western ones. Finally, the discourse of **chaotic reform** and institutional ignorance is very important in understanding the academics' attitudes to the reforms. I showed that participants are highly negative about and critical of the reforms, highlighting different aspects of poor management and institutional ignorance. In this analysis, we can see a combination of the incompetence of the implementers in managing the reforms and the limits of top-down administration, which is a model of governance inherited from the Soviet past. In relation to this, I draw attention to the recontextualisation of borrowed patterns in the Kazakhstan context, which helps us to understand why borrowed international practices play out differently locally. As I explored earlier, this is a key concern for the theory of educational policy borrowing. Through the application of CDA to the study of post-Soviet education voices, I make my own contribution to show *how* and *why* international practices are re-interpreted locally.

### **Analysis of alternative voices**

Within the additional sections containing a range of opinions, I represent the variety of views voiced during the interviews. From those voices it can be seen that, while there are a number of opinions and a seeming diversity, they repeat particular thematic patterns, which were included and analysed in the main analytical sections. So, the diversity is conditional, which from my point of view can be explained by the simple fact that similar patterns of reform are being carried out throughout all HEIs in Kazakhstan, because they are all managed by the Ministry of Education. It is only in few Kazakhstan institutions, such as Nazarbayev University, Kazakh-British University and KIMEP, that a different picture could be expected because these elite HEIs are not governed by the Ministry of Education. Yet, they are operated by western management, have substantial international staff, and from the very beginning were set up as western-style universities. Therefore, they do not struggle with the reform process as do those post-Soviet HEIs, which are the focus of my research. As this is a centralised education system, governed by an autocratic approach to educational development and to its staff, the range of responses by participants on education policy is very limited. On the contrary, there are differences between the capital and regional HEIs in other issues, such as, their financing, student recruitment, and conducting research. Yet,

these issues are not the focus of this study, because they do not relate directly to the reform process.

Here I have analysed how people are responding to the introduction of the current reforms of Kazakhstan education at a general level. Now I turn to the specific topics involving changes to academic practice that were discussed. In the next empirical chapter, I study the participants' responses to the transformations in teaching, learning and student assessment and the challenges that arose through these.

## **Chapter VI. Chaos, progress and nostalgia in academics' responses to the reform of teaching and assessment**

In the previous chapter I analysed the academics' overarching views on the changes and challenges in the reform process. This included their general attitudes to the reforms, their understanding of the reforms' necessity for Kazakhstan and how today's Western reforms are situated in their outlook in relation to their past Soviet experience and their pro-Western present. I identified three key discourses – nostalgia and loss, progress and modernity, and chaotic reform – through which the participants respond to these issues. I also stated that the discourse of chaotic reform is multi-faceted, as it is generated by various aspects of the post-Soviet social environment. The key factors are the lack of the knowledge and skills necessary to implement change and the dominant authoritative top-down method of administration which impedes the process. Yet, it is also a result of mixing Soviet and Western education patterns which, in practice, created partial and 'half-baked' reforms in Kazakhstan. In this chapter, I further develop these aspects of the discourse of chaotic reform.

I argue that a minimum prerequisite for the operation of the Bologna Process is the credit system, without which the Bologna Process cannot operate. As I mentioned earlier (Chapter II), the credit system has been set up and employed in European HEIs since the 1980s, while the post-Soviet states introduced this technology twenty years later. They then became 'late adopters' as they were in relation to outcome-based education (OBE) within the school reforms (Steiner-Khamsi 2006). Thus, the countries of the Second World faced a more intensive, multi-layered and complex reform process, as their adoption of the credit system, which came to replace the linear one, happened simultaneous with their adoption of the Bologna Process package. In Chapter II I examined the differences between the two, linear and credit, systems and the difficulties involved in the transition from one to another, which are not easy to overcome.

Remarkably, many of the challenges that local staff face in the adoption of a credit system are similar to those challenges that UK academics experienced during the implementation of the credit framework in UK HEIs, which was studied by Trowler (1998a, 1998b). Despite the twenty year gap, the academics' responses in both countries are more critical than positive, and the conclusions made by Trowler are similar to mine. In particular his main conclusion is that, because of the excessively-managerialist approach, the outcomes of the reforms were

not as they were expected or intended to be, and that such an approach results in a 'forgetfulness' of education realities by the policy makers. Surely in the case of Kazakhstan, and I would say in the wider post-Soviet area, we do not find educational managerialism in the Western style as in Trowler's study. On the contrary, I argue throughout the research for the historical absence of this in Kazakhstan and across post-Soviet education, where the command-style management from the Soviet system dominates. While these are both top-down approaches, I would argue that the difference is that Western managerialism is a professional management, and is not political, whereas Soviet and post-Soviet management is a form of political governance which is aimed primarily at achieving political and not professional goals. Nevertheless, in both countries I see the similarity being that educational realities and academics remain a peripheral concern of policy makers: the academics have struggled less with the educational issues per se, and more with the necessity to meet the imposed requirements. As I state throughout this thesis, the main leitmotif in the participants' views of the reforms in Kazakhstan is the clash between the educational values of the academics and the political priorities of those in power.

The introduction of a credit system caused changes in all educational fields, including in the education process itself, leading to modularisation, curriculum change, the recalculation of students' loads and the reorganisation of academic labour. In this chapter I include those issues, which generated the most discussions among the participants. The sections below are devoted to changes in: the organisation of the education process, academic loads, and learning and assessment modes. In **the first section**, I study the participants' accounts of the adoption of a credit system and challenges with the credit transfer. In **the second section**, I explore the changes made to staff labour, following with the introduction of new class-hours. In **the final section**, I analyse the participants' attitudes to the introduction of student-oriented learning and of a written testing system.

I argue here that the discourse of chaotic reform is the key one. It is more explicit here than in the last chapter because I am focused on specific issues. I also argue that the specific post-Soviet context impacts on the re-contextualisation of these international patterns in the Kazakhstan environment. In this chapter I show how the local context influences policy implementation and further, how the post-Soviet mentality and ideological patterns play out in academics' responses to the changes, and in particular in how the chaotic reform discourse is articulated in relation to the discourses of progress and nostalgia.

### ***Personal reflection***

As it can be seen from the analysis in this chapter, the similarity in the participants' views on the challenges of reformation does not differ between the academics in all four organisations, where the data were collected. In fact the major differences between the regional and capital Universities, as I found it, were not about the reform process, but related to some external factors, not directly attributed to the focus of this study. For example, regional Universities might be different from the capital ones with more bureaucratic formalities and degree of openness, which I explained earlier (Chapter III, section 2). I would refer this to the existing psychological differences that people may have in capitals and regions as some general objective factor, meaning that in regions people may be more conservative and close-minded. Another differential factor relates to the facilities for staff, such as English classes provided for them, which was found in one of four participating Universities and is seen as a (positive) local incentive. It is also the differentiation in state funding between the participating Universities, where two capital ones, included in the study, are of National status and two regional ones are not. This factor indirectly could influence the participants' responses. Being less financed by the state, the regional HEIs have limited, compared to the capital ones, support for research activity, following with fewer laboratories and different facilities necessary to conduct research. Similarly, as it could be observed from two regional HEIs, there the academics talked less about research activity, and more about teaching. However, these factors were not very critical to this study, as they do not make much difference to the issue of implementation of the new standards, studied here.

Instead, what I found noteworthy during interviewing is the explicit homogeneity in the participants' views, which features them as a particular group of professionals, despite of their different locations. It is what van Dijk (2000a) calls "institutional ideologies" as ones relating to a particular group of people seeing in CDA as a social group. The exhaustion and critics against the reformation process was the overall sentiment among the participants. To my view this implicitly works for the fact that the entire Kazakhstan education system is of a high degree of centrality and centralised governance, which is carrying out the reforms equally everywhere.

As I stated already my feeling was that the local academics in all participating HEIs had some incomplete, incorrect information or illusions about the Western education system, which were constantly present in their response. Some examples of these are their imagination about independent learning as a somehow total skill among Western students or that the Western system is so individually-oriented, that it can meet any student's claim, such as setting classes for one student if a full group is not formed. Similar references were present in the discussion of multiple choice question tests, which, in the academics' views, do not exist elsewhere and

are fabricated by the Kazakh Ministry of Education. On the other hand, it can be argued that the Ministry has moved beyond the requirements of the Bologna Process. For example, in some local HEIs and some participants' interviews, the administration introduced the eight-hour working day for the staff, as it takes place in Western HEIs. Similarly, the introduction of additional contact hours for the students with members of staff (ISWT) was criticised as useless and ineffective. I concluded that the reformation process in Kazakhstan is not only being re-contextualised according to local needs, but often misinterpreted, possibly unconsciously, by those in authority.

## **1. Credit versus linear systems**

The transformation of post-Soviet Kazakhstan education under European standards has primarily meant the re-organisation of the education process and the introduction of a credit system. This system was intended to replace the linear system used within Soviet education and its introduction led to major changes in education practice. In this section I analyse the academics' accounts of the implementation of the credit system in Kazakhstan HE focusing on two main topics: the implementation of the new system itself (subsection 1.1) and the difficulties of credit transfer (subsection 1.2).

### ***1.1. Participants' views on the implementation of a credit system***

The implementation of the credit system was discussed by 12 of the 38 participants. Its defining theme is the poor implementation of the credit system, and its impact on local actors. Here one finds an instance of the chaotic reform discourse, earlier identified in participants' accounts of the management of the reforms (Chapter V, section 3). The chaotic reform discourse dominated discussions of credit versus linear systems, combining three elements: a. superficial and partial implementation has created a messy situation; b. Kazakhstan needs to transfer fully to a credit system; c. there is a negative attitude to the credit system.

Svetlana Z: The credit system of education is a credit system in name only (a.) because on closer comparison to the European credit system – not in form, I mean, and not by the number of credits, or by the list of disciplines and so on, but by how it operates (a.) - the mechanisms within the system are completely different. We have a shell, which though transformed and approaching the European system, has inner content that's old and left over from the linear system. (a.) We still keep planning the process and organising training for a group-stream.<sup>xxviii</sup> From my point of view, here is the conflict in essence. It prevents us from fully implementing the European experience in the form that we'd like to have. (b.) [RU1, history, 17 years]

Elena H.: We don't get a proper European or proper American [system]; we get a model of some Kazakh credit system, which is not exactly a credit one, but it's not a linear one either. (a.) It's something between the two, which has lost the quality of the Soviet system and hasn't got the benefits of the new system yet, and it has all of these shortcomings. (a.) And if we don't transfer quickly to the new system, education will collapse (a.). There is no way back, but why stand in the middle? (b.) ... It's very hard [...]. Why shift all blame onto us, poor teachers? Not everything depends on the teacher; not everything. We must move quickly to the normal credit system in the form it should be, (b.) but not the one which we have now. (a.) [CU2, biology, 24 years]

Saule H.: Well, the credit system is implemented today in Kazakhstan formally. In fact, formally. (a.) It's my opinion, it is necessary to completely switch to credit technology. (b.) To do this, good funding is needed. At the moment, it is still half-baked. (a.) And because of this there is a negative attitude. (c.) [RU1, physics, 32 years]

In these extracts the theme of the contradiction between the two different systems is dominated by the discourse that the credit system is poorly implemented. In this way, the participants imply their resistance to those within the education authorities that govern the reforms. All participants similarly generalise from their current situation, with the idea behind this presumably being that, given the persistent, not-yet-overcome, mechanisms of the Soviet education system, the shift to a fully European system is difficult. The conflict then is between the academics and those in power, who are by implication the Ministry of Education. I would point here to the differences between the two systems, which I explained in Chapter II, and which perhaps make a full transition to a credit system either impossible or something that cannot be performed by the authority.

They construct their views around the norms and values of how the process should be organised and thus represent themselves as professionals, and as caring about the education system and its future. They point to a possible collapse, if the reforms are not properly implemented: "and if we don't transfer quickly to the new system, education will collapse" (Elena H.). Also, they construct their talk around that things does not work, distinguishing what is done well and badly. Examples of this are in these similar wordings of the same idea: "in the form it should be" (Svetlana Z.) and "in the form that we'd like to have" (Elena H.). This has an analogy in the analysis of the speech of politicians, in which critics' opposition is "based on a professional ideology organizing attitudes about what can and should (not) be done in" politics (van Dijk 2002: 31). That is, the opposition is accused of being unprofessional (ibid.). Similarly

the Kazakhstan academics position themselves as standing for a professional, effective and well-organised education process, in contrast to those who cannot govern the process well and thus are either unprofessional or indecisive, paralleling my earlier analysis (Chapter V, section 3). The opposition between “we” and “they” is an opposition between two different approaches to education and two sets of ideological beliefs. Therefore, a conflict between political and educational priorities is evident.

Yet, as in other cases, they avoid directly naming their opponents, while implying them through their critical evaluation of the situation. The negative representation of the authority is clear in the criticisms of its approach to the reforms. It is blamed for creating chaos in the reform process through a superficial approach to the changes, where features of the Soviet system are not yet eliminated and thus implementation is “half-baked” and just “a shell”. Similarly this can be attributed to the authority’s poor strategy, focusing on formal achievements rather than looking deeper into the situation.

This indirect blaming of the authority is also apparent in the academics’ self-representation as victims of the reforms: “It’s very hard [...]. Why shift all blame onto us, poor teachers? Not everything depends on the teacher; not everything” (Elena H.). In other words they seem themselves as those “who suffer most from dominance and inequality” (van Dijk 1993: 252). This again repeats the pattern analysed earlier in Chapter V, section 3, where the academics are under the constraint of needing to obey the governing authority, while this authority itself lacks the knowledge necessary to implement the credit system.

In this section I have pointed to the use of the same chaotic reform discourse that I identified earlier in Chapter V, section 3. The chaos here is shaped by the clash between two different approaches to the reforms. Overall there is no Soviet/West or past/present opposition; instead the opposition is between academics and those in power, who adhere to different goals and values in the reform process, resulting in chaos. Yet, there are also aspects of the discourse of progress, as participants stress the need to move forward towards the full implementation of the credit system and not to stay between the two systems. This possibly is not said because of a valuing of progress and modernity as such, but rather for the good of the education system, which is damaged by partial implementation. Still the need to move forward is expressed clearly here and can be attributed to the discourse of modernity and progress. My examination of the chaotic reform discourse continues in the discussion of credit transfer in the next subsection.



## **1.2. Participants' views on credit transfer**

Talk about the difficulties in credit transfer is also dominated by the chaotic reform discourse. At the core of the implementation of the credit system is the adjustment of credits between disciplines, with re-counting and re-calculating of credits needed for students' academic mobility. Kazakhstan academics show that, while in few cases credit transfer works smoothly, in many others it is barely achievable. Several key points characterise this discourse here: a. disciplines do not match across HEIs and because of this credits often cannot be recounted; b. students have to cover two training programmes; c. credit transfer does not work properly.

Tatyana L.: It seems they get a choice [of disciplines], but if a student misses a module, he [sic] then has to study something very similar, theoretically, and to bring it back here (a.). If he doesn't bring it back, he needs to pass a different module here. (b.) The system isn't working yet. It works badly. (c.) That is, I mean, yes, it's all counted in credits, but as for the content of modules. (a.) ... The problem is in the very large difference between the modules (a.). That is what we teach here and what's taught elsewhere doesn't usually coincide. (a.) [CU2, economics, 14 year]

Mark G.: But within our universities there's even a problem to transfer from, say, from our university to another (a./c.) ... Students find a huge difference, (b.) and they have to close the gap. (b.) They eventually find that they have no time to study their current courses. It really becomes a big problem for students. (c.) Therefore, to my mind today in Kazakhstan it's not working. (c.) [RU1, economics, 18 years]

Svetlana Z.: Our students, who go for academic mobility in other universities in Kazakhstan, or, for example, go abroad – they have a course in that university and at the same time they have to take a programme here. (b.) So, they have to pass double the amount of credits. (a.) And this shouldn't happen. (c.) ... Apparently they should have credit transfer, but they just have double – they study here and there. (c.) ... It's not in our power to solve this, because in theory it should be worked out by the Ministry of Education and Science. (c.) That is, our general State Standards must be brought into accordance with the European system, and this should be started in schools, then further aligning the State Standards for each speciality. (a.) [RU1, history, 17 years]

Here the discussion is built around two issues. On the surface their talk focuses on the difficulties in transferring Kazakhstan credits within the European system because of

differences in modules between the two systems. Yet, behind this, there is opposition not to the credit system as such, but to the education authority in the form of the Ministry of Education, which ineffectively administers the transfer of credit. The latter issue shapes the main conflict between the two sides, where “we”, the academics, suffer from “them”, the education power, and their policies. As can be understood from these extracts above, the process of credit transfer for disciplines is not worked out at the level of the State Standards, which by default are set by the Ministry of Education. Thus, in the view of these academics, the education authority is not fulfilling its responsibility; instead, the entire burden of the reform lies with academics.

Here the academics again align themselves with a professional identity. The indicators are the vocabulary used, such as credit transfer, State Standards, theoretically and modules, and the construction of their talk around the norms and values of how things should happen and what is going badly.

Their talk of caring for their students is an important point to address. This contains the message that not only do academics suffer from the actions of those in power, but students do as well, for instead of having credit transfer, they “have double - they study here and there” (Svetlana Z.). So, the academics represent themselves as those who care about the students unlike the authorities. It can be presupposed then that their professional norms include caring about the system and the people in it. Yet, it also indicates the victimisation of staff members and students, who are both dominated by “them”. Hence, this draws attention to social inequality and power abuse, where the speakers “are assigned a more passive role: they are victims of manipulation” (van Dijk 2006b: 361). Overall, through all these patterns, academics gain a positive self-representation through talk about their own victimisation (Sedlak 2000). Their ideological belief can be summarised as “we are concerned about education and our students, but nothing will change”, through which they present themselves as defenders of the institution of education. As van Dijk states: “One of the many implications of the institutional or organizational affiliation of communicative events is precisely the fact that such participants take part as representatives of the institution, and hence often carry the institutional ideologies, if any, into the ongoing context” (2000a: 224).

Against this positive self-representation, their negative representation of authority sheds light on their view of “others”. On the opposite side there are wrongdoers, who are not part of “us”. Here one can see one of the rare cases throughout the interviews where the Ministry of Education and Science is named directly: “It’s not in our power to solve this, because in theory it should be worked out by the Ministry of Education and Science” (Svetlana Z.). The

unwillingness of the Ministry to resolve the issue is emphasised by this remark; its ineffectiveness is related not only to external mobility, but to mobility within Kazakhstan's HEIs (Mark G.). "They" are represented as people who do not want to or can not resolve the problem; and hence they are represented as acting badly and unprofessionally. The problem is the authorities who do not care for education and the people involved. While, it may be assumed that education authorities engage only at the initial stage of borrowing international policies, this ignores the subsequent adaptation needed to implement the reforms, through which the academics struggle by themselves. The underlying discourse behind these accounts is that of chaotic reform and poor management, the same one that I identified earlier (Chapter V, section 3; Chapter VI, subsection 1.1).

Here I would identify several aspects of this chaos which are shaped by global and local factors, where the latter derive from the post-Soviet context. At the global level there is indeed a problem regarding differences between curricula, modules, courses and credits, which all European HEIs face (Karran 2004; Karseth 2006; Schriewer 2009). Similar to these Kazakhstan academics, Western scholars critically identify the existence of gaps between programme content across the various national systems. Even in cases where courses at two different universities have identical subject content, a mismatch is still created through different assessment modes and grading procedures, which also vary across the national systems (Karran 2004). There is also a recognition that the calculation of ECTS credits "can clearly create unfair anomalies as the course content will vary over time, as knowledge within the particular subject area develops, while changes in staff turnover may mean that the course is both delivered and assessed differently, from one year to the next" (Karran 2004: 5). Other differences relate to the number of hours allocated to credits across the EU Universities, and for UK HEIs the gap between their programmes and those in other countries is greatest. For example, in relation to MA programmes, it is stated: "At the moment, for Masters, Bologna measures workload and numbers of hours. That is antithetical to the UK Masters, which is based on the quality of the outcome and the experience" (House of Lords 2012: 15). In Kazakhstan's case, credit transfer even within the country is becoming impossible due to the existing differences in disciplinary content across the country's HEIs. In a properly regulated environment this should not be a case, while it remains unresolved by the Ministry.

So, one can see how in the local post-Soviet Kazakhstan context the situation is complicated by the attitude of the educational authority to education practice. As I have shown, the academics are predominantly highly critical of the Ministry for ignoring the needs of education in favour of pursuing its own goals by any means necessary. The Kazakhstan reforms explicitly demonstrate how important political achievements and priorities are, while their

implementation is often viewed as “an a-political administrative activity” (Hupe and Hill 2016). In those cases where there is a combination of several factors, such as an overall lack of skills for effective management, a lack of deep knowledge of the borrowed Western practices, and a disregard for those who are lower down the social hierarchy, the reform process takes on an even more complicated character. While this creates chaos within the reforms, it also describes the features of the post-Soviet context, which are a reflection of inherited experiences from the past, and which are inevitably part of Kazakhstan’s education system. The mixing of contextual patterns remaining from the past system with policy changes, as we see in this section and in the last chapter, often generates a particular combination of discourses. I continue to explore this combination in looking at academics’ responses to the changes made in the organisation of their labour.

## **2. Reforming academic labour**

The introduction of the credit system brought about a re-organisation of the academic staff’s work process and their workloads. In general, participants were very critical of the overall increase in paperwork and while there were several salary increases, this can hardly compensate for increased workloads and the needs to apply greater effort and labour. Remarkably, again, there are similarities with the responses of UK academic staff to the introduction of the credit framework twenty years ago. As Trowler states: “At its simplest level academics responded to the administrative fallout of the credit framework by adopting coping strategies not envisaged by managers. Administrative fallout refers to the increased load on academics which resulted directly or indirectly from the credit framework: increased amounts of paperwork, numbers of assessment boards and more advice and support for students, for example” (Trowler 1998b: 104). However, as I argue below, these strategies are also shaped by the post-Soviet context.

The critical responses of Kazakhstan academics often included direct comparisons to Soviet practices, some of which were seen as preferable to the corresponding Western practices. However, this is complicated by poor management of the changes been carried out. The re-organisation of the work process discussed in the interviews was mainly linked to the recalculation of academics’ working hours and the introduction of extra contact hours, themes that many participants could not avoid. This section consists of two subsections organised according to these two themes. I argue that in both cases the overall discourse of chaotic reform is again the dominant one, but that its occurrence in combination with the discourses of nostalgia and modernity is important.

## **2.1. Participants' accounts of changes in their teaching loads**

With the move to the credit system, teaching loads changed dramatically. Of 38 participants, 31 touched on this topic. There are several key points to identify in their talk: a. teaching loads are heavy; b. teaching loads of European academics are lower; c. academic staff are overloaded. Some examples of typical accounts are:

Mark G.: If you compare our labour costs and wages, annually our teaching load increases. (a.) When credit hours were introduced, I read that the staff load must be 650 hours. (b.) Today we have 1000 hours. (a.) This includes direct teaching hours only, and doesn't include IWST [independent work of students under a teacher's guidance]. This is only lectures and practicals. Indeed, judge for yourself. The result is that my salary has not increased. It went up numerically, but if you measure it in terms of the unit cost of labour, it's decreased (c.) [RU1, economics, 18 years]

Saule H.: Teaching loads have increased. (a.) This is far from European. (b.) There's a Professor in the classroom spends 8-9 hours a week, a student – 10-12 hours per week. (a.) We have for staff 36 hours a week, for a student – 40 hours per week. (a.) Well, compare them, you can see from these figures. So, what self-study is possible? What can be the attitude to research? Academics are overloaded and the same for students. (c.) [RU1, physics, 32 years]

Serik G.: It's disadvantageous to the university to severely reduce teaching loads, because salaries need to be good. It turns out that the cost of one hour must then be increased (a.) Reducing teaching loads significantly will lead to a reduction in staff at the university. It's bad [...]. Reducing teaching loads means that we can't supply 24 credits a year as we do now. (a.) Our rate is 24 credits per year, so we must teach students. (a.) ... To decrease teaching loads, they need to give us a load of 15 credits per year. (b.) Yet, the university isn't able to do this. [CU1, chemistry, 18 years]

This talk is constructed around the issue that academics are facing increased workloads as a result of the reforms. As can be seen, while changes were made, their loads have not been allocated through appropriate implementation of the credit system, and their overall workload has increased.

The academics' self-representation is built on showing their position is worsening not only in comparison to their European colleagues, but also in comparison to their position before the

reforms. A combination of two discourses can be identified in their talk here: nostalgia and loss, and progress and modernity. Both the Soviet and the Western systems become desirable in today's context of chaos and overload. As for discourse of nostalgia, the remark of another participant is helpful:

Svetlana Z.: In the linear system I had a maximum of 4 disciplines, now I'm to have a full rate, to have from 10 to 16 disciplines a year. That is I'll have from 4 to 8 hours of classroom hours a day, and that's only my main department; i.e. I have classes in 2-4 disciplines a day, every day. [RU1, history, 17 years]

The discourse of progress and modernity is associated with the above comparison with the European approach as a better sample: "It is far from European. There a Professor in the classroom spends 8-9 hours a week, a student - 10-12 hours per week" (Saule H.). Representing their own side, academics speak of themselves as being victims of the reforms, which have made their position even worse. Their belief can be captured by the message "we are unhappy but can change nothing". Their talk overall is coloured by unhappy and degraded feelings.

They do not make any direct criticisms of the authority, rather they assert that the problems are due to the social context. For example, Serik G. explains the situation in which any reduction in teaching hours would lead to a reduction in their salaries. So the position of academics is one of powerlessness and the education power is not the only one held responsible for this. The remark that "the university isn't able to do this" (Serik G.) also implies the role of a higher education power, because the HEI administrators are only the executors of the Ministry's instructions.

Thus the opposing side is not identified with particular "others". Their criticism is likely directed both at the local education authority and the established system as such. Here one can see the construction of contrasts between the two systems as an objective reality, and thus as unavoidable. Their consent to the situation is understood as being because it is the only way that they can gain a more-or-less appropriate salary, while still not one that matches their commitment.

At the first sight, their talk of limitations on their salaries can be seen as an instance of a common social belief, that those who are dominated by a powerful elite are less commonly "given wanted social resources, such as money, salary, a job, a house and other material resources" (van Dijk 1997: 18). But it is likely a combination of this ideology with the

professional one discussed above. The professional ideology, and thus the transmitting of a professional identity, appears in talk constructed around the limited resources to which post-Soviet education and its staff have access.

Indeed traditionally in post-Soviet societies, teachers and academics form a low-paid social group, similar to medical professionals and others who are funded from state budgets. It is also well known that while the government regularly increases their salaries, economic inflation and constant increases in prices, mean these raises make little difference to them. Additionally, as can be seen from the examples of HEI staff, under the reforms, their workloads have increased even more. So, we see here that academics commonly represent their own side as having scarce resources, in the same way as in the talk about the need to pay for the international publications that I analyse in Chapter VII, section 2.2.

Here it is evident again, as in the introduction of a credit system in the preceding section, that the current situation with teaching workloads in Kazakhstan HEIs is the result of a clash of two systems. On the one hand, there is the need to have a particular number of work hours to earn an appropriate salary and the measurement of this by teaching hours as in the Soviet system. On the other hand, the authority is attempting to apply the principles of the credit system, where labour is counted through credit units. The authority is unable to resolve this problem. At a deeper level this signals chaos in reforms, with a mixture of two systems' norms and inefficient management by those in power. The same discourse of chaotic reform was also found in those cases where participants discussed the implementation of the credit system earlier in section 1.

In fact what the academics reveal in relation to this issue is the contextual model of the reality in which they work. The shift to the credit system meant a change in measuring staff workload, from classroom hours to credit units. Chaotic reform then becomes understandable if we look at the context of how things were organised in the previous system and why it clashes with today's reality. It should be noted that Soviet academics' salaries were dependent on their classroom teaching hours, without taking into account their overall workload, which also included administration, preparation for lectures, seminars, paperwork and research activity. In short, there were classroom and beyond-classroom loads with the latter being unpaid. Therefore, academics sought to obtain higher classroom loads because it meant more money. This observation of Russian and Ukrainian universities is relevant to the situation in Kazakhstan HEIs:

However, my impression is that the survival of this system is also related to the particular tradition that lecturers are paid, above all, according to the amount of time spent in class per week. Lecturers thus have an incentive to secure for themselves as many weekly teaching hours as possible. There even seems to be a kind of contest among academic staff members for the assignment of in-class teaching – something quite difficult to imagine among professors at many Western universities. (Umland 2005: 225)

The practice of payment for teaching hours only, was likely shaped by the weak research tradition in Soviet and post-Soviet HEIs. So teaching was the only measure of people's labour and their only route to earning. As can be understood from the literature (Abdygapparova et al. 2004), under the reforms a move was made to count academics' workloads in credit units, and a fixed number and salary were allocated for each position, while the content of each credit unit is still predominantly made up of teaching hours. In other words, a credit unit turns out to be a number of teaching hours and the participants' remarks then becomes understandable: "Reducing teaching loads means that we can't supply 24 credits a year as we do now. Our rate is 24 credits per year, so we must teach students" (Serik G.).

This allows me to conclude that changes were made in form rather than in content, where the legacy of the Soviet past, at this stage, is seen as unavoidable. On the one hand, this approach does little to promote research activity in HEIs, which has been expected of them since the dismantling of the Akademia Nauk (Chapter II, subsection 2.2). In practice, the attitude to research activity today is not very different from that in the Soviet past as "research has been hamstrung by a requirement for academics to have 800 to 900 hours of contact time a year with students" (Matthews 2012). So, today's drive to strengthen research activity in Kazakhstan HEIs to bring them into line with the West, comes into conflict with established Soviet patterns, and the implementation of new ways of measuring academics' labour remain elusive. In relation to academic work, a key example of the local re-interpretation of borrowed practices is the introduction of additional contact hours which I examine next.

## ***2.2. Participants' accounts of the introduction of new contact hours***

With the introduction of the student-centred mode of learning (section 3.1), contact hours were decreased and independent learning hours increased. Independent work of students (IWS), and consultative contact hours, namely independent work of students under a teacher's guidance (IWST), were introduced. So, in the new system the overall weekly workload of students amounted to an average of 48 hours, of which 16 hours are taught classes and 32



hours are independent work, including 8-16 hours of IWST (Abdygapparova et al. 2004: 38). At the time such innovations were aimed at giving greater freedom and increasing the students' independence within the educational process, although in practice their effectiveness is questioned by members of staff. The IWST are obligatory hours for staff in almost all HEIs across the country. In only one of the four universities where I conducted interviews had IWST been cancelled, while in the others it is still obligatory.

The introduction of these additional hours had a strong impact on the participants' perceptions of the reforms as they related to European standards. Overall 28 of 38 interviewees shared their views on this issue. I identified the following key points within these: a. students largely ignore IWST hours; b. members of staff are strictly obliged to be in the classroom; c. IWST hours are not paid; d. IWST is a waste of time for members of staff. For example:

Zoya G.: These are our mandatory classroom hours and extracurricular, yes, the IWST, which [they] don't pay us for. (c.) But we have an unwritten schedule and the first vice-rector can personally come and check if I'm in the classroom, (b.) even if there are no students. (a.) But it's mandatory for all of our staff, regardless of whether students come to your consultations or not ... You must be in the auditorium in your scheduled time. (b.) ... "[We] don't need to teach you what to do in this time: sit and write UMKD"<sup>xxix</sup>, they say ... And now it turns out that we actually sit and do this load twice, that is, we spend even more hours ... And why are we a bit sceptical about the credit system? Because it has such distortions here and it seems [to lead] away from credit technology. Where's space for creativity? (d.) ... Then I say: "why do we need this credit technology, who invented it". [RU2, psychology, 20 years]

Serik G.: Basically, this IWST is not paid to us. (c.) That is, it's in our scheduled time, and a teacher must sit in the auditorium at this time; (b.) if a student has questions on a subject, he comes and asks. It's not included in a load. (c.) So I'd remove this IWST. (d.) [CU1, chemistry, 18 years]

Galiya T.: This IWST ... I do think it isn't normal for us, because students don't come to it. (a.) They come only to pass and receive their marks. Just for this. But to come, to say that I don't understand this, to go to know, to talk to a teacher (a.) – this isn't our students. So, the classroom work's reduced due to the fact that independent work with the teacher is increased. That is, I should theoretically work with each student

individually. And where can I find this time? I have no such time. [CU1, biology, 18 years]

In these examples critical evaluations of the introduction of IWST prevail. It is difficult to say exactly whether these additional hours are part of the credit system or a local invention. I tend to see IWST as a local creation, which was designed in Kazakhstan education as guided time for students to help them adapt to independent study. Yet, these hours are not counted in credit units and thus are not paid. Also, as the participants say, the intervention does not, in fact, work as students mainly ignore it.

The opposition of academics to the educational authority is again explicit here, being expressed through the pronouns “we” versus “they”. The application of this common strategy here sets up a positive self-representation and a negative other-representation. (van Dijk 2006a). Here the positive self-representation is achieved through representing themselves as the victims of the authority’s ineffective actions, on one side, and being under its authoritative control, on the other. Mentioning the constraints from these two positionings, the interviewees show themselves as having no choice other than to submit to the rules of the administration. Through this they identify the abusive power of the authority. The abusive character of this power is made more explicit as these hours are not paid.

Consequently, the other side, “they”, is represented in a negative light, as authoritative, insistent and ineffective in managing the introduction of such initiatives. The remark about a vice-rector who can personally come and check staff attendance (Zoya G.) is remarkable as it signals the presence of Soviet models of governance and control in contemporary HEIs. It is assumed that those in power are concerned more with maintaining their power and domination, than with caring about education. This can be viewed as a repetition of a Soviet pattern, where the need for social change was always preceded by the primary concern of the political elites to preserve their power (Rakowska-Harmstone 1985).

I would point to the construction of professional identity by the participants. They build their talk around specific institutional terms – such as ISWT, UMKD, auditorium, classroom work, and independent learning – and the conceptions of time and rationality. The criticisms that the administration’s policy resulted in time wasting and that there is an ignorance of ISWT among students create an assumption that academics’ professional norms include efficient use of work time and concerns about student attendance. Similarly, the participants position themselves as rationally oriented and resistant to ineffective approaches.

Here the beliefs about poor management and irrationality turn out to be another side of the chaotic reform discourse. As in the other cases analysed, chaotic reform in Kazakhstan derives from the preservation of old management patterns, resulting in partial reform. Similarly to my analysis of the implementation of the credit system (section 1) and of the changes to academics' workloads (subsection 2.1), here one finds the application of an old-fashioned approach to academics' salaries. I do not know why IWST hours are unpaid, but, I would suppose that the educational authorities are continuing the wage regime from the Soviet system, where hours spent outside the teaching hours, on administration and preparation, among other things, were unpaid.

Building on the previous subsection, here is further evidence for the significance of the local context for policy re-contextualisation. While there is an overall drive for modernisation and change, the actual reforms, in fact, repeat the same pattern of top-down management carried over from the past. The continuation of authoritative governance is evidence of the dominance of political rather than educational goals in the reforms and this pattern too is taken from the past. It also indicates the inevitability of this contextual pattern in the post-Soviet system, where the properties of the past affect present reforms and re-contextualise borrowed practices.

### **3. New modes of teaching and assessment**

The changes to teaching and student assessment made in Kazakhstan are partly through the Bologna Process. So, the Berlin Communiqué (2003) set out the pedagogical re-orientation of teaching and learning principles within the EHEA, and the introduction of new modes, such as "outcome-orientation" and "student-centred learning" (Reichert and Tauch 2005: 12). Similarly the adoption of student-centred learning in Kazakhstan was part of the reforms undertaken through the Bologna package. In contrast, the testing system, while an established part of Western education before the creation of the EHEA, was new to local practice. In post-Soviet education systems, multiple choice and other written testing, like the credit system, was adopted simultaneously with reform under the Bologna Process. The need to transform the whole system in line with Western standards, on the one hand, complicated the reform process in the post-Soviet education area, while on the other, it suggested a more extensive reform process.

In this section the participants' accounts of the introduction of a student-oriented mode and a testing system are analysed in two corresponding subsections. There were multiple aspects in their discussion of the testing system, three of which I chose to include into analysis.

Therefore, subsection 3.2 consists of three parts, focused on: the anti-corruption agenda behind the borrowing of the testing system in Kazakhstan, its application in different disciplines, and its use as a tool for student assessment. I argue here that, while the participants consider the implementation of testing to be a means for fighting against corruption, it is further evidence of the politically-driven goals of the reforms, where educational goals are undervalued. The professionals' resistance to such politics is found in their criticism of the general application of testing in all disciplines and especially in the humanities. As in the previous analysis, the central discourse is that of chaotic reform with nostalgic sentiments evident in their desire for more holistic and authentic forms of assessment, particularly in the humanities, and for familiar ways of teaching. We can see also progress and modernity through their opposition to corruption and their acknowledgement of improvement through some changes, such as independent student learning. I argue that both discourses, nostalgia and progressiveness, appear as reactions against the chaotic reform process, within which education quality, the key concern of the academics, becomes threatened.

### ***3.1. Participants' views on students' independent work***

The move to student-centred learning caused a dramatic shift in pedagogical processes, because for decades the role of learners was dependent and passive (Kingston and Forland 2008): they were simply the receivers of information provided by a teacher. Kazakhstan academics find this shift very challenging as can be seen from the extracts below. The following key points can be distinguished in the academics' accounts: a. Western students are independent; b. local students are used to passive learning; c. the changes should start in schools; d. this mode does not work in Kazakhstan.

Demey E.: European students ... they are more independent. (a.) And ours ... because it ties to schooling, they are not really taught independence, basically [they] have been under control. (b.) And those former students ... under the control come to us; they are used to it, so that they don't practically work independently. (b.) We have to drive them anyway. And because of this there's a problem with the credit system. (d.) The total hours should have remained those from the Soviet Union, but the actual number of hours they work in the classroom has halved. Because of this, it turns out that quality dies. (d.) Alone [they] don't work, (b.) it turns out that the hours decrease, but the load on the staff hasn't dropped [CU1, physics, 13 years]

Erbol N.: In general, what I want to say is that 50 minutes is not enough time for a lecture. And now ask yourself: are our students ready for this system? If in Europe [students] are prepared for this system from a school bench, (a.) and where do we start this? At the university and [that's] all. And think: despite the fact that we have a large cohort, it isn't a secret that students enrolling to higher education are those, I would say, who don't have the skills to work independently. Not. (b.) This is in Gumilev and the same goes for Al-Farabi.<sup>xxx</sup> This is the problem everywhere now. (d.) If we want the Bologna Process, it's necessary to introduce elements of the Bologna Process in schools. (c.) [RU1, economics, 21 year]

Iliya R.: Our students don't want to understand this. They cannot work independently. (b.) When [you] stop lecturing, when you stop engaging with them in laboratory work ... they are used to since kindergarten ... since schools, [they] are taught that we should give to them, to sort out everything and so on (b.). [CU1, journalism, 20 years]

At the first sight the opposition here lies in Soviet versus Western approaches to teaching through the binary “we – they”. However, the common use, according to which “we are good” and “they are bad” (van Dijk 1998b), is transformed here into “we are bad” and “they are good”. In other words, the critic turns out to be self-critic, where the academics admit that their local practice is not good but this is not changeable. The use of phrases such as “control”, “we have to drive them” (Demey E.) and “we should give to them, to sort out everything” (Iliya R.) reflects the traditional teaching approach in the Kazakhstan system, carried over from the past. A recognition of their own poor practice implies a positive representation of the “others”. These “others” are a shared notion that likely refers to Western education and its students. Supposedly these “others” do good and this seems attractive to the participants. This positive representation is understood through the comparisons to the local students: “Our students don't want to understand this. They cannot work independently” (Iliya R.); “they don't practically work independently” (Demey E.). This is an instance where Kazakhstan academics show their adherence to progressive approaches as they did when expressed their support for the need for the reforms and their unwillingness to return to the Soviet education system (Chapter V). Therefore, we can see indications of the discourse of progress and modernity here.

However, the recognition of “our bad things” contains a hidden accusation of the local authority, which can be summed up as: “imposes European standards without taking into consideration the local specifics”. The participants identify a major gap between the two

systems which cannot be simply overcome by the transfer of one system's standards to another. Similarly, they position themselves in opposition to the education power, who is othered as "they". Hence, the education authority is represented as ignoring the specifics of education and not caring about education. At a deeper level the academics present themselves as victims, as all the difficulties of the reforms are on their shoulders. The staff work in a constrained environment: "Alone [they] don't work, it turns out that the hours decrease, but the load on the staff hasn't dropped" (Demey E.).

The overall talk of the participants is built around the organisation of the education process, and thus draws on specific professional language. Hence, they identify themselves through the professional identity. They disclose their professional values and norms, or rather protest the distortion of them, such as the lowering of education quality, the reduction of time for lectures to 50 minutes and the general decrease in contact hours. The reference to "Gumilev and Al-Farabi" (Erbol N.) can be read to mean "even in the main Universities things are going badly" and thus this problem is on a large scale. Here the observation by van Dijk (2000a) that professionals often talk not as individuals, but as representatives of a larger institutional and organisational group is helpful. The participants then represent themselves as caring for education across the whole country.

Their ideological belief is that the reforms are not properly managed and student-oriented learning is not appropriate for Kazakhstan higher education. Yet, this is also complicated by the reduction in class hours and lecture time, which in the past were much higher: "The total hours should have remained those from the Soviet Union" (Demey E.); "50 minutes is not enough time for a lecture" (Erbol N.). Here nostalgia for the past is explicit. Through this the participants voice support for Soviet education standards, where most taught classes were 90 minutes long (Chapter II, subsection 2). Such Soviet norms placed a teacher in the dominant position, so this reference to the past could be a response to the dis-empowering of teachers in the new system. This is similar to the nostalgia discourse, which was earlier identified in my discussion of participants' willingness to restore Soviet patterns, in response to the inconsistent and chaotic reality (Chapter V, section 2).

Consequently, another discourse here is that of chaotic reform, which, as is apparent throughout the analyses in this study, commonly arose when there is a mixture of, or a clash, between old and new patterns or approaches. The common outcome of the chaos discourse is that the new standards do not match the local reality, established in the past. In this particular case a new teaching mode contradicts local educational traditions.

Indeed, in the post-Soviet education context, the traditional teacher-oriented pedagogic model, with the teacher in a leading role, was dominant. This pedagogic model resembles the model of the entire Soviet society with its top-down social hierarchy. The main drawback of that system-oriented model was the resulting passivity, and lack of initiative, creativity, and independent thinking of the people, while these were shaped under strong ideological indoctrination. Hence, the new person-oriented approach is not easily achievable. For example, a similar situation can be observed in contemporary Russian education under its reforms: “Pedagogical models that emphasize conformity, the collective, and centralized control are inconsistent with those that emphasize individual choice, self-development, and independent thinking” (Polyzoi and Dneprov 2003: 174).

Similarly, the organisation of the education process itself, with the dominance of taught classes, promoted passivity in the students. This significantly differentiates the Soviet system from the Western one: “to somebody educated in the Western system, the time students and lecturers spend together in the lecture or seminar room every week appears ridiculous ... they spend approximately 15 ‘pairs’, or 30 academic hours per week in class, sometimes more” (Umland 2005: 224-225). Within such an approach the staff got little from the students in return.

An interesting point to address is the local academics’ belief in Western students’ high level of skill in independent work, which they assume starts from school or even kindergarten (Iliya R., Erbol N.). This was a widespread opinion among the academics with whom I talked, yet, it is a misunderstanding of Western educational reality. There are difficulties with independent learning in Western HEIs as well, for example, in relation to international students, who come from various cultural backgrounds (As-Saber et al. 2006; Kingston and Forland 2008). I identify here a deficit in knowledge and a misinterpretation of some Western conceptions by local academics that may contribute to the chaotic reform process. Another example is found in their talk about the requirement to pay for publications in peer-reviewed academic journals (Chapter VII, section 2.2).

What can be seen from the analysis above is that, while there are tensions and challenges in shifting from a teacher-centred to a student-centred mode of learning, there are also misunderstandings about what constitutes a student-centred mode. This is seen as the consequence of an overall lack of professional development and re-training among staff, which I found throughout the different issues studied in this research. Thus, while there is a *general* understanding of the need for modernisation in education, there are misunderstandings of the

details associated with the Bologna Process, and therefore no specific understanding of the reforms.

The teacher-centred mode might be seen as more comfortable by local academics, because, firstly, it centralises the significant role of the teacher and, secondly, it justifies having more teaching hours as it had been in place in the previous system. The dataset does not show any direct evidence of the lack of professional development for transferring to a new mode of teaching. Yet, there is evidence of the academics struggling with implementing reforms in other areas. In the context of a lack of professional development and of misinformation, academics reveal greater comfort with the old system, such as in one participant's account of struggling with marking:

You see, we still have the five-point system in our head as more comfortable for us psychologically. When we mark today, we still transfer the percentage into the old five-point system as it makes it clearer for us as to the level of students' competency (Dina K.).

Similar to this, the lack of professional development means that academics do not know how to change from a teacher-centred to a student-centred mode and are thus resistant to the new standards. Therefore, their complaints about the students, seen in the texts, as unable to work as independent learners should be seen as reflecting an inability on the part of the academics and the authority to implement the reforms. Here one can see that the chaotic reforms are shaped by contextual models inherited from the past system, and thus by objective factors, and by the overall approach to the education reforms. The discourse of chaotic reform continues in participants' views of the application of a testing system in Kazakhstan practice.

### ***3.2. Participants' views on introducing a testing system***

The testing system is one of the core issues which Kazakhstan HE academics have dealt with from the very beginning of the educational reforms. Their talk about the use of the testing system in Kazakhstan HE covered many aspects, from which I chose three to analyse here as they were the most repetitive across the interviews. The aspects are: the anti-corruption politics behind the application of tests (3.2.1), the challenges of applying tests across all disciplines (3.2.2) and finally, the accounts of testing as an assessment tool (3.2.3).



### 3.2.1. Participants' rationale for the implementation of a testing system

In the views of my participants testing was introduced into Kazakhstan as a tool for combating corruption. While overall negative evaluations of testing are widespread among Kazakhstan academics, not all of them link it to the issue of corruption. This could be determined by the academics' general outlook, their sensitivity and ambivalence towards the topic, and a willingness to talk about it. Among 38 interviewees, only seven of them dared to raise the anti-corruption issue. Five of these interviewees were from one university, which, in popular opinion, had the reputation of being the most corrupt HEI in the country in recent history. As can be seen from the data, most of those who raised the corruption issue in relation to testing were from that particular university.

The following three points are the key marks of this discourse: a. testing was introduced with anti-corruption goals; b. testing has helped to reduce corruption; c. the effects of testing on the education process is in question. Some typical examples of this are:

Demey E.: Well, testing as an alternative, as an auxiliary method isn't bad. But it's elevated to some absolute and that's nonsense. (c.) Sometimes people just suffer from such extremism: testing is for anti-corruption (a.). People likely struggle with corruption, but to destroy everything. One might even say [they] breed corruption in an attempt to combat it. (a.) I can account for our department, we have no corruption. Even if it happened ... if there were any rumours we'd work with them to avoid such things, [we'd] even expel [them]. At least for our department, we'd respond. (b.) [CU1, physics, 13 years]

Iliya R.: Well, why testing was introduced, Zhumagulov<sup>xxxi</sup> fought against corruption. When he arrived, there were terrible complaints about corruption. (a.) Much, much improved ... Well, yes, we defeated corruption, (b.) but what then? (c.) [CU1, journalism, 20 years]

Mark G.: The positive sign is that testing, at least in the eyes of students, has more objectivity. (b.) Objectivity not so much in terms of the knowledge held by students (c.) as objectivity in the teacher-student relationship. (b.) As for an oral exam, ... it's just my opinion ... students can call into question how objectively a teacher assessed [them]. That's a plus of testing. (b.) [RU1, economics, 18 years]

Here one can find positive evaluations of the implementation of testing, as increasing objectivity in student assessment and as a means of fighting against corruption. It also brought more transparency into teacher-student relationships, rather than an improvement in educational quality. Mark G.'s statement that "Objectivity not so much in terms of the knowledge held by students as objectivity in the teacher-student relationship" is evidence for this. How testing influences direct education practice is analysed in sub-subsections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3.

The academics responded ambiguously to the use of testing. On the one hand, they support the fight against corruption in education, on the other hand, they identify testing as an extreme approach to this. While admitting that there is no longer any corruption in HEIs and recognising the value of the testing system in this sense, this created other problems in education and made things even worse: "People likely struggle with corruption, but to destroy everything" (Demey E). This is what is named "extremism" by the participant.

The conflict between the academics, "we", and the power of the Ministry, "they", is expressed through the contrasting use of pronouns. The "we" side of the academics is represented in a generalised manner rather than personally and thus can be attributed to the entire social group of HEI professionals. This side is constantly contrasted with some others, "they" and "people", who are stressed many times, and who introduced the testing system into education "to combat corruption". Here by default only the Ministry of Education could be implied. One can find here, again, that while being critical of the actions of the centre of power, participants avoid naming it directly. In this way, academics probably mean to convey one of the following effects, which have been attributed impersonalisation: "it can background the identity and/or role of social actors; it can lend impersonal authority or force to an activity or quality of a social actor and it can add positive or negative connotation to an activity or utterance of a social actor" (van Leeuwen 2008: 47).

In these accounts, the Ministry is concerned with the fight against corruption at its most extreme, while not caring about education. The Ministry hence is represented as unprofessional and insensitive to educational concerns; there is also an inevitability to the Ministry's authority and the staff's surrender to its rules.

Through these criticisms of the authority academics represent themselves positively, as those who are concerned about education and its outcomes. Another contribution to their positive self-representation and professional identity is their support for the eradication of corruption in HEIs. While identifying this as a positive of testing (see Mark G.), the professional values and norms of the staff also include various actions that benefit of education. This is also an

indication of their transmitting a professional identity. As professionals, they show their norms and values through what they find good and bad, right and wrong (van Dijk 1995a).

So, there is ideological conflict between the power and the academics, seen as two sides pursuing different goals, political versus educational ones. Staff are concerned about education and educational values and the Ministry, prioritising political goals and the extreme pursuit of anti-corruption targets, ignores key features of educational practice and cripples the education system. Thus it is uncaring about education. Opposition to this power is understood in the context of disagreement about the politics of the absolutist use of testing in an attempt to fix the problem of corruption. I argue that the underlying discourse behind this is chaotic reform, where chaos is formed by the mixing two or more different approaches, as argued earlier (section 1; section 2). Here the pursuance of political aims by the education authority “is elevated to some absolute and that’s nonsense” (Demey E.) and clashes with the educational aspirations of academics.

The dominance of political goals in the reform process explains why testing was borrowed by local policy makers in Kazakhstan. This can be attributed to the externalisation of international patterns, which derives from the socio-logic of necessities in the national context (Schriewer 1990). In this role, testing in Kazakhstan HE was seen as something which was likely to resolve the corruption problems. Corruption in education was mainly possible in oral examinations and in this sense a testing system was meant to total replace these. In the Soviet tradition, oral examination was the main form of assessment, and was employed at all levels of education, including finals and entrance examinations for a college or other institution. It represented an individual delivery of an examination to a student by a teacher after a given amount of preparation time (approximately 30 minutes) and was seen as a form of a personal communication between student and teacher. It is different from testing, where contact between both parties is minimal. Many such communications were determined by the moral qualities and honesty of the staff, yet, subjectivity in the assessment of students, with both over- and under-valuation, must have been unavoidable. The vulnerability of oral examinations is that they open the way for potential corruption, when a student, for example, could have an agreement with a member of staff regarding the inclusion of a particular subject, and thus be guaranteed a high mark, in exchange for money, services or simply at the request of a student’s friend or relative. This especially was crucial for the entrance examinations to HEIs, where the number of free places was limited. The examination mark could influence whether or not a student would receive a stipend.

Overall, corruption in education is part of the Soviet phenomenon of “blat” (Ledeneva 1998), which is not well known to Westerners. In the Soviet period negative tendencies, such as corruption in education, were rarely discussed in public, due to the absence of free media and an overall ideological belief that they could not exist in “the best country in the world”. Yet, after the fall of the Soviet system, corruption continued to increase, but now it became more open for discussion:

Corruption was anticipated in many public services and functions, but the spread of corruption in the education sector has been a shock. No one in 1991 anticipated the depth to which this disease would take over or the impact it would have on the reputation of the higher education systems. This is particularly true in Central Asia. (Heyneman 2010: 81)

There are many reasons for the need to cope with corruption in the post-Soviet Kazakhstan education system. In the generally-acknowledged normal understanding, corruption is against moral principles. Another important reason was the desire to join the Bologna Process, and thus to support their political ambitions. As I argue throughout this thesis, the underlying post-colonial agenda pushed Kazakhstan officials to introduce Western standards as quickly as it is possible. There was an understanding that corruption ruins education and should be eradicated, as it “may in fact bring the Bologna process to a halt” (Heyneman 2010: 81).

However, in the views of the academics, Soviet-style oral examinations offered more possibilities for getting a fuller picture of a student’s level, because it displayed a student’s skills in thinking, logical construction, range of vision, ways of expressing thought, and so on. It also gave the teacher the opportunity to ask additional questions or to give another task to check a student’s level in as detailed a way as possible.<sup>xxxii</sup> In this regard it is interesting to analyse the academics’ accounts of how testing operates in different disciplines.

### **3.2.2. Participants’ views on the application of testing across all disciplines**

The authority’s demand for the application of testing to all disciplines, irrespective of any differences, was painful for staff. Here is further evidence that they pursued education reforms for political goals, by any means, as I argue throughout. Indeed, practically, especially in Bachelor’s programmes, it was imposed as a strict requirement. The participants who mentioned this feature were from different disciplines. Nine participants from the social sciences and humanities and four from the natural sciences indicated the inappropriateness of this extreme application of testing. Often to justify their disagreement with the Ministry’s

politics, they referred to international practice, where, in their view, testing is not universally applied. Such an approach arises from explicitly negative attitudes, and combines the following three points: a. the use testing across all disciplines, especially in the social sciences and humanities, is wrong; b. testing is not widely applied in other countries; c. in Kazakhstan, we are forced to use testing. Some examples of these responses are:

Mark G.: Well, the problem [with testing] is that, ... when it was imposed, without exception in all disciplines, regardless of what kind of discipline it is, on which department it's focused (a) ... All today are to be tested, (c.) even using the same UNT<sup>xxxiii</sup> or when the landmark control of students' knowledge in the end of the second year. (c.) I think this is the wrong approach. (a.) You can't assess knowledge in all disciplines or all themes in a discipline through testing. (a.) [RU1, economics, 18 years]

Iliya R.: There's one course, speech technology it's called, it's passed through testing. How many years we fought [this] and every year they promise: "yes, yes". (c.) So, I think many departments have such subjects ... Well, there are two majors – like close relatives: journalism and public relations. In PR it's very effective, because in PR there are sociology and economics, crisis management and consulting involved. This you can test well. But journalism, where the majority of courses are of a creative character ... using testing, it's very difficult. (a.) I know the feedback from our naturalists – everyone's excited about the tests because it's effective there. It's become obvious. it works well for them. If I remember, in America and Germany, when I told them that we apply tests for journalism they were shocked (b.) They said: "but how"? I showed them and explained to them that we have open and closed tests and how they work. ... They said: "no, [we've] nothing like that". (b.) Although we are told that in America and Germany testing is applied everywhere. (c.) [CU1, journalism, 20 years]

Erbol N.: As I understand it, not in France, neither in Germany, there's no such thing as a test. (b.) While in England, in Cambridge, practically everywhere there's testing only. And how the French and Germans told [me] about it – personally, I heard with my own ears – do you know how they criticised [testing]? (b.) That the test, which they use as a form of exam, diverts students from logical thinking. This really is confirmed in today's Kazakhstan education. Everything is oral there. (b.) There's no such thing as a test. (b.) They openly said to us: "it's all invented by Cambridge. It's their technique". [RU1, economics, 21 year]

The main message across these texts is that the application of testing under the Westernisation of education is not always effective as disciplines are different and testing is not always applicable. It is also worth pointing out that the implementation of international standards as it is applied in Kazakhstan is distorted. Reference to practices in other countries is used as evidence for the participants' critical attitude, implying that the local authority's actions and claims are incorrect. In such a view, they transmit the message that what is imposed on Kazakhstan education turns into bad practice and what people are told by the Ministry is not accurate.

The texts contain the conflict between the Ministry of Education, as the dominant power, and the academics. While the latter are concerned about the issues of student assessment, they are ignored by the Ministry. One participant discloses this in the following: "How many years we fought [this], and every year they promise: 'yes, yes'" (Iliya R.). The use of word "fought" is an exaggeration, and such 'hyperbolism' is not a general rhetorical feature, rather it is selectively used to dramatise negative events or actions (van Dijk 1991). Another remarkable point is the inevitability of the use of testing in Kazakhstan education practice. This contains the assumption that academics see themselves as being forced by the authoritative Ministry to apply testing even in those disciplines where testing is not appropriate in their view. In other words, the texts imply that the underlying blame for these educational policies lies with the Ministry's not being concerned about education as such, while it is demanding and forceful. Their negativity towards the educational authority's approach is conveyed through the wording, where the authority is depersonalised. It is limited to the use of the passive voice and third person pronouns ("they"), which suggest their hidden hostility to the Ministry and disagreement with its actions (van Leeuwen 2008).

Certainly the participants position themselves through the professional identity, constructed around the specific professional issue of the method of student assessment. As professionals they consider the use of testing in humanities as inadequate. Across all the texts, the participants construct their conversations around the quality of education, and thus they position themselves as those who stand for professionalism. The international practices of Germany and France serve as an example of a good practice, yet, by this the speaker indicates the authority's manipulation: "we are told that in America and Germany testing is applied everywhere" (Iliya R.). So, in such view the authority's manipulation affects the very norms and values used to legitimate actions on behalf of academics (van Dijk 2006b). Similarly, these accounts can be seen as the opposition and resistance of professionals to the Ministry's unprofessional approach to education. Also, they may convey how the Ministry imposes standards without properly acknowledging about how things work in practice. In such

a view, these texts transmit the message that there is a deficit of knowledge about the borrowed education policies among Ministerial officials themselves, which contributes to an overall chaos in the reforms.

Overall the discourse of chaotic reform is evident here, as it is in the above sub-subsection, in the claim that behind the universal use of testing lies the political goal of defeating corruption. In order to pursue this they harm education, and this turns out to be a repeated pattern. In the following sub-subsection this discourse continues in the accounts of testing as an assessment tool.

### **3.2.3. Participants' accounts of testing as an assessment tool**

While the application of testing system across all disciplines was mainly viewed critically, academics' responses to its use for student assessment are more varied. The participants can be divided between those who partly support testing (8 people), those who consider it as an auxiliary method (4 people), and those who were strongly negative towards testing (15 people). The latter often expressed their dissatisfaction with testing on the grounds that it does not objectively assess students' knowledge and instead works like a 'guessing game' or a 'lottery'. Another recurring point is that tests do not evaluate students' cognitive abilities, such as logical thinking and verbal ability. In general the participants confirm the widespread opinion of the majority of post-Soviet professionals, for example, in Russia, who state that: "Memory and diligence such tests can still check, but intellectual skills and abilities – hardly" (Glagolev and Shipunov 2012, personal translation). In all cases the participants compared testing with the oral examinations typical of Soviet education, and considered the latter as a preferable form of assessment.

Therefore, three key points in the participants' accounts are: a. a negative attitude as testing is like a guessing game; b. the oral examination from the Soviet system is better; c. testing does not assess cognitive abilities. This ideology can be traced through almost all of the participants' interviews, in both capital and regional universities, irrespective of the disciplines where they are experts.

Elena H.: I have a very negative attitude to this [testing]. Tests ... it's a guessing [game]. (a.) Can a normal exam draw on guesswork? Students are happy when they have a test and upset when they have an oral exam ... because for the oral exam they need to open their notes and prepare thoroughly. (b.) But they pass tests in a flash and still get normal marks. (a.) Well, judge for yourself by looking at their reactions. [CU2, biology, 24 years]

Boris O.: In testing a student is limited, (c.) while in oral or written examination<sup>xxxiv</sup> a student has more opportunity to realise himself. (b.) For example, in an oral exam one can directly see how the cognitive activity of a student works. (b./c.) [RU1, philosophy, 12 years]

Saule H.: Universities in that linear system of education, in our Soviet one, took exams orally, and all examinations both during the term and finally were oral. And students had a qualitative education. (b.) He or she knew how to think, to ponder, and to logically construct. (b./c.) I went through this, and I think that in university and everywhere all exams should be in this form, (b.) rather than European tests. Tests are limited with “yes/no” answers. (a.) [You] select either A or C (a.). And in the oral exam for each question it’s not [easy] to answer “yes or no”. (b.) [RU1, physics, 32 years]

The underlying belief is that the imposition of innovations such as testing did not bring any improvements into the teaching process; instead, it negatively influenced it and even created new problems. What these fragments imply is that answering such tests requires the mere memorisation of information, which often turns into simple guesswork, rather than revealing the actual level of knowledge and skills of the students. As can be seen here and beyond, participants built their accounts primarily around their professional norms and values, such as the significance of educational quality, where testing is treated as an indicator of a decline in the quality of education. The norm of educational quality is a sign of the transmission of professional identity. Other such signs are the use of specific terms such as “cognitive activity”, “linear education”, “oral examination”, and “written examination”.

The decline of educational quality appears as a result of the universal application of tests, as is required by the education authority. While the value of educational quality is essential to academics, this value is disregarded in the Ministry's approach. This ideology positions the dominant power as one that neglects educational values, and this is a recurring ideological belief of the participants, as in the case of the obligatory and universal use of tests across disciplines (subsection 3.2.2).

Here one can find the juxtaposition of two methods of assessment, built on the contrast between testing and the oral examinations practised within the Soviet education. It also reflects a conflict between two education cultures, where the Soviet one is seen as preferable. Traditionally, in the Soviet system, oral examinations were predominantly used for student assessment and rarely were written assessments used, while testing was not used at all. In



such constant recourse to the patterns of the past, one may find the strategy of “Our good things and Their bad things” (van Dijk 2006a: 124), which in turn can be seen as the ideological belief on which they are based. It can be assumed that the assessment of cognitive skills was one of the aims of the oral examination, which is lost in testing. It can also be read as a remark about the loss of one of the values of Soviet education in the view of academics: the value of cognitive “holistic” thinking (Zhelkunov and Petrov 2007). This in turn is a part of the ideological belief about the thoroughness of Soviet education, discussed earlier in this thesis (Chapter V, section 2). The contrast becomes more obvious with the use of “our” in relation to Soviet education by Saule H. Her preference is reflected in the structure of her talk, which is focused on a detailed and positive description of a Soviet oral examination, while she says less about testing. In other words the polarisation is achieved through the strategy of emphasising of “Our good things and Their bad things” (van Dijk 2006a).

The academics’ views are examples of the discourse of nostalgia and loss. Here the discourse of nostalgia implicitly contrasts the better Soviet education system and its higher quality, with contemporary practice. As was found before (Chapter V, section 2; Chapter VI, section 2), the discourse of nostalgia appears in relation to the lowering of education quality under today’s reforms. In the view of the staff, the patterns of the past are desirable as they produced better results. Therefore “education quality” becomes the key value for them, and thus is a characteristic of their professional ideology.

Overall, in this section the presence of all three discourses was identified, yet the discourse of chaotic reform emerged as the leading one, because it reveals itself more in the analysis of the implementation of the specific borrowed patterns.

#### **4. Diverse voices**

##### ***4.1 Implementation of a credit system***

Below are the academics’ accounts, which were not included in CDA above. As can be seen, they talk about the implementation of the credit system in Kazakhstan from different angles, which is in line with my earlier statement that the participants shared their views according to their own conceptions and knowledge of the issue. For example, from these extracts it can be seen that one of the participants discusses the changed role of teachers under the credit system, two of them about the problems with credit transfer, others discuss difficulties in the implementation of the credit system in a general sense, and one refuses to say anything. Overall three types of views can be identified throughout. The first and the one occurring most

frequently, (texts 1-5 in Appendix 4.2) concerns the problems of implementing the credit system in Kazakhstan. A few examples of this theme can be useful:

Zarina M.: The credit system isn't working. Because of the increase in the number of electives in the curricula to 70% - their titles almost don't match and the credits are not counted if they are received in other universities, including foreign ones. [RU1, sport, 16 years]

Said Z.: The credit system hasn't been structured in Kazakhstan. I would say that everything is happening by trial and error. [CU1, physics, 40+ years]

In these, the participants talk about different challenges which prevent the proper functioning of the credit system within the local practice. Some of them offer a general statement that the credit system works poorly (texts 3-5 in Appendix 4.2), while others are more specific, pointing to particular aspects which do not work (texts 1-2). These criticisms can be seen as a continuation of the same academic voices which were analysed in the main section 1, and that analysis can be applied here. As was already said, the credit system is being implemented within a system, where the main features of the Soviet linear system are still in place. For example, there are groups which are united into a single stream that attend the same lectures. This contradicts the flexibility of student groups that is central to the credit system. Another problem regards differences between curricula, modules, courses and credits, which even all European HEIs face (Karran 2004; Karseth 2006; Schriewer 2009).

The second theme is found in one text and it relates to the effect of the credit system on the role of the teacher (text 6). The dis-empowering of teachers in the new system conflicts with the Soviet education tradition, where the academic was in the position of ruler and superior (Kingston and Forland 2008). An example of this theme is:

Bek S.: On the one hand, the credit system is very, very good: a student receives points when performing a task, for attending classes and during practical sessions. But it turns out that a teacher is no longer playing an important role, and rather he's an operator, as in a human-machine system. You probably know such a system. That is, a teacher's role is already relegated to the background, and it's not right. [RU2, psychology, 10 years]

One academic's voice covers the impossibility of answering the question for unknown reasons (text 7). Overall it can be said the examples above show the diversity of opinions to some degree, but they are limited. The two final voices do not bring any substantial diversity to the positions in the first group of texts, which were, in turn, analysed in the main section 1.

## **4.2 Reforming academic loads**

The participants' accounts here focus on the heavy workloads of academics under the reform process and in this sense these extracts should be seen as additions to the texts analysed in section 2. Therefore, the answers do not show any substantial diversity in responses, instead they are broadly similar, as they are constructed around the increases in academics' workloads. A small difference is found in the focus on increased paperwork, where the most challenging aspect is the production of UMKD, and that the low salaries do not correspond to people's labour.

I would point to one theme distinguished here. All six extracts (texts 8-13 in Appendix 4.2) on this heavily-discussed topic offer additional voices to those texts in section 2 above. Overall, there were no positive replies to the question on the changes in workloads; rather all the replies were highly critical. Examples of these accounts are:

Bek S.: Loads changed, hours were reduced, very reduced, but with all this we have to work more. Why? Because in the first half of the day we have four pairs of classes, and for the afternoon work we're not paid, when we conduct individual work with the students. [RU2, psychology, 10 years]

Mark G.: The paperwork increased significantly. If earlier it was only one work program, which we prepared, then today it's a mass of documents: work programs for students, syllabus, teachers' directory, a mandatory set of lectures. If previously only the abstracts of lectures were required, now it's the fully typed lectures, practical tasks for IWS, IWST must be, and it's a huge burden.

As previously stated in the main section 2, the introduction of the credit system brought about increases in staff workloads and paperwork (Trowler 1998b), including the production of new types of documentation. First of all, this relates to the UMKD, which represents a set of documents developed in accordance with the content of the Government State Standards and includes, among other things: qualification characteristics; typical and working curricula; the content, scope and procedure of training; and the basic knowledge, skills and competencies required to be taught. A UMKD must be produced for each discipline and each one consists of up to one hundred pages.

## **4.3 Introducing a testing system**

The question on the implementation of a testing system was discussed in a general way. The different aspects of the use of testing are illustrated below. Several different aspects of the implementation of testing were discussed, which in turn form four distinct themes.

The first theme discusses testing as an effective tool for assessing large groups of students. The participants point to three advantages: saving time, being able to quickly check the overall level of students' knowledge and having an objective method. These are especially seen as positive in comparison with oral examinations. Four texts can be assigned to this group (texts 14-17 in Appendix 4.2). Two examples are:

Galiya T.: This is the form of testing which I like the most. You can include questions from different areas and very quickly check the level of knowledge. It's better than essays, where there are only three questions. Because we teach far more than three themes and thus it's limited. Assessing orally, of course, would be a way out, but again, as I say, there's limited time. Fourteen oral exams in one hour are simply impossible. Therefore, testing for me, for example, is convenient. [CU1, biology, 18 years]

Mark G.: Testing saves time. I often apply it to assess students' knowledge because within two hours I can cover 20-40 students. And oral exams will require considerably more time. [RU1, economics, 18 years]

The second theme covers the challenges of implementing multiple-choice questions with students. It is interesting here, that while MCQ tests are widely used in western universities, these accounts stress that it is unacceptable to apply these within local education practice. Two texts can be assigned to this group (texts 18-19). This is an example:

Svetlana Z.: That form of new tests - have you seen the ones that we have now? This is generally quite a horrible thing, because there's a test question and eight possible answers, of which three are correct. To include a question on cause-and-effect relationships is practically impossible. Only unimportant small issues, which don't have particular roles in the discipline, can be included. [RU1, history, 17 years]

The third theme addresses how teachers are dis-empowered under the new testing regime. This is a sensitive point for some post-Soviet academics who used to have a leading role as a teacher in the education process (Kingston and Forland 2008). There is only one example of this (text 20).

The last theme is separate from those discussed above. It touches on the illegal use of tests' answers for personal profit (text 21 Appendix 4.2). As it only occurs in one text, it is worthy of note, but no more than that.

## **Conclusion**

### **Analysis of CDA discourses**

In this chapter I analysed the academics' accounts of the reforms of the organisation of the education process, and the teaching and learning modes. As I state throughout this chapter, these changes resulted from the introduction of the credit system, and while it is not part of the Bologna Process, it was an immediate necessity for Kazakhstan to implement this in order to join the EHEA. Similarly, in this chapter I analysed the participants' accounts of the challenges within the adoption of the credit system and credit transfer (section 1), including new approaches to staff workload and contact-hours (section 2), and the student-centred learning and testing systems (section 3).

The main leitmotif underlying all the accounts of the local academics is their overall criticism of the reform process, as I discussed earlier as well (Chapter V, section 3). There are similarities with British academics' critical responses to the implementation of the credit framework in the 1990s, and effects of the managerialist culture in education (Trowler 1998b). While the command-style approach of the post-Soviet system is not same as Western managerialism, parallels are evident as those in power are accused of their blindness in the face of educational realities, with the latter being forgotten (Trowler 1998b). However, in the Kazakhstan case, things are worse because of the existence of specific post-Soviet factors, such as the political orientation of the policy makers and the broader post-Soviet education context. The local academics' responses can be understood as reactions to their being located in a constrained environment, where new patterns/approaches are not adopted in full and past patterns/approaches are not overcome yet.

The analysis showed the presence of three discourses, of nostalgia and loss, progress and modernity and chaotic reform, which were first identified in my analysis in Chapter V. While the discourses of nostalgia and progress are explicitly present in the academics' views, they mainly appear in connection to that of chaotic reform, which is the key discourse.

I showed that the discourse of chaotic reform has many aspects and is expressed in cases where there is a mixing of two different patterns or approaches, complicated on the one hand, by the top-down style of administration and, on the other, by the deficit of knowledge and skills among the implementers. In other words, chaos is organised by the clash of political/educational or Soviet/Western patterns or approaches in a particular case. One example is the ideological conflict between the political goals of the authority and the educational values of academics in the introduction of the testing system (section 3.2).

Another instance is the partial implementation of the credit system (subsection 1.1) and the recalculation of academics' workloads in terms of credit units, yet following the Soviet pattern of not paying for the full staff workload (subsection 2.2).

From the position of policy implementation one can see how borrowed patterns are implemented in the local environment and thus re-contextualised according to local specificities. Yet, the common approach of theorists of education policy borrowing mainly anticipates any local re-contextualisation to fit local needs as being made by the local authority or policy makers, and thus under human influence (Silova 2005; Steiner-Khamsi 2006; Steiner-Khamsi et al. 2006). Against this, I would identify the existence of some systemic features, which complicate the reform process for objective reasons. The dominant teaching mode of post-Soviet HEIs, the historical absence of professional administration in education, and systemic corruption are some examples of these features. Thus, I argue that, because of the post-Soviet context, overcoming some of these challenges is unachievable, at least at the current time. This also confirms my other argument that, in relation to Second World states, I identify a re-modelling and re-structuring of their education systems towards Western patterns, because the well-developed educational infrastructure inherited inevitably plays out in the adoption of the borrowed policies.

From a theoretical perspective, I have shown how the inclusion of and attention to specific post-Soviet features helps us to understand how and why internationally borrowed patterns – such as the credit system, student-centred learning and the testing system – are localised differently in the Kazakhstan context than in their home location.

### **Analysis of alternatives voices**

The range of opinions included in section 4 shows the diversity of views discussed by the participants on various topics. Some are in line with these themes analysed in the main analysis in sections 1-3. These themes are: the difficulties with the implementation of the credit system and increased academic workloads. From the thematic analyses above one can also see that the discussion on the implementation of testing in terms of local practice raises many issues, such as testing as an effective tool for assessing a large number of students, testing as a time-saving tool, and the application of MCQ tests. While these are interesting and specific topics to discuss, they are voiced by few participants and therefore are not included in the main analysis.

Similarly, this can be said about the discussion on the disempowered role of teachers in post-Soviet education. Two topics arose: the assessment of students through the testing and

implementation of a credit system, and student progress fixed and ranked by a computer. While this is a specific and interesting topic, it was voiced by few participants throughout the interviews and was thus excluded from the main analysis.

The accounts of the academics' increased loads in subsection 4.2 are added to the main analysis in section 2. Two aspects of the problem were discussed: the changes in the academics' loads and the introduction of the additional contact hours under the reformation process. This is to say that the theme of academics' workloads is very painful to the participants and it was discussed from many angles. Yet, because of space limitations not all of these aspects could be included in the main analysis. In this chapter I studied the participants' accounts of the reform of the organisation of the educational process, academic workloads, learning and assessment. Now I move on to an analysis of the participants' attitudes to the changes in the requirements for academic research, publication and language.

# **Chapter VII. The reforms to research, publishing and foreign language competency in post-Soviet Kazakhstan**

In the previous chapter I analysed the participants' accounts of the changes to education and teaching processes, student assessment and staff workloads made under the reforms. In the analysis in the last chapter I showed that the participants, when discussing changes in specific areas, primarily respond with the discourse of chaotic reform. I also showed that the chaotic reform discourse is shaped by various factors, generated by objective features of the post-Soviet system and human attitudes to the reforms. This pattern largely continues in this chapter, where I analyse how the academics responded to the changes made to training programmes, the system of research degrees, academic research and publishing, and academic mobility.

As I said earlier, for Kazakhstan to join the EHEA, it had to implement the main principles of the Bologna Process, such as the introduction of a Western three-tier system of higher education (Bachelor's, Master's, PhD), academic mobility, the recognition of studies and degrees obtained at universities in other countries, and a system of quality assurance. Yet, it is also entailed engagement with a European and global academic community. For example, while publishing in international scientific journals is not a direct requirement under the Bologna Process, nonetheless it is one of the norms of the Western academic world. Similar to the case with the credit system, the principles of international academic practice had to be adopted in addition to the educational standards.

I argue in this study that one of the main factors causing the chaotic reforms in Kazakhstan is the contradiction between the dominant power's politically-oriented goals, driven by a liberating post-colonial agenda, and the educational values and norms of the academics acting as professionals. In this chapter we can see how despite the authority's pressure to introduce the Western three-tier system (Bachelor's-Master's-PhD) and degree qualifications, and to increase the number of publications in journals with high impact factors, these turn out to be impossible to adequately realise due to the system's distinctiveness and an objective deficit of skills and knowledge among those implementing the reforms. For example, the widespread absence in the post-Soviet world of research matching Western standards, especially in the social sciences and humanities, can be attributed to the latter. Another factor is the lack of



proficiency in English among post-Soviet people, which prevents them from publishing internationally and from being academically mobile.

Yet, I also argue that due to the reforms being politically-driven, educational needs and goals are sidelined in the views of local policy-makers. As can be seen in the analysis in the previous chapters and as is apparent here, the academics found themselves being constrained by, on the one hand, the demands of the authority, and, on the one hand, a lack of skills to meet those demands combined with limited provision of information and support. Similar to the earlier analyses, we can see how, in such conditions, nostalgic sentiments about the 'better' Soviet education system become a reality of the constrained environment.

The pattern of the discourses in the interviews depended on the subject around which the participants were constructing their responses. Thus, I organise these accounts thematically, following the repetition of a discourse across a group of accounts. In section 1, I include accounts of two connected themes related to the implementation of the Western three-tier system. First, I look at the challenges involved in the adoption of new training programmes in conditions of institutional ignorance. Second, I look at the academics' dissatisfaction with the replacement of Soviet research degrees with Western ones, as a result of the introduction of the Western three-tier system. In this section, I identify the discourse of chaotic reform in combination with the discourse of nostalgia.

In section 2, I analyse the participants' accounts of the challenges arising from the pressure to publish. Three aspects of this theme are discussed in three subsections. These are: the authority's strong demands for an increase in international publishing (2.1), the requirement to pay for publications in international journals (2.2.), and the specific challenges around publishing in the social sciences and the humanities (2.3). The central discourse through which the academics respond to these changes is once again that of chaotic reform, however, often together with the discourse of modernity and progress.

In the final third section, I analyse the academics' views of the challenges they face in regard to attaining the foreign language competency that underpins demands for international publications and academic mobility. In this section the discourse of institutional ignorance, which is part of the overarching discourse of chaotic reform, is evident, combined explicitly with the discourse of modernity and progress.

### ***Personal reflection***

My personal reflections within Chapter VI can be equally applied to this chapter. My concern, as elsewhere in the thesis, was to study the differences between the two academic cultures, to

discover what impedes reformation and how specifically it is proceeding in the local context. Again, I would reiterate that differences in the answers between capital and regional academics were not evident, as the texts' extracts provided support this position.

In this chapter, as elsewhere, I believe that the academics' responses were, to some degree, "impression management". It was particularly noticeable for me as a researcher that some respondents tried to avoid answering the question on language complexity, which I suppose was due to their own difficulties with mastering a foreign language. I concluded this after the conversation with one of the staff members, who shared with me the outcomes of the internal review of the staff's attitude to English language. The people's negative attitudes to English language were defined as "alien, cold, undesired" and this contradicts my findings, as none of them questioned the necessity of English. I can only assume that such a difference in views might be because I could be perceived as an outsider, to whom people did not want to appear ignorant or critical. Yet, with the 'inner' interviewees, such as the one I talked to, they could be more familiar and feel more natural. I mainly noticed this "making impression" in the issues about some particular skills or features of the Western culture, which are not easily accessible to the local academics.

My feeling was that the academics, while they were very critical about the reformation process, still did not disclose the extent of their anger and discontent. Again, I believe this was due to the fact that they viewed me as an outsider. This was especially noticeable when they talked about the need to increase academic publications internationally, which seemed a very challenging to them. I see this as being underscored by heavy pressure from the Ministry, as I was said privately, those without publications might be made redundant. The use of the words like "forcing" and "strongest demand" among others can reveal, to some degree, academics' troubles about this particular pressure.

An unexpected theme was the academics' anxiety arising from the need to pay for publications. Again it should be understood that the local staff know about the western publishing system indirectly and thus draw conclusions based on the information with which they are provided, which can be limited, incomplete or wrong. Therefore the participants' understanding of the new standards sometimes was not factual, but rather based on their interpretation. The most interesting thing about this issue was that the need for payment was a very common opinion among the participants, who believe this is a common thing. Yet it also appeared that Western journals are more concerned about earning money than on the quality of publications. This distorted image of the Western academic world is likely to be the result of lack of information given and lack of knowledge of academics, which is a recurring theme of

the study. I would say that this and other myths about the West may influence staff. I was personally interested to know more about the issue of payment and later had a chance to clarify this with two editors-in-chief of international journals.

The discontent of academics with the difficulties in publishing abroad and its link to payment, unfortunately contributes to greater distrust of the West, which therefore produces further myths about it. I was told by some academics of them being puzzled why their articles were refused to be published in the international journals. Further in the chapter I examine the reasons for this, pointing to the lack of skills held by local academics in relation to Western academic writing. This was however an aspect they were unaware of. My overall feeling was that the reformation process in Kazakhstan has no consistent understanding of or adequacy in transmitting the new standards from one context to another. Rather it is more like an uninformed interpretation of a borrowed policy, which academics attempt to apply to the local context.

### **1. Participants' responses to the adoption of the Western three-tier system**

In this section I explore how Kazakhstan academics perceive the introduction of a Western three-level system (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate), which has replaced the Soviet system of programmes (specialist undergraduate, aspirantura and doktorantura). The introduction of a tiered structure, as central to the Bologna Process, applied not only to degree programmes, but also to degrees (Kehm and Teichler 2006), as each level constitutes a degree.

I expressed earlier (Chapter II, sub-subsection 2.3.2) my disagreement with the widespread view in the literature that the Soviet system had one or two levels, and my argument that this view in fact creates confusion in understanding the differences between the two systems. Instead I prefer to see both as having three levels, while still differentiating between the Western and Soviet structures. I see the Soviet three-level system as a version of the Western system, in accordance with the idea that Soviet (Russian) education is a modified version of Western education, imported in a particular historical period (Chapter II, subsection 2.1). I also explained there that the two systems differ from each other in the number of years involved, the qualification standards, the performance quality, the content, and the outcomes allocated to each programme.

I argue that because of these differences at the systemic level, the attempt to replace one system with another, undertaken by Kazakhstan's policy makers, became challenging. While it was formally introduced, in practice its adoption became challenging because of

misunderstandings and incomplete understandings of the differences between the programmes, and because of attempts to equate incompatible degree qualifications across the two systems.

The overarching discourse evident throughout these accounts is that of chaotic reform and, particularly, institutional ignorance mixed with the nostalgic feelings that are common among post-Soviet academics in an environment marked by chaotic reform. Of 38 participants, 23 discussed this topic. The key elements of the discourse are: a. confusion about the new programmes and degrees and lack of awareness of how to teach to the new standards; b. adjustments between the programmes and degrees of the two systems are inappropriate; c. the Soviet patterns was better. The following are typical responses:

Berik K.: It seems to me, that it's not clear to us who are these Bachelors. They're not specialists yet, and to which level of competence do we need to teach them? And who are these Masters, who aren't specialists already, and what competencies should they have? (a.) [RU1, psychology, 20 years]

Svetlana Z.: The first five, six years, when we transferred to the new system, we had a problem with Bachelors, because their diplomas weren't recognised by many people (a.). They thought that it's incomplete higher education, at least as it's widely understood in the post-Soviet area (a.). And I remember that we wrote letters to the organisations that "please, if you read the diploma, it's written there: 'a diploma of higher education'". (a.) And, for example, to equate a Master's diploma to the level of a Kandidat's thesis, so, from my point of view, they are, to put it mildly, different levels (b.). And then, there are the two doctoral levels, for example, a PhD and a Doktor Nauk, our Doktors who work at the Department ... when the new system was initially introduced, in order to equate [the degrees], I remember this was a terrible insult for them (b.), and as far as I know, this issue was never completely resolved [RU1, history, 17 years]

Urii N.: The level of training of postgraduates and the level of training of Kandidats is like "the land and the sky". (b.) Here the Master's training is clearly losing out in comparison with the level in the Soviet school (c.) ... So, we haven't got a clear understanding of how to prepare them. (a.) [CU2, management, 21 years]

Tatyana L.: That scientific system existed in our country, and the system of defending Kandidat and Doktrate theses just failed and that's it. A three-tier system of education was implemented But the staff has not been explained. (a.) So, today the status of Kandidat Nauk and Doktor Nauk are not clear in the European system, in fact. (b.) PhD theses that are defended in Kazakhstan today, from what I've seen personally, don't correspond to the level of the Kandidat Nauk. (b.) They have a more applied character and are at a lower level (c.). Comparison between them is not appropriate (b.), and we haven't discussed this [change] anywhere ... A quite large number of academics "hover" about today – who belongs where? (a.) [CU2, economics, 14 year]

These texts typify the academics' accounts of the confusion that exists around programmes and degrees since the introduction of the Western three-tier system. As we can see the academics reveal their attitudes to these changes through constant comparisons with the Soviet system. For example, there are repeated references to the Soviet system with its better training, Kandidat and Doktors' theses, and defence procedures, so that equating these to the Western ones "is not appropriate" (Tatyana L.). As I argue throughout this thesis, Soviet education patterns serve as a frame of reference for post-Soviet academics, becoming context models within their talk. Van Dijk defines context models as "some kind of overall control mechanism in discourse processing ... They let us know what we believe our recipients to know already, what the current social relations are between the participants, where we are now, and what time it is, and in what social situation we are now" (2000a: 27). What is particularly relevant in relation to post-Soviet people is that context models are a representation of "people's ability to adapt themselves to current situations on the basis of a combination of old information and the capacity to analyze current situations" (ibid.: 27-28). Therefore, we can see that their responses to the reforms are determined by the post-Soviet context models, which I also refer to as pre-existing knowledge (Chapter IV, subsection 1.2), and which influence people's understandings and misunderstandings of Western practices.

An opposition between "us" and "them" is clear and apparent in their resistance to the reform process. "We" is used to indicate a collective of all academics as a professional group. This makes it clear that what the participants in one HEI experience through the reforms is relevant to their colleagues in other HEIs. As I stated earlier (Chapter VI, section 3.1), it is a professional norm to speak as a representative of a wider institutional or organisational structure, rather than from an individual position (van Dijk 2000a).

The other term, “them”, has many meanings. These include the Kazakhstan education authority and Western education as a general entity. While this opposition to the West operates at the level of comparisons between the quality of the programmes and the degrees, it is accompanied by a recognition of their own misunderstandings and lack of knowledge about Western standards. As can be seen in the extracts, the academics do, in fact, lack knowledge of the Bachelor’s and Master’s qualifications, neither do they recognise the difference between these: “it’s not clear to us who are these Bachelors. They’re not specialists yet, and to which level of competence do we need to teach them? And who are these Masters, who aren’t specialists already, and what competencies should they have?” (Berik K.).

In other words, the introduction of the Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes seems to have happened without either the provision of clear information or the adequate preparation of staff. In their talk, the main criticisms are directed at those in power, who are responsible for staff being unaware of how to teach students to Western standards (Berik K., Urii N.). The participants’ negativity is also directed at the introduction of changes without any prior discussion with staff (Tatyana L.). They identify themselves as professionals, something which also is transmitted through their use of professional notions and criteria (van Dijk 1995a), such as quality, thesis defence, “applied character”, and “level of competence”.

The overall responsibility of the Ministry is constructed by presenting these shortcomings as the result of the Ministry’s failures, something which is repeated throughout the texts. Yet, the participants avoid explicitly naming the education authority, rather it is identified through their criticism of its actions. Within these criticisms, the participants use either a passive form, such as “it is not clear to us” and “the staff has not been explained”, or an active form but one implying that this has been the result of others’ actions, such as “we haven’t discussed” and “we haven’t got a clear understanding”. While both forms mitigate the negativity, they imply an accusation against those who govern the changes. Given that the reforms are being forcefully imposed, the academics transmit an ideology in which they are victimised by the dominant power, thus being under pressure to meet the authority’s requirements even while they indicate the impossibility of doing so. The impossibility of meeting the new standards derives from the absence of clear instructions and information about the substance of the reforms, which is not being provided by the authority.

The negative representation of the other is constructed as a response to their unqualified approach and incompetence in equating former Soviet degrees to Western ones, coloured by strong personal opposition from the participants. The use of metaphors, such as “hover[ing]” (Tatyana L.), and exaggerations, such as describing the change as “a terrible insult” to local

Doktors (Svetlana Z.), is further evidence that the academics feel that they are victims of the dominant power's policies. The employment of rhetorical figures, such as hyperbole and metaphors, often serves as a way of "demonising" the other side through "the exaggerated representation of the problem in terms of illness ('pathologies,' 'virus')" (D'Souza 1995, cited in van Dijk 2001b: 362). In this way, the position of academics as "victims" is transmitted.

Their discomfort with their status is increased by the appearance of younger colleagues, who have been awarded a PhD degree, that carries doctoral status while requiring less rigorous research. Probably this brought a lowering of the participants' status and bad feelings about their current professional positions. In such accounts, the education authority is represented as oppressive, unfair and uncaring towards academics and as mismanaging the reforms. The overall critical account fits with other participants' beliefs about wrongdoings by the authority. As often happens, a negative representation of others is a means for constructing a positive representation of your own side (van Dijk 2006a). The underlying message the academics transmit is along the lines: "we are the ones who worry about education and stand for proper reforms".

The clash in ideological priorities between the two sides is complicated by the reality of an overall lack of information, skills and knowledge. Such ignorance is likely a feature of the whole society, where Bachelor's degrees are not recognised. Indeed, institutional ignorance of Western degrees and qualifications is not only a feature of the Kazakhstan reality. This is also common to other post-Soviet countries, such as Ukraine (Nyborg 2004), Russia and Georgia, where "there is a lack of knowledge and understanding about what exactly the title of 'Bachelor' stands for and how the old five-year programmes should be changed in order to produce coherent and meaningful Bachelor programmes" (Glonti and Chitashvili 2007: 215). Thus, in the post-Soviet states where the Bologna standards were introduced, the transfer to Bachelor's programmes was made by simply squeezing a five-year specialist programme into four years (*ibid.*). Therefore, there is a general tendency for post-Soviet employers to give preference to Master's degree holders, while those with a Bachelor's degree are treated as insufficiently trained: "the Bachelor degree does not appear to be something one could enter the labour market with" (Glonti and Chitashvili 2007: 217). Hence, similar to the findings from my Kazakhstan participants, institutional ignorance is feature across post-Soviet members of the Bologna Process, where "neither professors nor students are able to differentiate between study at Bachelor's and Master's degree levels, although the professors seem to perceive Master's degree level training in terms of preparation for the Candidate of Sciences [*sic*] training, the so-called aspirantura" (*ibid.*: 216).

As I stated in Chapter II, section 2, Kazakhstan chose to make radical changes in order to meet the standards of the Bologna Process. It is the only state in the post-Soviet area that set out to formally equate Soviet research degrees with Western ones, while other post-Soviet states (Russia and Ukraine) did not do this. I consider this radical approach to the reforms as a whole, and the equating of degrees in particular, as supported by the underlying political motives of those in power and their desire to integrate closely with the Western system, at the expense of distorting educational values. Similar to the other cases (Chapter V, section 3; Chapter VI, section 3), here one can see that conflict arises due to the different desires of the agents of the reforms: while the academics are concerned about education, its quality, and their professional positions in the system, they struggle with these challenges on their own.

Also, as we saw in earlier chapters (Chapter V; Chapter VI, section 3), and as is seen here, references to Soviet standards, such as higher quality theses and stronger doctoral defences, make these appear preferable when participants look to their confusing current reality and find themselves desperate. The Soviet patterns then become the better options as they are well-known and familiar to staff. Recalling models from the Soviet past is a mark of nostalgic sentiments, even though this appears alongside the dominant discourse of chaotic reform. Yet, the nostalgia in such uses by academics is not necessarily “antimodern” (Boym 2007). As Boym states, nostalgia can be “not merely an expression of local longing, but the result of a new understanding of time and space that made the division into ‘local’ and ‘universal’ possible” (ibid.: 8). In such a view, in contrast, the Soviet patterns are seen as local and native. Then reference to Soviet patterns becomes a means of escaping from their confused current reality, some sort of a defense mechanism (Boym 2007). In other words, it is because of this inconsistency that the Soviet patterns seem more attractive and that leads to the appearance of the nostalgia discourse. Thus it can be suggested that in a consistent, well-executed reform process the discourse of nostalgia would not be used by the participants.

Thus, one possible conclusion, in relation to the implementation of international patterns in local contexts, is that while education reforms are borrowed, these are not authentically understood by the local politically-motivated authorities, which then impose them in distorted forms. Added to this, the lack of understanding and knowledge about the borrowed models by those implementing them, for example, about the qualitative standards of PhD theses in Western HEIs, led to poor quality research performance, and to weak PhD theses in particular. Yet, such recontextualisation of Western models in post-Soviet contexts also follows objective factors, such as existing discrepancies between the systems, as we saw in relation to research degrees. The discourses of chaotic reform and abusive power relationships also dominate the theme of academic publishing.



## **2. Participants' views on the challenges involved in academic publishing**

Pursuing closer integration with the European and global academic communities, the Kazakhstan education authority has set certain requirements for publishing articles in journals with high impact factors. In practice, the country's academics face a number of problems, ranging from a lack of competency in foreign languages (mainly English) to the need to learn how to write in the international academic style. Many of these limitations are a legacy of the historical isolation of Soviet academics from the international academic community. Historically, the strong Soviet ideology regulated the development of the social sciences and the humanities, creating a situation in which there are few scholars in the post-Soviet world who are trained in methods and research to Western standards (Stern and Husbands 1989) (Chapter II, section 1.2).

As was the case with the introduction of the three-tier qualification system (section 1), the credit system (Chapter VI, section 1), and student-oriented learning and testing systems (Chapter VI, sections 2 and 3), the demand by the education authority for Kazakhstan academics to publish internationally is impossible to attain for objective and subjective reasons. In this section, I argue that the reform of Kazakhstan's research and scientific practice combines forceful imposition of Western criteria with the authority's ignorance of the local education reality. I argue that the academics respond here predominantly by drawing on the discourse of chaotic reform, but with a loyalty to Western academic standards for which they draw on the discourse of modernity and progress, unlike what we saw in the previous section. In this section I show how influential the post-Soviet context is for the reform of research and scientific practice under international standards. Through this, then, we can understand how the borrowed standards are re-contextualised according to local conditions.

I chose to include three main themes in this section, that recurred most in the interviews. These are the academics' accounts of the authority's pressure to increase their international publications, that are imposed on staff across the disciplines (subsection 2.1); the requirement to pay for publications (section 2.2), and the particular challenges of publishing for academics in the social sciences and the humanities (subsection 2.3).

### ***2.1. The pressure for international academic publications***

After the changes made to Kazakhstan's research structure, namely the removal of research and science from the Akademia Nauk and the allocation of these to HEIs (Chapter II, section 2), the pressure on academics increased. In the interviews, participants identified severely increased publishing demands and this was one of the most painful themes for them. All those

9 participants who talked about this topic had a Kandidat Nauk degree, a scientific degree awarded for the defence of Kandidat Thesis, written during the three years of study of the aspirantura. The key points of this discourse can be identified as follows: a. there is a strong demand to increase publications; b. there is an incongruity between an authoritarian approach and the depth needed for good research; c. a thorough approach to research is needed; d. there has been poor administration of the process. In response to my question about the requirements under Western standards, these answers were typical:

Iliya R.: Yes, the strongest demands. (a.) ... And this is very difficult. [CU1, journalism, 20 years]

Demey E.: Exactly, they force us ... Thomson Reuters appeared, now [they] say that we need to rise in the international rankings and for publications to increase. (a.) For this we need to put science on a new footing. (c.) There wasn't actually any university's science in the Soviet time. But now we have to increase, to double what we're doing. (a.) It requires a very careful, very meticulous approach, and much effort. (c.) We don't work hard enough. (b.) They are going to allocate a lot of money, but science can't be fixed with money. (b.) There's a need for appropriate people who will govern this. (d.) They should treat it carefully and cultivate [research], rather than demand. With demands alone science can't be improved (b.) [CU1, physics, 13 years]

Zhanna F.: It requires concrete purposeful and systematic work. (c.) Again, due to time constraints we don't do this, (d.) although there are quite strict criteria for the universities' assessment (a.) ... And they tell us: how do you succeed in scientific publishing, do you have publications? (a.) [There are] very serious problems. And efficiency is very low ... almost in the entire university. In order to get a very good article to be published in a journal with an impact factor, there's a need for the research and the results which will serve as a basis for the article. (c.) And if there's no such work, how could there be an article? (b.) [RU1, mathematics, 26 years]

These texts demonstrate how participants responded to the reform process being carried out in the field of research and science. Here their opposition to the educational authority is explicit. Demey E. applies "we" to academics in general and "they" to those in power, where "we" seems to be applied to the side of the academics and the academic research practice in general.

The authority's politics is represented as a deterioration of scientific values. The need to rise in the rankings describes the dominant power's overall politics ("now [they] say that we need to rise in the international rankings and for publications to increase" - Demey E.). Their political intention is to conform to international standards by any means, and is possibly combined with a fear of "falling behind" internationally (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006: 189). In the participants' views the authority's desire to get fast and visible results, using quantitative indicators, does not consider the need to nurture research and that quality is attained through effort and thoroughness. It also intends to get results by using compulsion and making severe demands of staff. The participants stress this by using the phrases "the strongest demands", "they force us", and "we have to increase". Their discontentment with the current situation is due to the distortion of the values to which they hold. These values include a concern about research and its quality, for example, they dwell a lot on "quality" and the effort and work involved in research ("It requires a very careful, very meticulous approach, and much effort" - Demey E.; "It requires concrete purposeful and systematic work" - Zhanna F.); they are part of the norms of those who identify themselves as professionals.

The distortion of these values generates opposition and resistance to the Ministry's approach. Yet, participants' talk also accuses the Ministry of being unable to organise their environment and workloads so as to support their increased engagement in research activity: "due to time constraints we don't do this" (Zhanna F.). This is understandable given the participants' complaints about increased paperwork and teaching overload (Chapter VI, section 2). Overall, they see themselves as suffering under the Ministry's superficial attitude to research and its unrealistic demands of people. As we saw in Chapters V and VI, an opposition between us and them, with the former positioned as victims of the latter, is integral to the chaotic reform discourse.

The ideological position of the academics implies their commitment to proper administration, and thus they resist the Ministry's attitude. The remark that: "there's a need for appropriate people who will govern this. They should treat it carefully and cultivate [research]" (Demey E.) suggests that there are inappropriate people in power and that the Ministry is unprofessional. The transmission of the academics' ideology through the values of research quality and professional governance, again indicates a professional identity.

As in many other cases, they avoid directly naming their opposite side, replacing it with the pronoun "they", to create a clearly-defined object: "they force us", "they tell us", "they are going to allocate a lot of money", and so on. In such phrases, "they" are those people who allocate money, and who force and tell others what to do, and thus who have resources concentrated

in their hands: “Power is based on privileged access to valued social resources, such as wealth, jobs, status, or indeed, a preferential access to public discourse and communication” (van Dijk 1996: 85).

Behind these overarching criticisms of the demands to publish and of a lack of professionalism, there is a conflict between two ideologies: the political goals of the authority and the professional goals of the staff. The contrast between these two approaches is expressed through the difference between “cultivate” and “demand”: “They should treat it carefully and cultivate [research], rather than demand” (Demey E.). This refers to the “top-down” approach to the education reforms in Kazakhstan, which I discussed elsewhere (Chapter V, section 3; Chapter VI, sections 2.2 and 3.1).

Yet, we also see an indication of the discourse on modernity and progress, which, as in other cases (Chapter V, section 1; Chapter VII, subsection 2.3), is disclosed through the recognition of the excellence of the Western traditions in research and the drawbacks of the previous system. The evidences for this include: “There wasn’t actually any university science in the Soviet time.” (Demey E.) and “In order to get a very good article to be published in a journal with an impact factor, there’s a need for the research and the results which will serve as a basis for the article.” (Zhanna F.). The remark of Zhanna F. is remarkable, as she talks about the norms of Western academic publication, which are not widely recognised by other post-Soviet academics. Instead, there are various interpretations of this conception (see Chapter VII, subsection 2.3). So, we can see that Western academic values are preferable for higher professional performance and hence point to the modernity and progress discourse in the views of the participants.

Overall the academics find themselves in a constrained environment, where, on the one hand, they face demands to increase their publications in international journals, and, on the other hand, they are under pressure, overloaded and badly managed. In other words, they respond by drawing on the discourse of chaotic reform, with the combination of the one of modernity and progress. The discourse of the chaotic reform, as the critical one here, has many factors for its appearance. As we saw in the previous chapter (Chapter VI), the chaotic reform discourse is commonly generated through a clash between different approaches to implementing borrowed policies. In this particular case, there is a clash between political and professional values, which creates an ideological conflict between the two sides.

I point throughout this study to the prevalence of a top-down authoritarian style of management in the administration of the reforms in Kazakhstan. This is a pattern inherited from the Soviet social system, within which the achievement of political goals justifies the

means, even if it damages professional practice. Similarly, this top-down style within post-Soviet education is about political governance rather than professional management. I argue that post-Soviet education lacks the professional management, which started to develop after the fall of the socialist system and with the development of a market economy, and which now can be found in commercial spheres. Yet, education and research, being financed by the state, are still governed using a political approach and, as we can see from the analysis here and elsewhere, this gives little consideration to the field and its professional needs. So, what Demey E. identifies as a lack of appropriate people in the Ministry, is to some degree a reflection of the objective reality of post-Soviet education and research.

Therefore, two local factors should be taken into account when it comes to understanding the character of the reforms to post-Soviet education: the absence of professional management and the presence of Soviet-style authoritarian governance. These factors influence the implementation of borrowed Western policies, which operate differently in the local context than in their home context. The use of quantitative indicators to force staff to publish internationally is evidence of how re-contextualisation relates to local conditions (Schriewer 1990; 2000; Steiner-Khamsi 2012b). This parallels the recontextualisation of the testing system in Kazakhstan, where it was imposed in order to end corruption (Chapter VI, section 3). So, we can see that the effects of the re-contextualisation of borrowed patterns, in relation to local conditions, at a deeper level, are not good for education. Rather the reforms are pursued due to internal politics, to be closer integrated with the Western world as part of a post-colonial agenda. The specificity of the post-Soviet context runs through the academics' accounts of the need to pay to publish.

## ***2.2. The need to pay to publish internationally***

The theme of the need to self-finance in order to publish in international journals arose during the interviews. This was an unexpected turn as I did not assume that this would be a problem for local academics. Also it was a very widespread opinion among the participants; in many cases all the problems with publishing were reduced to this one. Overall 17 people discussed this theme. The key features of their discussion are: a. they need to pay to publish; b. it is expensive and unaffordable; c. publishing in international academic journals with impact factors is required For example:

Bek S.: They are all paid, practically, that's it. (a.) I encountered this problem: to publish an article that would have an impact factor. (c.) I found one collection, but first, there

was the cost; this cost was more than my monthly salary and there's the same problem with translations. (b.) [RU2, psychology, 10 years]

Urii N.: Well, all these publications, even in Ukraine, even in Germany, they're all for money (a.). Then [they] refund money, there's this regulation at the university, specially designed, that [they] refund, compensate. But all the same, you still need to have 500, 600, 700 dollars to throw out, then [you] wait until [they] refund it. Well, today [you] should be able to eat as well. (b.) [CU2, management, 21 years]

Zoya G.: Well, today in our university, it's required that we have more international publications, than ones in our country. (c.) But due to the fact that international publications require a financial outlay, we can only afford Russian [publications]. (a./b.) We are probably the only department among those in our university that publishes more than others, although in Russian journals. How to classify these Russian journals: as international or not? But other issues, say, more meaningful issues, we just can't afford it. (b.) It's required that we pay. (a.) Even in Prague, which offers a range of journals, educational ones. ... They say that they're going to get impact factors, and so, the price is such ... when I said this amount to my colleagues. (b.) ... Well, I don't know [about non-paid journals]. Maybe I'm uninformed in this regard, I only know those with payment. (a.) [RU2, psychology, 20 years]

As can be seen from the above, there is a tension between the requirement to publish internationally following the new standards and the need to pay for this. While opposition to the education authority is not clear and open, it is expressed in a subtle way. The "we-they" polarisation indicates the conflict, where the pronoun "they" refers to HEI management or to the Ministry. The representation of the own side through "we" is inclusive and constructs all academics as a social group. As in many of the other cases analysed here, the academics speak out as members of a larger institutional or organisational group, rather than as individuals, as is characteristic of professionals (van Dijk 2000a).

Their own side is represented as suffering, in a disadvantaged position and dominated by educational power. Their aggrieved position is based in the combination of an imposed demand to publish more articles, the need for payment and the ignoring of this by those in power. The use of exaggerations is powerful here, for example: "today [you] should be able to eat as well" (Urii N.) and "this cost was more than my monthly salary" (Bek S.). Exaggeration is a strategy that emphasises negative information about others (van Dijk 1995b). While here this

is used to show the amount of payment needed, it is largely designed to point out the inhumane politics of those in power, and thus to “demonise” them (van Dijk 2001b).

While at a first look, the participants demonstrate the general identity of members of society, constructing their views around “money”, something which can play a role for any other social group, I would also point here to their professional identity. Following the logic of the analysis offered by van Dijk (1998a), the academics in fact construct their opinions around the criteria of “resources”, which is one of the ideological categories of those who identify themselves as professionals. This category corresponds to discussion of which resources they have as a social group, implying a questioning of “What do we have, and what do we not have?” (ibid.: 25). In this regard, the participants’ focus on their limited financial capacity is likely to be explained by their identification with those in society who are poorly paid. Indeed, traditionally for post-Soviet states, academics, like other state employees, are underpaid. This is similar to the case I analysed earlier where the low salaries of post-Soviet academics are constructed as a characteristic of their profession (Chapter VI, subsection 2.1).

Such representations inevitably transfer a negative representation to those in power (“they”), as it challenges their dominance (van Dijk 1993). In other words, by positioning themselves in a relationship of inequality, the participants indicate that “others are bad”, invoking the opposition “we are good” versus “they are bad” (van Dijk 1998a: 33). Hence, one can notice here that academics, as the dominated group, communicate several ideologies, where one is the belief that the imposed requirements are unrealistic, and another is that they are a poorly paid social group. Hence the latter justifies their resistance to the demands of those in power.

Furthermore, the participants (for example, Zoya G., Urii N.) talk about journals published in Russia, Ukraine and Prague in relation to their financial affordability, which at a deeper level we can link to the issue of language. Being published in Russian is accessible, because most Kazakhstan professionals have a good command of Russian, compared to English. The focus of these journals can be an implied discourse of nostalgia, when the known patterns, such as Russian language, are treated as preferable in the environment of unrealistic and confusing demands. In Prague, which is not random example, being in a former socialist state, the academic journals in Russian are aimed at a post-socialist audience. I would suggest that stressing the scarcity of money is a way for them to avoid talking about their language competency, which is in fact a large obstacle to publishing in international journals and which is more dependent on their individual efforts (see section 3 below). Instead, focusing on the financial cost, which is quite a widespread concern, adds to the negative representation of those in power and highlights the overall drawbacks of the system. I see this as an example of

local semantic meanings, following van Dijk, who states that local meanings are related to “underlying beliefs, but not openly, directly or precisely asserted for various contextual reasons, including the well-known ideological objective to de-emphasize “Our bad things and Their good things” (van Dijk 2009: 69).

Analysis of these extracts shows that the imposed standards pose insurmountable challenges for academics, who lack the resources needed to meet these demands. As ideology often takes the form of a “cluster of beliefs” (van Dijk 1998b: 22), in this case we can see several of the participants’ beliefs: the educational authority forces the issue of international publishing, staff need to pay for this, staff lack financial resources, international publishing is practically impossible, and the dominant power ignores the academics’ suffering. The participants show themselves as suffering from being in the contradictory conditions created by the dominant power.

The conflict develops as politically-driven reforms clash with the existing reality. This situation creates chaos within the reforms, which as I argue throughout this study, is the result of a clash between two mutually exclusive approaches to the reforms, in this case, between political ambitions and academic resources. Further to this, the chaos in the Kazakhstan reforms is complicated by the lack of adequate information about international standards and how the latter operate in their home location. Hence, I would identify the chaotic reform discourse of as the central one, while with the combination of nostalgic feelings.

Indeed Kazakhstan staff take seriously their belief that it is necessary to pay for publications in international journals. In answer to my question on what they know about non-pay journals, Zoya G.’s reply, for example, was: “Well, I don’t know [about non-paid journals]. Maybe I’m uninformed in this regard, I only know those with payment”. I was told several times independently while conducting the interviews for this research that academics are commonly offered publishing opportunities in exchange for particular sums of money. In fact, outside of the hard sciences, very few of the highest ranked journals with the strongest reputations in their fields charge a publication fee. Yet, this is seemingly unknown, even to the Kazakhstan education authority itself. I say this in relation to a specifically designed regulation through which academics initially pay to have their journal articles published and then the university refunds their expenses, as Urii N. explains above. This regulation should be viewed as a supportive measure to stimulate academic publication, created by the Ministry of Education, yet, operating primarily in the capital HEIs, as these attract more funding from the state than regional ones. The organisation of such support is evidence of the limited information about the non-pay international journals.



This offers an understanding of the local context in which the Kazakhstan implementers operate and of the context models they carry in their minds. As can be seen, often local agents have to deal with an environment marked by incomplete or incorrect information, which creates myths about the West and Western education. The belief that Western students are used to independent learning from earlier stages of their lives is of a similar type (Chapter VI, subsection 3.1). Such misinterpretations occur due to a lack of information, which commonly generates myths (Sittig and Ash 2009).

From the perspective of policy borrowing, this demonstrates how international patterns are adopted into local practice, operating within internal conditions. As can be seen from the analysis in this section, these internal conditions include various factors related to people's approaches and to the post-Soviet system itself. Human factors are influential when it comes to the dominance of political over educational goals and the institutional ignorance, evident in the lack information, knowledge and skills of the reform agents. The practice of refunding publication costs, as in Urie N.'s extract, can provide a stimulus to increase the number of international publications, which the authority considers politically beneficial (subsection 2.1). The case analysed here is remarkable evidence of how the borrowed Western standard of academic publishing in international journals plays out in local conditions (Steiner-Khamsi and Quist 2000; Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006). Its re-contextualisation in local practice (Steiner-Khamsi 2012b) is shaped by a lack of information of how Western standards operate in their home context. This lack of information is an objective consequence of the absence of those with knowledge about the Western education norms among the post-Soviet reform agents. The combination of these factors in the post-Soviet context creates the reality of chaotic reform.

These context models are inevitable as they were largely formed in the past and are a feature of today's post-Soviet reality. Their influence is even greater in relation to post-Soviet social sciences and humanities, which, for decades, developed separately from the international academic community. In the following subsection I move to analyse participants' accounts of this theme.

### ***2.3. The challenges of academic publishing in the post-Soviet social sciences and humanities***

The academics' accounts on the challenges of publishing in the social sciences and the humanities formed another topic of discussion, which may be surprising to most Westerners. The challenges that academics in these fields of study face are linked to particular Soviet and post-Soviet practices, which I would argue prevent Kazakhstan social science and humanities

scholars from integrating into the international academic community and meeting international standards. Seven of the 18 participants with qualifications in these fields mentioned this topic. The main features of this discourse are: a. there are difficulties with publishing for social science and humanities scholars; b. there are differences between research in these fields in the two systems. For example:

Iliya R.: For example, big disputes arise about how to publish for Türkologists, philologists, or for us journalists. (a.) ... Now scientists at our university certainly publish, between 80 and 200 articles with an impact factor per year. But all these articles are by naturalists [natural scientists] somewhere, no more than five humanities academics publish. This issue is not yet resolved (a.) We were taught by our American counterparts how to conduct research. (b.) Much of what was written before, well, if I'm comparing now, it had "a lot of water."<sup>xxxv</sup> (b.) They bring the bare facts. And the writing itself, the language of an article doesn't look like what we've been doing for many years. (b.) So this process doesn't just take one year. [CU1, journalism, 20 years]

Boris O.: One of the difficulties in the new system is publishing in the humanities, for example, in my field, philosophy. (a.) I know that their publications are different from ours. (b.) [RU1, philosophy, 12 years]

Berik K.: Great difficulties arise with publications in journals with non-zero index citation rates. (a.) [RU1, psychology, 20 years]

It is clear from these extracts that publishing internationally is considered a serious problem by these social science and humanities scholars. They link these challenges to the differences between the practices in the two systems and to their inability to write at an international level. There is the same strategy of a "we-they" opposition found throughout the analysis in this study. The pronoun "we" can probably be attributed to all Kazakhstan professionals as well as to the entire post-Soviet research community and to practice in the social sciences and the humanities as a whole. On the contrary, "they" presumably refers to their foreign counterparts and the Western academic world as a whole.

Here we can see that the typical strategy of opposing "our good" with "their bad" (van Dijk 2011: 39) is not used. Instead, the representation of the other side avoids any explicitly negative judgements. On the contrary, their own side is positioned as following the lead of others, as "they" teach "us" and demonstrate their higher professional standards. This also

feeds the assumption that “our side” are weak, because “we” cannot conduct research as required. Their own side is represented in a negative light, yet, their criticism is not directed against themselves, but rather against the Soviet and post-Soviet traditions of research, where writing with “a lot of water” was the norm. There is a contrast between the Soviet system and the Western systems.

Overall, all the talk is constructed around the norm of research quality with the use of “specific institutional terms” (van Dijk 2002: 21), such as “Türkologists”, “philologists”, “humanities”, “impact factor”, and “non-zero index citation rates”. In this way it implies the professional identity through which the participants identify themselves. Yet, I would also point to the Soviet identity here, because the participants adhere to past traditions; they associate themselves with these, while somehow downplaying them. The admission of their own poor research tradition and the other better Western one draws on the discourse of modernity and progress. Similar to the case I analysed earlier (Chapter V, section 3; Chapter VI, subsection 3.2), the participants praise Western patterns and thus Western advancement because the latter represents higher professional value, and thus quality of performance for them as professionals. Yet, I would suggest that, in situations where people want to present themselves in a good light, they may choose to do so by ascribing to progressive values, even if they traditionally associate these with “others”. As van Dijk states “Face-keeping or positive self-presentation are well-known phenomena in social psychology, sociology and communication research, and are part of the overall strategy of impression management” (1992: 89).

As professionals, quality of performance is important to them. They construct their accounts around the issue of the quality of academic papers and through a comparison between the systems in terms of performance quality: “our” writing had “a lot of water” – they “bring bare facts”. Even though in fact, the Western academic tradition is not about simply concerned with revealing “bare facts”, as Iliya R. presents it, he compares this to what “we’ve been doing for many years”, meaning the settled practices in the Soviet social sciences and humanities. The latter is different from the Western approach by “the writing itself, the language of an article”.

It is obvious to them that what they have been doing for many decades needs to change. This is viewed by academics as very difficult to do and they are frustrated. How the academics describe these challenges and the complexity of the problem demonstrates that they are under pressure, yet, obligated to perform to the new demands. The repetition of the word “difficult” is evidence of these feelings: “Great difficulties arise”, “One of the difficulties”, as well as “big disputes arise”, “this issue is not yet resolved”, and “this process doesn’t just take one year”.

Their underlying belief can be summarised in the phrase “we cannot do this”. Yet, another belief is that they are only partly responsible for this failure and for the low quality of their research, as they are part of that system.

Being frustrated because they lack the knowledge and skills to write at an international level is a feature of institutional ignorance, which I would identify as the other side of the chaotic reform discourse. This is added to by the representation of themselves as suffering under the new requirements. So, they find themselves in a constraining situation, where the new requirements, imposed from above, are impossible to fulfil due to limitations of academics’ possibilities and professional resources.

The recognition that “our research practice is not good” indicates a wider context which goes back into Soviet history. As I discussed already in the methodology chapter (Chapter IV, subsection 1.2), the Soviet state ideology strived to control people's minds and intellectual life in society and, hence, it regulated the development of the social sciences and the humanities. As a result, there was progress in natural sciences and “in fields like mathematical economics and archaeology, but stagnation in fields like sociology, political science, social psychology, and applied economics” (Stern and Husbands 1989: 29). Iliya R. points to the disproportionate number of Kazakhstan publications across disciplines; this is a reflection of the Soviet pattern, described by Stern and Husbands. For example, using data from the Thomson Reuters’ National Science Indicators, the share of foreign publications by Kazakhstan academics in the global total is 0.021%. Of this number, more than 90% are scientific papers related to five subject areas: chemistry (1420 articles), physics (1168 articles), biology (402 articles), medicine (393 articles) and earth sciences (364 articles) (Idrissov 2011).

Another metaphorical remark by Iliya R. concerns “pouring water”, which in fact is a long-term approach in the Soviet social sciences. The key difference from the West, I would argue, is the absence of arguments and argumentative writing which are the main features of academic papers and theses in the West. Instead, most post-Soviet publications present the flow of one’s own thoughts in combination with those of other authors, playing with and narrating ideas based on formal logic. The overall gist of this style can be understood from the following quotation from Gonerko-Frej, who refers to Kaplan’s rhetorical models:

the Polish rhetorical pattern is represented by the so-called *Russian* line – with an irregular pattern of numerous turns and deviations from the path. This is translatable into a writing style that often loses focus, diverting the reader from the main line of

argumentation with frequent digressions and a substantial amount of irrelevant material.  
(2014: 76, original emphasis)

Besides the style of writing, there many other gaps, which prevent Kazakhstan social scientists and humanities scholars from publishing internationally. Within these, I include: ignorance of the importance of methodology in research,<sup>xxxvi</sup> and the misinterpretation of basic research conceptions, such as “research publication”<sup>xxxvii</sup> and “theoretical article”<sup>xxxviii</sup>. Yet, the main problem here is the lack of information among post-Soviet academics which create different myths among them about the West.<sup>xxxix</sup> It can then be understood why post-Soviet academics in the social sciences and the humanities find publishing in the international journals challenging.<sup>xl</sup>

From this analysis we can see that the Kazakhstan academics experience specific challenges in their research practice, which are likely to be characteristic of other Second World states. Thus the integration of post-Soviet Kazakhstan research practice into the international academic world faces many obstacles, some of which may be unknown to Westerners. For example, the lack of professional skills and knowledge by university staff is one of these obstacles.

Another set of contextual factors is the lack of information and knowledge of Western models among those implementing the reforms, which then creates myths about the Western world, such as the widespread belief about the need to pay to publish (see section 2.2). I see such obstacles as partly objective and as a consequence of the absence of professional management and people with knowledge in the field. This, in turn, is increased by the fixed political approach of post-Soviet society, in which a top-down command-style, primarily oriented to political achievements, ignores the educational reality and does not promote proper adaptation and internalisation of international reforms.

In summary, these factors, first of all, show how borrowed patterns are re-contextualised in the post-Soviet Kazakhstan context. They also confirm the idea that the post-Soviet specific cannot be ignored by anybody with the intention to understand the Westernisation reform process. This inevitable combination of post-Soviet context models with borrowed Western standards creates a chaotic reform environment and the discourse of chaotic reform is the central one for local academics. Yet, this is combined with their preference for progressive Western models, when they recognise their association with higher professional levels.

In this section I analysed the challenges around research and academic publication in Kazakhstan from the perspective of the country's academics. Now I turn to an analysis of their accounts of the challenges associated they face with foreign language competency.

### **3. Foreign language competency and post-Soviet academics**

At the start of each interview I asked participants about the most significant difficulties they had encountered during the reforms. They indicated that lack of foreign language competency, primarily in English, was one of the main difficulties preventing them from publishing internationally and going abroad for training and for academic mobility. Also, as I explained earlier (Chapter II, sub-subsection 2.2.2.), in 2005, Kazakhstan changed its language politics and declared English and training in English as one of its priorities. It is very likely that this declaration was politically driven, yet, it put staff in Kazakhstan HEIs under more pressure. Thirty-two participants expressed their views on the challenges they face with English. Their replies included several key points: a. few academics know English; b. the lack of English limits them; c. they have a desire to know English; d. a concern with institutions' facilities for studying English.

Berik K.: Publishing in international journals and knowledge of foreign languages is hard. (b.) This isn't accessible enough for me personally and for many older academics. (a.) I actively learn English. I've already reached level B1-B2 [Beginners English]. (c.) [RU1, psychology, 20 years]

Veronica D.: I want to learn English and I did, when I worked for another university. (c.) We had [a course] there, for staff after work. It was free. The Department of English conducted classes for those who wished to learn. (d.) For example, I studied German, and I know it well, but English ... I didn't know it at all, but due to that, I attended that English course for about three months, at least I learned to read, because reading in German and English are two different things. In the university here [there's] no English course. (d.) That's why I'm always saying that our administration itself isn't interested in it. You need to solve it on your own. It turns out it only depends on me. (d.) ... Right now I don't learn English, but I think ... I know that I need it and would like to. (c.) [RU2, psychology, 17 years]

Iliya R.: We've lots of children who know English, Turkish, French, who have high marks in foreign languages, but there are not many places [to study abroad]. As for

academics, here the situation is the complete opposite. (a.) There are dozens of places, but few who wish to go, (a.) because they aren't proficient in English, German, or French. (a.) The staff can go on "Bolashak." They're funded. It's a problem with language. (b.) And foreign universities sometimes offer for group of five people to go there with one extra free place. But they can't even find five people, because if they go, an interpreter will be needed (b.). [CU1, journalism, 20 years]

Zoya G.: No, not English [course]. (b.) Why? Because it all depends on the finance. Yes, you can learn yourself, at your own expense. (c.) ... But if, given the fact that we stay at work from 8:30am to 6:00pm, ... [long pause], not to a language. [RU2, psychology, 20 years]

There are several aspects to this issue. First, there is the academics' recognition of their lack of foreign language proficiency which limits their opportunities to go abroad for professional trips and to publish internationally. Second, while there are state-funded opportunities, there are few candidates for training abroad. Third, there is the absence of language courses for staff in their workplaces. The main message behind this is the overall problem with English for academics and thus their recognition of their own ignorance.

Here the two sides are not in open opposition, as they are elsewhere. While their own side definitely relates to academics, the other side may imply different agents. It can be attributed to the dominant power, who are imposing the international requirements. It is also can be attributed to some objective entity, such as the English-speaking world. The academics present themselves as needing to meet both the demands of the education authority and of objective reality, by understanding the necessity for the new standard. That is why one can see that the participants do not reveal any open resistance to the expectation that they learn a foreign language. Instead there is an admission of their own lack of skill and their ignorance and a discussion of the efforts undertaken to deal with this challenge.

As is the case with the challenges of publishing in the social sciences and the humanities (subsection 2.3), here the academics' own side is not represented as good or right, but as poor and unskilled. The positive representation instead is given to the other side, that of the dominant power, which provides funding for training abroad, and to the objective reality, in which English skills are good, desirable and provide better professional opportunities. In other words, the participants support the popular belief that English is a means of advancement. This indicates the academics' adherence to the ideas of progress and modernity, within which

Western patterns become preferable to their own. I would identify the discourse of modernity and progress when a preference for the patterns of others is expressed and when the academics recognise the professional value of them.

The participants' professional identity is clearly shown through their efforts to learn English. The desire and actions directed towards learning English are typical of academics; as professionals, their norms and values include pursuing professional aims (van Dijk 2002). While it is not only desire, but an active approach to learning English, for example, "I actively learn English. I've already reached level B1-B2" (Berik K.), probably reflecting the professional belief that a teacher should always be a student (Ramsden et al. 1995).

While they have a desire to learn English, there is also pressure to do so, as the staff are required to publish internationally. There is a conflict between the demands imposed from above by the authority and the impossibility of meeting these from below for the staff. In the views of my participants the real constraints are: the age of some academics (Berik K.), the absence of English courses in workplaces (Veronica D., Zoya G.), and a shortage of time because of overloading at work (Zoya G.). During the data collection I found that only in one of the four institutions is there a language course for its staff, the one which Berik K. works in. In the other three studying English becomes an individual concern. So, the authority does not organise language courses for its staff or it does so selectively and thus it is represented as ignoring and not caring about the academics: "our administration itself isn't interested in it" (Veronica D.). By "it" she probably means the Department of Foreign Languages, which most multi-profile Kazakhstan HEIs have, as has the university for which she works. Knowing how things can be organised in other places and having human resources for this, the participant says about poor university administration while there is a possibility. In this way the authority ignores the needs of people.

Overall I would identify a combination of two discourses, that of progress and modernity, mentioned above, and that of chaotic reform. Chaotic reform is caused by the clash of several factors, such as, the discrepancy between the demands of the authority, the limited resources provided to staff, the limited skills of the staff themselves, and time and financial constraints. In other words, the academics identify their chaotic and confusing reality.

Looking at this from the perspective of power relationships, it can be said that the requirement for academics to be more engaged with English is a politically-driven imposition. As I argue throughout the research the move to the EHEA primarily had political motivations, aimed at distancing the country from Russian influence and that inevitably touches on the issue of language. Similarly, the state's provision of scholarships for training abroad can be considered



as a political initiative. As I described earlier (Chapter II, section 2), in 1993, Kazakhstan was the first of all post-Soviet states to run a state programme for training its citizens abroad. However, while the education authority provides the scholarships at governmental level, it does nothing to resolve the issue within the workplace and thus the scholarships are not achievable for those who lack knowledge in foreign languages.

Beyond Kazakhstan, many European scholars point to the challenge with English faced by those from non English-speaking countries, such as Italy (Aittola et al. 2009) and France (Berthoud 2003). As Tudor, following Berthoud, states: “The challenge of academic mobility in Europe is thus of course in part of a linguistic challenge” (2005: 5). The challenge is critical in relation English, as he says: “This is especially the case with English, which is assuming a particular role as the lingua franca of academic life in Europe” (ibid.).

In this regard it can be noted that while English is a challenge for European academics, it is even more challenging for post-Soviet academics. This is because of the existence of two worlds in the mentality of post-Soviet people, where the post-Soviet world is associated with the Russian language and the Western world with English. Hence, the specificity of the post-Soviet context derives from its belonging to the Russian-speaking world. This cultural entity was separated from the rest of the world until recently and this influences the effectiveness of the reforms towards Westernisation, with the added factor of language. Similarly this pattern applies not only in the local Kazakhstan context, but more widely to the entire post-Soviet area (Pavlenko 2009).

So here one can see a clash between the political goals of the dominant power and the impossibility of HEI staff meeting their requirements due to a lack of proficiency in English. Yet, there is also a clash between two languages and even two different worlds. The mixing of different approaches/patterns into one, as we see in the analysis in this study, creates a chaotic reform process and generates the discourse of chaotic reform.

#### **4. Diverse voices**

##### ***4.1 Introducing the Western three-tier system***

In the interviews, I asked how participants felt about the introduction of a European three-level system, in place of the Soviet one. As before the following range of texts represent the opinions of the participants that were excluded from the main analysis. At the beginning of each main section, I indicated how many participants disclosed a particular ideology with two to four typical examples, which were included in the analysis. Some of the extracts below reflect the same discourses that are analysed earlier in this Chapter. However, other opinions

are presented that provide a wider contextual understanding of educational reform in Kazakhstan. Drawing on a thematic approach here, three groups of replies can be distinguished. The first group (texts 1-3 Appendix 4.3) shows a positive attitude to the change, one example of which is the following:

Saule H.: Although it is said that it was the Soviet system, in fact it's based on the old European system of education. And there, I think, it was the same three-tier system with postgraduates, lecturers, professors, and what we have now is Bachelor, Masters and Doctorate. I think it's a good idea. I have a positive attitude. [RU1, physics, 32 years]

Another group of two texts display a critical attitude to the introduction of the new three-tier system (texts 4-5), for instance:

Said Z.: The European system has been misunderstood in all these documents. In fact we have now some sort of American or South American ones. And there's now a lot of confusion. [CU1, physics, 40+ years]

Maria A.: The attitude to the European System would be normal if there was proper organisation of the educational process. [CU2, philology, 30 years]

As can be seen from both of these groups, there is a lack of detail in the responses that reinforce the idea that there is a general lack of understanding. In contrast, the third group of texts (texts 6-8 in Appendix 4.3) take a more evaluative attitude to the changes, where there is a positive evaluation of the change on the surface, but a critical one underneath. These texts are more specific than the two groups above, as they contain more detail to support the academics' views. For instance:

Galiya T.: I think that the introduction of the three-level system is a norm, but the only thing with the Bachelors here is that employers don't accept them, to be honest. But again we have such a mentality and it's our habit to think that to graduate they have to study for five years. With four years of training they're not seen as people with higher education. Then they require that for a Masters people have to study two years. And not everyone can do a Masters programme. It's good, if it's free, but in most cases it's paid. I think that three years for a PhD is a too little time, for example, for them to publish. Now [a journal with] an impact factor is required, and it's not easy to be published in such journals. [CU1, biology, 18 years]

The example above is remarkable because it shows the conflict which the introduction of the new three-tier system brought to academic practice. One of the particular challenges of the new system is that the Bachelor's degree was not acknowledged either in local educational practice or the jobs market. This constitutes a big problem not only in Kazakhstan, but, as experts argue, in the whole post-Soviet education area (Glonti and Chitashvili 2007; Nyborg 2004).

This same opinion was disclosed by other participants and in fact constitutes a conflicting discourse which was analysed in the main section earlier (section 1).

#### **4.2 The challenges of academic publishing**

Most of the texts below represent the same groups of discourses, which were discussed in the main analysis under three subsections and thus they relate to my main arguments. From the thematic analyst's perspective, they form a particular group of opinions, the most common one being on the challenges of academic publishing in Kazakhstan. Eight texts can be found in this group (texts 9-16 Appendix 4.3) and the following extracts can serve as examples:

Elena H.: We apply to translators to have a good translation, but publishing articles with an impact factor, it's a complex issue. It's rare throughout Kazakhstan. Now it's become mandatory to publish in journals with an impact factor. What are the main difficulties? Well, as usual, it's hard to obtain reliable results as everything goes through the lab to be processed. In addition, it should be an appropriate translation. Then the publication is considered over a long time. I'm not even mentioning that it costs financially. Teachers are beginning to get used to that and we can gradually adjust. [CU2, biology, 24 years]

Saule H.: Well, with the impact factors now it's difficult. The difficulties are with publishing in English. Therefore, for a non-zero factor, shall we say, in the university, there're few publications. First, many people lack time, and second, they lack the English language. Third, as they say, you need to comply with certain requirements to be published by Thompson Reuters. [RU1, physics, 32 years]

As one can see here, this group of texts also mention the same factors which prevent local academics from publishing in international journals, and which are repeated throughout by different participants. These factors are: low competency in English, the need to pay for publications, the lack of time and equipment for conducting serious research, and the mismatch between their work and international publishing requirements. As I argued, post-Soviet academics are indeed in a specific position, in which there are objective reasons why

the Western requirements imposed on them are not always achievable. These factors derive primarily from the specific situation within which research activity was separated from HE, was highly ideologically controlled, and developed within the Russian-language domain, and thus separately from the Western academic community. One of the consequences of this development was the formation of obstacles that academics have to overcome in order to integrate within international practices. In other words, what the participants disclose here is a reflection of the post-Soviet reality in which they are struggling to meet international requirements. The analysis from sections 1-3 is fully applicable here.

Another two texts (texts 17-18 in Appendix 4.3) demonstrate very different positions both personal and professional from those that have gone before:

Maria A.: I personally publish articles, but again this is just my personal interest, while others absolutely don't care. Rather they care only for reports to show that at the Department, Faculty or University everything is okay. There are people who don't publish, write or even read articles, but they still receive the same salary. The question is why then would you put in the effort to publish and spend a lot of money, when you can live in peace. [CU2, philology, 30 years]

Said Z.: When someone teaches, they must have publications at an international level. Why do I emphasise this? Many people don't pay attention to it. In the West, it's respected, and we don't. Lectures should be given by a professor who has done something in the field. This is a minimum requirement, I can explain. Even if someone is an excellent lecturer and diligent professor, but they give lectures from books – it doesn't make sense. Books appear after research publications when a long time has passed. [CU1, physics, 6 years]

Here you see how some academics engage with publishing as part of daily professional activity and do not see the same challenges their colleagues identify or face. This position links to the next sub-subsection 4.3.

#### **4.3 Foreign language competency**

In response to the question about the possible challenges with English language, academics responses can be grouped under three themes. In the first theme, one can see a repetition of the discourse about the difficulties with languages that Kazakhstan academics face within the reform environment and competency in English is a great challenge. This was the largest group of texts and it was analysed in the main section 3. As I stated earlier, 32 of the 38 participants mentioned this difficulty:

Iliya R.: We have almost no one who knows languages. They created a translation service, which translates texts, but most of the scientists themselves don't know English. [CU1, journalism, 20 years]

Tatyana L.: There's a language problem. The Soviet Union dropped slightly out of this system, it wasn't a demand before, but today it is. The students only are beginning to make up this gap, because English or German is very important for their mobility. And let's say, the teaching staff for the most part doesn't speak the language at the appropriate level. [CU2, economics, 14 year]

Indeed, as I state throughout this thesis, one of the challenges for the post-Soviet area in integrating into the international community is the difference in language. As other researchers argue, westernisation and the Bologna Process increased the significance of English language (Pavlenko 2009). While it is seen as a problem in some Western countries, it is a much greater problem in countries of the second world (Aittola et al. 2009; Berthoud 2003). The requirements under the education reforms, while they are politically desirable, are not easy to implement at the practical level and this affects how the reforms are progressing. Academics' also state that while there are some efforts to develop publications in English and to organise language courses in local HEIs, they cannot change the situation radically, because skill in a language mainly comes from individual effort focused on self-development.

The second group of texts have a positive view on the issue. Two participants offered opposing, and thus positive, opinions (texts 23-24). They state that there is no big problem with English competency and that many of their colleagues have a good command of it. The instances of this group are:

Demey E.: Language is getting not bad. We have courses. [CU1, physics, 13 years]

Elena H.: We have many teachers with a good command of a foreign language, others are actively learning, engaging. Yes, we feel time restrictions. In this sense, teachers work in their own time. [CU2, biology, 24 years]

The third and a small group of participants talked about their individual circumstances, which do not reflect an institutional voice (texts 26-27 in Appendix 4.3). One such example is:

Urii N.: I don't know English and I'm not concerned much about this. I see this as a task for our younger colleagues, but for those of my age it's too late to change. [CU2, management, 21 years]

Galiya T.: Maybe things should be published in English. I don't know much about this. I myself don't speak the English language, and I don't have time for it. I am mostly devoted to teaching, and there's no time to engage in research at all. [CU1, biology, 18 years]

While they recognise this as a general problem with English competency, they also exclude themselves from it by referring to their age and specific professional activity.

## **Conclusion**

### **Analysis of CDA discourses**

In this chapter I have analysed the academics' responses to the changes made under Western standards in the system of training programmes, academic publications, and the politics of language. Similar to the topics I discussed in Chapter VI, only part of the reform initiatives are directly related to the Bologna Process package, one of which is the introduction of the Western three-tier system (section 1). Other areas studied in this chapter constitute the wider reform package, which Kazakhstan needed to adopt because of its desire to participate in the international academic world. These are academic research and publication (section 2) and the issue of language (section 3).

It can be said that overall the same reform patterns and participant discourses, identified earlier in Chapters V and VI, recur in the analysis here. This shows that the reform of research and science in Kazakhstan under European patterns faces numerous challenges specific to post-socialist countries as a legacy of the Soviet system. The academics' dissatisfaction with the reforms is related to the general approach to the reform process, which ignores the needs and reality of education in favour of pursuing political goals. This includes the lack of prior preparation for staff and of a system to implement the new patterns; the formal equation of scientific degrees that has prompted disagreement among academics and a weakening of the academic level of doctoral theses; and the authority's demands for quantity in research production, by any means, instead of quality.

This ignoring of the realities of post-Soviet practice includes ignoring the specificity of how the research activity, including academic publication, of post-Soviet academics differs from what is common worldwide. It also includes ignoring: the misinterpretation of basic concepts, such as "research publication", in the post-Soviet system, including of a wide range of activities within this, such as participation at conferences and the production of conference presentations and teaching materials; the absence of empirical and applied investigations and weak

methodology; and a different writing style, which is a compilation of ideas and a flow of subjective thought, while lacking arguments. Primarily this relates to the post-Soviet social sciences and humanities which have suffered most under the reforms. The big problem of poor English competency among staff at Kazakhstan HEIs adds to this. Similarly this relates to the issue of payment for publishing in international journals, the cost of which appears unrealistic. These differences complicate post-Soviet academics' attempts to publish articles in journals with impact factors, if not completely discouraging them from doing so. The education authority thus is seen as unprofessional, demanding, authoritarian, and uncaring. In the view of academics the dominant position of the education authority – the Ministry with its demanding approach – makes the situation worse.

From the interviews, it can also be seen that, despite a relatively long period of pro-European reforms in the post-Soviet and wider post-socialist worlds, the patterns of Soviet education are still the benchmark for academics in their attempts to understand the reforms and in their efforts to apply the new standards. In post-Soviet academics' thinking, Western standards are understood through their correlation and comparison with the Soviet legacy of experiences and conceptions. Acknowledging this specificity will help to elucidate the complexity of the reforms as they relate to research and science and the specific barriers encountered en route to change.

Similarly to the analysis in Chapters V and VI, I found that the main discourse the academics draw on is the discourse of chaotic reform, which is the leitmotif of the Kazakhstan reform process. It is generated by a clash between contradictory patterns or approaches. Examples of these are: the contradictions between the political and educational goals of agents of the reforms, the clash between the requirements imposed from above and the limited professional skills of the staff, and the contradiction between political governance and the need for professional management and those who know the Western education. The latter is important as chaos in the Kazakhstan reforms is increased by the lack of knowledge of and information about Western education standards and the Western education system, which produces myths among post-Soviet academics. These deficits are caused both by the objective post-Soviet historical and cultural context and by human attitudes to the reform process. Another aspect of the dominant Soviet authoritarian approach is its systemic nature. The same pattern, which is the control of research and academic practice by primarily political methods, through strengthening requirements or pressure for an increase in the number of publications, was present in the Soviet system. At a deeper level, such approach could cause an objective absence of professional management within Soviet and post-Soviet education and research.

Yet, there are also the discourses of nostalgia and loss and of modernity and progress, which are actualised in particular situations. The analysis shows that the discourse of nostalgia appears in cases where the participants found themselves desperate and under pressure from various factors in their chaotic reality. Soviet patterns serve as their frame of reference offering familiar and thus better patterns to post-Soviet academics (section 1). They also respond with the discourse of progress and modernity, which is mainly found in cases where the academics recognise the professional value of practices that are commonly associated with “others” (subsection 2.3; section 3). In such cases Western patterns become preferable. Both of these discourses are interwoven with the central discourse of chaotic reform throughout the accounts.

From the analysis in this chapter we can see how post-Soviet features shape people’s responses to the reforms, changing their understanding of Western policies, and their adoption in practice. From the perspective of the theory of educational policy borrowing, we can see how the re-contextualisation of borrowed policies is determined by local conditions (Schriewer 1990, 2000; Steiner-Khamsi 2012a, 2012b, 2012c) and this provides a way to understand why the same standards work differently in the home and the borrowed contexts.

### **Analysis of alternative voices**

From the additional thematic analysis one can see that the participants in many cases prefer to reply in a general sense rather than in a detailed sense. This, for example, refers to their attitude towards the introduction of the European three-tier system or issues of foreign language competency. From these general accounts, it is difficult to conclude whether these replies are drawn upon acknowledged personal beliefs and knowledge or just an ascertainment of generally known ideas. For instance, the two participants who discussed the fact that English is not a problem for academics in Kazakhstan were themselves unable to communicate effectively in that medium. Hence there is a disconnect between what is said in terms of English language competence and the reality. This reinforces my view that academics were at times guarded when discussing the reforms with me (an outsider). This ends my analysis of the findings and now I move to my final conclusions.



## Chapter VIII. Conclusion

This thesis is the first in-depth study on the reform process in Kazakhstan's higher education. Its value is in providing the full systematic approach to the reform phenomenon, grounded on the substantial theory basis and with the application of the solid method of analysis. The study is carried out in broad cultural, historical, political and current societal contexts, both local (i.e. relating to Kazakhstan) and more widely those relating to the post-Soviet era. This has never been done before. Throughout the thesis I point out the value of using wider historical and societal post-Soviet frameworks to inform the findings. The existing literature on Kazakhstan's education reforms presents numerous disparate articles that fail to offer a holistic understanding of the process of reform, and the rich contextual framework underpinning it. These publications lack an understanding of the systemic and complex background of Kazakhstan's education, and they fail to explain how and why existing problems are not adequately addressed within Higher Education. Those who are critical about the failure of the reformation process in Kazakhstan (see Silova, Tomusk, Heynemann, OECD) or question why there is little progress in reformation (see Bridges et al 2014), do not provide any insights into the management of actual reform practice. Thus, this study offers a critical insight into the underlying context behind the visible processes of education reform. The main achievement of the research is that it offers a new comprehensive understanding of the reforms in Kazakhstan's higher education system. Again, because of the complex approach undertaken here, new insights on the process were possible. While there are other publications which suggest where Kazakhstan education system can go further (OECD 2007; Ruby and Sarinzhypov 2014) they are limited with the view of what needs to be done. They do not discuss the failure of the underlying mechanisms behind the reform process, yet, I argue it is namely because of these mechanisms that the proper reformation in Kazakhstan is ongoing. Thus, the problem facing Kazakhstan's attempts to reform is not an unawareness of what to do, it is the overall approach to the reformation by the government, as well as the lack of people who are able to bring changes.

My research studies Kazakhstan academics' responses to the reforms to Kazakhstan HE under Europeanisation, carried out in the country since the start of the twenty-first century. The most significant element in these reforms is the country officially joining the Bologna Process in 2010. However, as I argued in this study, the reforms in Kazakhstan are not limited to the implementation of the Bologna package. In practice, Kazakhstan was faced with having to implement wider changes, going far beyond the Bologna standards. The Bologna Process, at the time of its creation, for European HEIs meant further integration into a global community

already organised on the principles of Western education. However, for Kazakhstan, joining the EHEA meant stepping into the Western academic world for the first time. That is why Kazakhstan's reforms required the adoption of a wide range of features of Western education, which turned out to be a very complicated and painful process. Hence, I argue that it is appropriate to use both notions of Westernisation and Europeanisation in relation to Kazakhstan education, where the latter is an element of the former.

The fact that Kazakhstan is a Central Asian country of the post-Soviet and post-socialist world, called here as "the Second World", and now became a member of the European education community, can be a prime reason for its specificity, as well as of its possible novelty and curiosity to the Western world. Yet, the post-Soviet world is also about particularity of its societal and education system, specific people's mentality, experience, and knowledge, which I overall called the post-Soviet context. My main message in this study is that this context is highly influential in the post-Soviet people's views on the West, Western education and determine their attitudes to the changes.

My research question for this study was: how do Kazakhstan academics respond to the reforms of higher education (HE) carried out as part of Europeanisation? To answer this research question I employed qualitative research methods for both data collection and data analysis. I conducted 38 semi-structured interviews in different regions of the country with academics at four contrasting universities, the majority of whom had previously been either educated or employed in the Soviet system. Logically then that their current experiences of the Western reforms were shaped by the previous Soviet system of education.

To examine their accounts I applied the method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), based on the work of van Dijk. The choice of CDA was related to several factors. This method allows an examination of the underlying beliefs and context models in texts which are often not explicit, but which are unconsciously implicated or concealed by participants. Also, CDA enables an exploration of the power relationships existing between the opposed social groups who are engaged in specific social practices. In my case this social practice was the education reform process in Kazakhstan, with academics on the one side, and the educational authority on the other. Indeed, as can be seen throughout the analysis, the academics' responses to the reforms were in opposition to the dominant education power, who initiated, imposed and governed the implementation of Western education standards into local practice. These relationships are conflictual, generated by the political desire of the authority to implement Western reforms by any means and by the negativity to this approach from academics who

stand for educational values. Underlying the authority's political purposes, I see a post-colonial agenda and a desire to weaken their ties with neighbouring Russia.

My findings show that post-Soviet academics in Kazakhstan respond to the reforms with three main discourses, which I identified as: the discourse of chaotic reform, the discourse of nostalgia and loss, and the discourse of modernity and progress. Each of these are a reflection of particular beliefs, ideologies, and post-Soviet context models, both professional and societal. The discourse of chaotic reform was found to be the central one across the academics' accounts. This identifies the reforms as chaotic, confusing, unprofessional, governed by an authoritative top-down Soviet style approach and suffering from a lack of knowledge, skills, and information. It was found that the discourse on chaotic reform commonly arose in cases where two contradictory patterns, approaches or models from the Soviet and the Western systems were combined. In the process of implementation, it recurred as patterns from the new standards are implemented, while the old patterns persist. This created a confusing reform process, where the adoption of the borrowed policies happened in a very different context than their home context. For example, the introduction of the credit system (discussed in Chapter VI), as the participants said, is superficially Western, while its detailed mechanisms repeat the Soviet linear system. In addition to this clash, the chaos in the Kazakhstan reforms is influenced by particular post-Soviet context models, such as command-style top-down management in the Soviet pattern, limited knowledge of Western standards.

I found two other discourses, of nostalgia and loss and of modernity and progress, which are expressions of particular cultural phenomena. The discourse of nostalgia and loss expressed people's longing for the better past, which they assume they had in the Soviet system. I argued that these beliefs reflect context models formed in the Soviet period, which I characterise as a time when strong state ideological imperatives were imposed into social life and people's minds. Some of these beliefs are that Soviet education was the best in the world, offering high quality, thorough and profound training, and providing systematic knowledge. Other nostalgic beliefs derive from the Soviet societal context and were expressed as desires for stability, social guarantees, non-competitiveness and a well-organised and properly-managed system.

Finally, the discourse of modernity and progress reflects both the universal belief in the value of Western and European modernity, and its excellence and advancement, and the internal societal belief in the pro-Western development path, and the desire for modernity, which is a reflection of the Eurasianism that is an official doctrine in Kazakhstan. I identified the strong pro-Western ideology that exists in contemporary Kazakhstan, and that was realised after the

collapse of the Soviet Empire. In Chapter II, I explained the reasons for the popularity of pro-Western ideas of modernity and progress, tracing these back through Kazakh history and culture.

I found that these discourses co-exist in participants' accounts, forming particular relational patterns. For example, I found that the discourse of nostalgia, while it commonly arises in references to Soviet education, was activated together with the discourse of chaotic reform. The discourse of nostalgia is found explicitly in cases where participants discussed the stressful and confusing reform environment, in which patterns from the past become a type of defence mechanism against the surrounding chaos (Boym 2001). In other words, the objects of nostalgia are not always seen as better per se, but as well-known, familiar and thus reliable reference points for people. I also argued that the chaotic reforms themselves provoke nostalgic feelings as the academics find themselves lost in such reality. This happens when Western standards are distorted within local practice, for example, by being forcefully imposed for political motivations by the authority. There is evidence of this in the distorted introduction of the testing system for the purpose of eliminating corruption in education, and thus the academics' preference for Soviet oral examinations (Chapter VI, section 3). Another example is the academics' confusion over Western programmes/degrees and students' low quality doctoral research, and thus their nostalgia for the stronger and higher quality education in the past and the Soviet system of thesis defence (Chapter VII, section 1).

Similarly the discourse of modernity and progress is interwoven with the discourse of chaotic reform. This happened in cases where the participants recognised either advancement through Western education patterns, such as student-oriented learning, or their own lack of professional skills, such as English competency. Throughout these analyses I identified the prevalence of professional criteria in the academics' talk, as they constructed their views around professional values, such as "academic skills", "education quality" and "research quality". I stressed throughout that it is because of the lowering of education quality under the reform process and the lack of the skills needed to meet the new requirements that we see claims that both the past and the West as better. Yet, the central discourse with which the academics' responded to the changes is that of chaotic reform.

This thesis clearly shows that the potential chaos in Kazakhstan is a result of the lack of practical skills, knowledge and ability of those charged with delivering the process. This is doubled by both poor management and a traditional, authoritative, way of governance. In this thesis I stress that the Ministry of Education must make efforts to change from a traditional

way of governance and pay more attention to encouraging local specialists in education management and administration to champion reformation.

Answering the question as to whether Kazakhstan has achieved modernity and progress, which is seen as the priority of the governmental doctrine, I would repeat the statement that “Kazakhstan goes West, but only so far” (Matthews 2012). As can be seen from this study, the education reforms were initiated and pushed by the political will of President Nazarbayev and followed by the Ministry of Education. Thus the reformation did not come about from a desire to change education practice. It is logical then that the stated goals of reformation, such as joining the EHEA, reconstruction of education institutions, formal implementation of the new structures amongst others, have been achieved at the level of political governance, but not at the level of education practice, where the reformation is significantly obstructed. The gap between the policy implementation and implementation in practice is not only a result of the government’s authoritative approach to implementation, it is compounded by the lack of resources in universities, and the lack of appropriate information and overall professional development available to academics. Thus, at the general sense the need for modernisation in education and a change to the Bologna Process is understood by academics. However, when it comes to the details and specific knowledge of European education standards they are not acknowledged in full, including particularly the content of the Dublin Descriptors and of wider professional knowledge.

My findings and the research overall contribute to a deep understanding of educational borrowing in the post-Soviet world and of the Westernisation of its education systems. Below I summarise the new perspectives my work provides and their relation to the theories I have used. I grounded my interpretations in the theoretical framework of educational policy borrowing. Yet, I offered also a different perspective on education policy borrowing in post-Soviet states than that contained in the literature on educational policy borrowing (Silova 2002a, 2002b; Steiner-Khamsi 2003, 2005, 2006, 2012a, 2012b). One of the theory’s main positions is that educational borrowing happens because of locally-contested reforms (Steiner-Khamsi 2004), a desire for modernity and progress, and out of fear “falling behind” internationally (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006: 189).

While these stimuli are almost always internally politically-driven and generally appropriate, I saw them insufficient to explain and understand Westernisation processes in “the Second World”. I argued that behind these, we can find the existence of a post-colonial and liberation agenda, reflecting desires to be free from the colonial past and from post-colonial relationships between contemporary Russia and its neighbours. I also identified the implicit character of this

agenda in the education reforms by national states in the post-Soviet area, which is overlooked by Western education comparativists.

A further contribution to this literature relates to our understanding of how educational transfer intensified globally due to the arrival on the international stage of the states of the Second World. While it is common to study how new education practices are borrowed from the First World, my argument is that educational transfer to the Second World should not be seen as similar to transfer to the Third World. The main reason for this is the existence of well-developed education and social systems in the post-Soviet countries, which were shaped under the historical and cultural influence of the Russian/Soviet Empire.

I pointed throughout to the specificity of this legacy, stressing, first, the existence of strong state ideological beliefs in the past that are still carried by people today, and, second, that the different education system shaped people's knowledges and attitudes to the changes that came from the West. I called the Soviet legacy in this study a specific post-Soviet context and the legacy in people's minds, post-Soviet mental models.

In this regard I stressed that the study of the adoption of borrowed reforms in post-Soviet states should be undertaken and can only be understood by taking into consideration their specific contexts, some aspects of which are not necessarily explicit and thus are not always visible to outsiders. For example, the widespread criticism of the implementation of the Bologna Process reforms in Kazakhstan and other post-Soviet states found in the literature (Heyneman 2010; Soltys 2015; Tomusk 2011), I would argue, ignores a basic feature of the Soviet legacy. While there is a recognition in some works of how the authoritarian command-style approach impeded the Bologna reforms, there is also a historical absence of professional management and people with knowledge about the Western standards among the locals, who can appropriately manage the reform process. In other words, today's education reforms are carried out under political governance which follows a pattern inherited from the Soviet past. Thus, the reforms in the Second World are carried out in the context of highly political governance and in the absence of the professional management.

I traced this back historically to the separate development of the Soviet system in isolation from the international academic community, whereby many mechanisms of Western education are absent from the post-Soviet system. This then is relevant to contemporary academics who, for instance, lack the skills needed to carry out research at a level matching that in the West. Yet, there are also cultural factors. The culture was shaped under the dominance of the Russian language, which means, first of all, that a lack of English competency prevents post-Soviet people from integrating into the international community. Second, I identified significant

gaps in how many professional concepts are understood in the two systems, such as, “research publication”, “ideology”, “fundamental education”, and “nationalism”. Due to cultural, political and linguistic factors, ideas are often misunderstood by post-Soviet academics and by society in general. Therefore, many concepts which are interpreted differently internationally are implemented according to local understandings and are thus ineffective.

I have also made a key contribution to the wider field of comparative education by offering a consideration of Kazakhstan in relation to other members of the EHEA, rather than placing Kazakhstan within the Central Asian region which is the usual approach in Western social sciences and which, as I argued, is misleading. In Chapter II, I explained many aspects of the unique position of Kazakhstan, pointing to its Euro-Asian location and the underlying logic of its entering the EHEA. In the study I identified many examples of systemic and structural changes in Kazakhstan’s education system, which set this country apart from its neighbours in the region, yet are overlooked by other scholars. I saw the Kazakhstan education reforms as similar to the processes taking place in other post-Soviet countries that are members of the Bologna Process and pointed to the more radical direction of reforms in Kazakhstan than elsewhere.

As the reader will have no doubt observed, this thesis is critical of the reforms in Kazakhstan as are the participants. I would suggest that this critical stance is inevitable for a number of reasons. First, I studied the views of a social group who are in a position where they are dominated, and thus are subject to social inequality and injustice. That is why the critical views of the academics are predictable and understandable, as their voices are from below. By carrying out this research I wanted to make my own contribution to the study of the views of those who are at lower levels in the reform process, carrying all the struggles of the reforms to local education practice. My choice to focus on them came out of my professional compassion for and solidarity with Kazakhstan academics, which I see as my colleagues (in a wider sense) and as abused by the dominant power.

This focus is also part of the CDA method. Through CDA this becomes possible as the method itself is “a method with attitude” (van Dijk 2001a). As van Dijk states, the targets of CDA researchers are “those at power, who enact, sustain and ignore social inequality” and its motivation is “solidarity with those who need it most” (van Dijk 1993: 252). So, in my case I chose to give a voice to those who are undervalued and who are not often asked for their opinions and about their professional challenges. While this can also apply to academics in democratic states, such as England (Trowler 1997), it is more relevant to post-Soviet societies, where people who are abused by those in power, are commonly ignored and do not have the

possibility to speak out. Instead, those in power have privileged access to various genres, forms and contexts of discourse and communication, which are important resources (van Dijk 1993).

I would argue that, while research on policy borrowing is concerned with examining why and how borrowed patterns play out differently in local contexts, they should also be concerned to study those implementing the reforms. For it is through their participation that the borrowed patterns are implemented. As Trowler (1998b) stated, academics' attitudes are always shaped by their pre-existing knowledge and experience, and this influences the implementation of the new policies and standards. The actors in the reforms are very important agents of the latter. It was postulated in this research that the reality of the reforms reflects the relationships between the two sides in the process, those who are in a position of power and those below them. Thus the application of CDA is helpful to examine the interrelationships between the two sides and to understand why and how the borrowed patterns are implemented into local practice. My original work indicates the potential of this approach for future studies.

This study has also made a significant empirical contribution in being focused on the current higher education reforms under Westernisation in Kazakhstan, which have never before been studied in depth. While there are a small number of publications on this topic, most of these are short articles focusing on international aspects, and concentrating on practical issues of implementation. They are also written from the point of view of what has been implemented (badly) in Kazakhstan. What I see as lacking in these studies is a discussion of the causes of the failures in implementation, behind the visible problems. The findings of my research can help to fill this gap and to understand the significance of Soviet context models, which shape the reform processes in post-Soviet education. Also, my study can be helpful in understanding the agenda behind education borrowing, which is not only motivated by a fear "falling behind" internationally (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006: 189). Instead, it is worth taking into consideration how primarily politically-driven reforms arise from post-colonial relationships and a liberation agenda within the post-Soviet world. From this perspective the West is not seen only as a place of modernity and progress, but as the free world.

A particular characteristic of this study is that it was carried out by an insider researcher from the post-Soviet world. This is significant given the lack of researchers from this part of the world, especially in the field of education policy, management and administration. As in earlier chapters, I point to the absence of these Western disciplines, both educationally and practically, across the entire post-Soviet space. There is also a general shortage of post-Soviet researchers in the wider social sciences and humanities, who are trained in Western



methods and familiar with Western theories. My study of Kazakhstan education reform helps a little to fill this gap, which is also a result of a lack of studies of post-Soviet pro-Western reforms by insider researchers. Thus, as a study performed by an insider researcher, this thesis can be helpful to those scholars who intend to approach to the study of the post-Soviet reality from within.

The fact that the researcher was sometimes viewed as an insider and member of Kazakhstan's academic community allowed me to explore the problems often hidden to outside scholars. This thesis sheds light on the internal context of the post-Soviet education reality and identifies previously ignored issues such as: nostalgic sentiments about the past, the degree of influence of Soviet education and overall context of the past on today's practice, utilisation of the way of understanding and adoption of Western novelties and general Western approach, strong political regulation behind the reforms, and lack of human and professional resources for resolving problems. It also shows how and why the borrowed patterns are re-contextualised there, and reveals how that system's mechanisms impede Westernisation, to at least some degree. However, sometimes I was the outsider and this means that some of the narratives offered to me were disconnected from reality. This can be seen clearly in the analysis of those diverse voices which provide a greater contextual understanding of University education in Kazakhstan.

Overall, the study can also be of use to international experts, who make recommendations based on generic approaches to education without attending to differences between countries. For example, the World Bank's common recommendation in relation to education in Kazakhstan and other post-Soviet states is to set up educational autonomy by decentralising the local HEIs. I would say that this standard recommendation is made without attention to the distinctions between post-Soviet societies. In this respect, my research points to the need to take into consideration specific features of the post-Soviet context when making recommendations for changes in these countries.

In contrast to the World Bank, I have identified the main problem as an absence of knowledge about western education, particularly among managers and other key professionals. Thus there is a need for key personnel to have or develop expertise on Western education. Academic freedom and decentralisation in education cannot be effective without such professionals. Western norms work in democratic countries, where there is a high degree of social and professional responsibility and respect for the law. However, in states with authoritarian governments, low levels of social and professional responsibility, and high levels of corruption, as in Kazakhstan and many other post-Soviet states, they can have the opposite

effect. In such conditions, many Western norms, focused on increased freedom and institutional responsibility, can result in anarchy. Instead, international experts, drawing on research like mine, can see that these states are twenty years behind the First World and so they need to develop mechanisms which are already in place in the West.

My research has some limitations. The interviews were conducted in only four HEIs in Kazakhstan. The participation of a wider range of universities and academics would strengthen the study and possibly give rise to different findings. Similarly, the study is limited to practice in Kazakhstan, and in-depth examinations of the implementation of the Bologna Processes in other post-Soviet states would also be helpful. My study included many aspects of the reform process, yet, not all of them. For example, it does not include changes in curriculum and modularisation made under the reforms. Some other aspects of the Bologna Process are also beyond the scope of my study.

Further research could be done to address gaps from the limitations of my study. I see a need for a further separate study of local factors which impede the adoption of Western reforms. For example, it would be of interest to focus on the management and governance carried out within HEIs and in the Ministry, looking at their personnel, and focusing on limitations in their skills, training and knowledge. As I have stated throughout the study I see the lack of professional management as the main factor underlying the chaotic implementation of the reforms. These findings could be then used in other post-Soviet states, as there are similar patterns across them.

I end by highlighting the immense experience which I have gained through my PhD journey. As someone educated in the Soviet Union and with research experience in the post-Soviet social sciences, I have discovered the Western academic world. Now, with experience in both academic traditions, I can see huge distance between them in the social sciences and humanities. With confidence, I can say that, despite my previous experience, stepping into the Western academic world, felt as if I were starting from scratch, especially in terms of my knowledge of Western methods, theories, and overall research expectations. This expanded my horizons and enriched my professional growth to a huge degree; it also filled the gap for me personally, which objectively exists between these two research traditions.

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# Appendix 1: A Map of Kazakhstan

The dark line shows the border between Europe and Asia in most mainstream modern definitions.

The red numbers 1 to 4 show the locations where I collected data.

Source: <http://www.hollingscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Central-Asian-Map.jpg>



## Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

1. Provide, please, your personal details: name, age, education, academic experience, current position, and place of work.
2. What, in your opinion, was the reason for the reforms of Kazakhstan HE? What are, in your opinion, the benefits of the Bologna process for Kazakhstan HE?
3. How do you view the reformation of Kazakhstan HE under the Bologna process? How do you feel that European education standards work or not in Kazakhstan HE?
4. What can you tell me about the three-tier system and its introduction into Kazakhstan practice?
5. What do you think about the implementation of Western degrees?
6. How does the credit system work in Kazakhstan HEIs? What is your attitude to it? Are there any difficulties in its implementation?
7. How has your research activity changed within the new conditions in HE? Are there any new requirements for academic publications? Do you face any challenges in this regard?
8. Do Kazakhstan academic programmes match the international standards? Are there any challenges in comparing local educational programmes with European ones?
9. How has your teaching activity changed under the reforms? Has your workload as a teacher changed with the introduction of independent work for students?
10. How has the teacher-student relationship changed in the new conditions? What can you tell me about this?
11. What do you think about academic mobility? Have you experienced any changes personally in relation to this?
12. What can you tell me about testing system? What is your attitude to it?
13. Do you face a challenge to learn English? What can you tell me about this?
14. Are there any changes in academics' salary in the new environment?
15. What is impeding the reforms in your opinion?
16. If you have experience under the Soviet education system, how would you compare it with the current one?

17. Are there things that should be preserved from the Soviet education system?

18. If it were possible, would you support a return to the Soviet education system? Please, explain your answer.

### Appendix 3: Table 3. Participants in the Study

Status	Location	Participant pseudonym	Subject	Academic position	Academic degree	Years of academic experience	Oral (O) or written (W) interview	Language used: Kazakh (K) or Russian (R)
National	Capital (CU1)	Gulim A.	Physics	DHD	PhD	6	O	R
		Demey E.	Physics	HSF, DCNT	PhD	13	O	R
		Said Z.	Physics	Prof.	DN	40+	O	R
		Serik G.	Chemistry	DCNT	KN	18	O	K
		Galiya T.	Biology	DCNT	KN	18	O	R
		Nina Z.	Journalism	DHD, DCNT	DN	9	O	K
		Irina N.	Journalism	SL	None	25	O	R
		Iliya R.	Journalism	DCNT	KN	20	O	R
National	Capital (CU2)	Zhuma E.	Mathematics	DHD, DCNT	KN	11	O	K
		Tatyana L.	Economics	DCNT	KN	14	O	R
		Elena H.	Biology	DCNT	KN	24	O	R
		Gulnaz Z.	Management	SL	KN	14	O	K
		Nazym S.	Biology	DCNT	DN	27	O	K
		Urii N.	Management	Prof.	DN	21	O	R
		Maria A.	Linguistics	Ass. Prof.	DN	30	W	R
		Anatolii T.	Architecture	DCNT	None	15	O	R
		Katrin N.	Design	DCNT	KN	16	O	K
Raikhhan K.	Chemistry	DD	DN	25	O	R		
State	Regional (RU1)	Mark G.	Economics	SL	MA	18	O	R
		Saule H.	Physics	HSF, DCNT	KN	32	O	R
		Zhanna F.	Mathematics	HSF, DCNT	KN	26	O	K
		SvetlanaZ.	History	SL	None	-	O	R
		Erbol N.	Economics	HD, DCNT	KN	21	O	R
		Zarina M.	Sport	SL	None	16	W	R
		Michael I.	Psychology	Ass. Prof.	KN	22	W	R
		Boris O.	Philosophy	Ass. Prof.	KN	12	W	R
		Berik K.	Psychology	Ass. Prof.	KN	20	W	R



State	Regional  (RU2)	Leila A. Andrei I. Bek S. Zoya G. Veronica D Dina K. Rysbek T. Rustem B. Talgat K. Sagit K. Bibigul K.	History Psychology Psychology Psychology Psychology Psychology Engineering Engineering Design Design Chemistry	Lecturer Lecturer SL DCNT SL Lecturer HD, DNCT DHD HSF, DCNT DCNT DCNT	None None None KN KN PhD KN None KN KN KN	12 15 10 20 17 6 - - 34 22 25	O O O O O O O O O O O	K R K R R R R K K K R

**Abbreviations used in the table:**

HD – Head of Department

DHD – Deputy Head of Department

HSF – Head of Sub-Faculty (a Sub-Faculty is a division of the teaching staff within departments, within the Soviet/ Post-Soviet structure of HE Institutions)

DCNT – Docent

KN (Kandidat Nauk) – The Initial Scientific degree under the Soviet/ Post-Soviet qualification system

DN (Doktor Nauk) – The Advanced Scientific degree under Soviet/ Post-Soviet qualification system

SL - Senior Lecturer

# Appendix 4: Diverse voices

## 4.1 To Chapter V

1. Michael I.: In general – no, I wouldn't support the return: openness, mobility, and integration: these are the most valuable things. [RU1, psychology, 22 years]
2. Berik K.: The entry of Kazakhstan into the European educational space is the next step in integration into the international educational space. Its main aim is to increase the competitiveness of Kazakhstan's higher education system, to bring it up to international standards, and to improve its quality. [RU1, psychology, 20 years]
3. Andrei I.: The transition to the Bologna Process... my attitude is positive. It's about keeping pace with the time we're in. My opinion is that these reforms taking place is good of course, but I'm an adherent of the old. [RU2, psychology, 15 years]
4. Serik K.: They say that we needed the transition to European standards mainly we to be integrated into the international educational space, so our students and academics have better opportunities, to travel, to study at foreign universities, to participate in various exchange programs. [CU1, chemistry, 18 years]
5. Gulim A.: I think so, yes, we did the right thing when we joined, because we have to compare ourselves with foreign universities, rather than as we did before, stew in our own juice. [CU1, physics, 6 years]
6. Zhanna F.: Well, I have a positive attitude to the reforms. I think that these reforms were necessary for Kazakhstan. First of all, I think these reforms are to improve education quality, to create a unified international educational space. In the past when our graduates, for example, went abroad, there were problems with the classification and recognition of their degrees. In general, not only the recognition of degrees, but also travel abroad was very limited, and he or she couldn't, for example, continue their education abroad. It's all due to the fact that we have very different systems. And it seems to me that the main purpose is to ensure the mobility of both teachers and students in a single international educational space. Another thing is that

there are so many problems before this system can work, a lot of difficulties, but it seems to me that the Bologna Process is needed. [RU1, mathematics, 26 years]

7. Boris O.: I have a positive attitude. However, this process is controversial. [RU1, philosophy, 12 years]

8. Svetlana Z.: I wouldn't want the past system to come back. Why? Because the world's changing, and as I said at the beginning, we need to enter into this system, this space, to take our place. That is, in this situation, keeping the old system isn't possible. As far as I know, in the post-Soviet area, only Moscow University tries to preserve anything, but sooner or later they too will have to integrate into the system. [RU1, history, 17 years]

9. Maria A.: My attitude is negative. The need - only alleged entry into the international educational space. Yes, I would support a return, because then we had a system and stability. [CU2, philology, 30 years]

10. Andrei I.: Well, I would support a return of course. You know, I'll tell you that if in the Soviet Union, I remember, and I know it, someone defended and got a Kandidat thesis, I was hundred percent sure that he knew his field very well. [RU2, psychology, 15 years]

11. Zarina M.: My attitude to the reforms is neutral. It's necessary to keep a linear system of education, that is, not the parallel study of disciplines, but their consistent study. The length of training would be increased by six weeks in each academic year; there would be more contact hours with the teacher; students in arrears would not transfer to the next year. [RU1, sport, 16 years]

12. Mark G.: So from the Soviet system... probably the current attitude to education I would like to keep. Here's what I'd like to change. The psychology of the Soviet education system I'd like to bring into today, if it's possible. [RU1, economics, 18 years]

13. Saule H.: What was good about that linear system of higher education was that all exams were oral. And the student had a quality education. He could think, reflect, and build thoughts

logically. So my personal opinion is that that system of higher education was one of the best. I myself went through it: primary education, secondary and tertiary.[RU1, physics, 32 years]

14. Nina Z.: The credit system is happening with lots of misunderstandings. I think it would be better to keep the previous system rather than destroy it with what we have now. [CU1, journalism, 9 years].

15. Raikhan K.: I would keep oral examinations as with testing there's lots of manipulation. It affects validity. [CU2, chemistry, 25 years]

16. Boris O.: I would keep the previous government's policy and support of hard-working professionals. [RU1, philosophy, 12 years]

17. Serik G.: I think we won't have anything good if we continue to experiment. That is, by constantly changing either the entry requirements to universities, or constantly reforming the school system, or changing curricula. Now we've moved to modular training, and students suffer even more, because every time they have to adapt to new conditions. We seem to be trying to work towards the European system of education, but despite that, we still have a lot of our own system. [CU1, chemistry, 18 years]

18. Urii N.: The new system has caused many misunderstandings. We had a settled system and radically changed it to another. It might need an interim period or something like that. [CU2, management, 21 years]

19. Michael I.: I'd like to see a consistency of standards and requirements, and continuity in the universities' leadership, stability and solidity. But these things aren't looking likely so far. The main problems with our education system are not currently about the introduction of the credit system, they're about the management, the non-professional management of HE. [RU1, psychology, 22 years]

20. Saule H.: If we have credit technology working as it does in Europe, so then expanding new horizons and obtaining new knowledge is possible. There are lots of its advantages to the new education system. But again, because of the fact that it doesn't fully work, if it continues to work

as it does now, being honest, things will collapse. The Ministry is taking some steps and making an effort, of course. But it's necessary to have a very high level of quality in all organisational issues to a huge degree: comprehensive, in depth, breadth, to improve the quality of education. [RU1, physics, 32 years]

21. Iliya R.: Well, it's well known for a long time that education is one of the most difficult systems to be subject to reforms and, apparently, because of this introducing change is going to be so difficult. There were a lot of misunderstandings about how things should go. [CU1, journalism, 20 years]

22. Galiya T.: The teaching loads have increased terribly, we're required to do everything: have classes, produce administrative papers, and do you know how much work they are? Here we have Lena B., she could talk to you. Every day she comes and just sits with these papers all day long. And these papers flow like a stream, you can't imagine. All the time, papers are required. This time, well, we've finished one thing, it's needed for next year to allocate the groups, to put the catalogues in order, to annotate the catalogues, and so on. That's a lot of things. Then the university will pass its international accreditation, then again something and again. We have to do all these, from morning to evening here we are. [CU1, biology, 18 years]

23. Erbol N.: In our university, I'll tell you, everything is run according to the shared regulations of the Bologna Process, which the Ministry imposes on us: we all adhere to and do everything. For example a university commission's been set up now and it checks every department looking for negatives in the organisation of the Bologna Process. You see? That is, we don't stand still; every time we're trying to do something new. [RU1, economics, 21 year]

24. Tatyana L.: In the past system, there was a systematic approach, it was very streamlined. Now we have more chaos. The reforms could be done differently somehow, not in the form in which they're carried out now. [CU2, economics, 14 year]

#### **4.2 To Chapter VI**

1. Michael I.: The credit system lends itself to unification, which includes the introduction of paid education and orientation to the 'profitability' of academic groups. But it limits students' choice in their modules and pathways. [RU1, psychology, 22 years]

2. Zarina M.: The credit system isn't working. Because of the increase in the number of electives in the curricula to 70% - their titles almost don't match and the credits are not counted if they are received in other universities, including foreign ones. [RU1, sport, 16 years]

3. Irina N.: I don't want to discuss credit transfers, I don't want to. Why? Because as my colleague put it, the devil himself would be stumped. There they still have not understood it themselves, as I see it, a clear view. It's not clear yet. [CU1, journalism, 25 years]

4. Berik K.: The introduction of a unified credit system to ensure the comparability of educational programs and thus the implementation of student mobility is proceeding with difficulties. [RU1, psychology, 20 years]

5. Said Z.: The credit system hasn't been structured in Kazakhstan. I would say that everything is happening by trial and error. [CU1, physics, 40+ years]

6. Bek S.: On the one hand, the credit system is very, very good: a student receives points when performing a task, for attending classes and during practical sessions. But it turns out that a teacher is no longer playing an important role, and rather he's an operator, as in a human-machine system. You probably know such a system. That is, a teacher's role is already relegated to the background, and it's not right. [RU2, psychology, 10 years]

7. Gulim A.: I can't answer this question. I just know when I was at post-graduate level; it was a credit system already. And I almost can tell you nothing. We didn't have this when I studied at BA level, but in the Master's program we had it. [CU1, physics, 6 years]

8. Bek S.: Loads changed, hours were reduced, very reduced, but with all this we have to work more. Why? Because in the first half of the day we have four pairs of classes, and for the afternoon work we're not paid, when we conduct individual work with the students. [RU2, psychology, 10 years]

9. Svetlana Z.: Administrative load. Oh, how it's grown! Because there's a huge number of papers for each discipline. That is, when we'd only just started, we had syllabuses, and now

we've got UMKD, i.e. a teachers' toolkit for each discipline. This form of UMKD was imposed from the top, it is absolutely unsustainable. Because in a syllabus a student gets a general picture of the upcoming semester - what they should do. That is, it's convenient for both students and teachers. And UMKD, it's such a huge folder of papers with explanations, layouts, seminars, questions, methodical directions, SRSP and so on. We now have a list of documents to make, which are irrelevant in practice. [RU1, history, 17 years]

10. Irina N.: A huge amount of paperwork. A UMKD is 90-120 pages. There's everything there. All the lectures, all the tests, all the tasks to cover. For example if I say something to the students, I have to explain this for five pages. If I give them the IWS, I have to justify where to go and take from. Imagine one module is mandatory and the rest are optional, and they are constantly changing. And UMKD is for everything. It used to be like this before, but not to such a degree. Then we had to give a lecture in the form of a presentation. They said that lectures should not be read any more. That's from the century before last. You have to show the presentations. That's the requirements of the US, Bologna, but the salary. [CU1, journalism, 25 years]

11. Mark G.: The paperwork increased significantly. If earlier it was only one work program, which we prepared, then today it's a mass of documents: work programs for students, syllabus, teachers' directory, a mandatory set of lectures. If previously only the abstracts of lectures were required, now it's the fully typed lectures, practical tasks for IWS, IWST must be, and it's a huge burden. [RU1, economics, 18 years]

12. Said Z.: Of course, first of all there's a lot of paperwork, too much. This must be stopped. Even the president once said that a lot of unnecessary paperwork should be reduced. [CU1, physics, 40+ years]

13. Demey E.: For scientists, their load must be sufficiently small. Because with the load which there is now, scientists can not work. Some concessions are made, but with the full-time teaching hours doing anything for research is impossible. [CU1, physics, 13 years]

14. Irina N.: We have tests ... we had them before, then it was cancelled, and a written exam restored. Now again we are asked to produce many tests. We have produced these tests, but

how they'll be introduced is the question. What I really like about this system is that I submit tests to the training department, they're uploaded into the program and I have nothing to do during the exams. It's very good that the teacher does not touch anything. That is, they want me just to create the tests and that's all. There is such objectivity, which is quite remarkable. I then just come and sign a statement. This, I think, is good. [CU1, journalism, 25 years]

15. Mark G.: Testing saves time. I often apply it to assess students' knowledge because within two hours I can cover 20-40 students. And oral exams will require considerably more time. [RU1, economics, 18 years]

16. Said Z.: Testing is necessary for mass control, but it must be implemented correctly, respecting the rules, laws, and procedures. It is applied not so badly now, [we] just need to comply with the right rules. All the trouble's with this. Also the criteria for drawing up the tests are questionable. The mistake is to use testing in scientific training, when it's required to test even doctoral students. Masters students also should not be assessed through testing. When there is creativity testing is not applicable. When there's mass assessment within known programs for standard topics, then it's needed. [CU1, physics, 40+ years]

17. Galiya T.: This is the form of testing which I like the most. You can include questions from different areas and very quickly check the level of knowledge. It's better than essays, where there are only three questions. Because we teach far more than three themes and thus it's limited. Assessing orally, of course, would be a way out, but again, as I say, there's limited time. Fourteen oral exams in one hour is simply impossible. Therefore, testing for me, for example, is convenient. [CU1, biology, 18 years]

18. Andrei L.: To be honest, I'm seeing testing as not very good, because that invention of our Ministry of Education has not worked out. So, I don't know who invented it, maybe it was done experimentally. I've always taught experimental psychology and have met with difficulties. Honestly, what kind of tests, in which there are 8 possible answers? Where have you seen these? Eight response options, three of them are correct. There are many incorrect questions. I would say to those who make up these tests what would they do. They themselves never in their lives would answer correctly 100%. They just mock students. [RU2, psychology, 15 years]



19. Svetlana Z.: That form of new tests - have you seen the ones that we have now? This is generally quite a horrible thing, because there's a test question and eight possible answers, of which three are correct. To include a question on cause-and-effect relationships is practically impossible. Only unimportant small issues, which don't have particular roles in the discipline, can be included. [RU1, history, 17 years]

20. Urii N.: When we turn to purely technical forms, when a person fills in some forms, tests or something else, then there's a contact, a living contact between a teacher and a student which is violated. I think testing may be an option, but it should not be used in a hundred percent of cases without exception. Teachers, professors sign statements or document, they puts their signatures to which a machine checked already. I just signed something, but I actually conducted a training course. I have to check the results of my work, for that. Do you see? There's no culture in this regard. In this sense the Soviet school was more humanistic, subjective, and without this we cannot work. Everything has to be justified. When it comes to controlling a real process of teaching and learning, the live contact is very necessary. [CU2, management, 21 years]

21. Raikhan K.: Testing for some people from education has become a source of profit. I mean, and you probably know this, that the answers to the test questions, which are created in the Test Centre, are sold and dishonest people have made it a source of income. I know certain people, but I won't name them. [CU2, chemistry, 25 years]

#### **4.3. To Chapter VII**

1. Saule H.: Although it is said that it was the Soviet system, in fact it's based on the old European system of education. And there, I think, it was the same three-tier system with postgraduates, lecturers, professors, and what we have now is Bachelor, Masters and Doctorate. I think it's a good idea. I have a positive attitude. [RU1, physics, 32 years]

2. Gulim A.: If you look at the Soviet system of education, its graduates were more general, that is, they had universal knowledge. But European specialists are narrowly focused, i.e. they know only their own field. There are pros and cons. They know more in their narrow field, and maybe they will do better than those who know everything ... how we were taught. For example, we

know of plasma physics, and everything else, but we know only general stuff. In Europe they are highly skilled in a narrow field. I like this. [CU1, physics, 6 years]

3. Berik K.: The transition to a three-tier system of higher education (Bachelors - Masters – Doctorate), I think works in Kazakhstan. [RU1, psychology, 20 years]

4. Said Z.: The European system has been misunderstood in all these documents. In fact we have now some sort of American or South American ones. And there's now a lot of confusion. [CU1, physics, 40+ years]

5. Maria A.: The attitude to the European System would be normal if there was proper organisation of the educational process. [CU2, philology, 30 years]

6. Galiya T.: I think that the introduction of the three-level system is a norm, but the only thing with the Bachelors here is that employers don't recognise it, to be honest, as expertise. But again we have such a mentality and it's our habit to think that to graduate they have to study for five years. With four years of training they're not seen as people with higher education. Then they require that for a Masters people have to study two years. And not everyone can do a Masters programme. It's good, if it's free, but in most cases it's paid. I think that three years for a PhD is a too little time, for example, for them to publish. Now [a journal with] an impact factor is required, and it's not easy to be published in such journals. [CU1, biology, 18 years]

7. Michael I.: The relationship to the European system is dual. A positive is the clarity and the limits of education, for example, a PhD thesis is the endpoint of education. A negative is the restriction of access to PhD study in terms of its availability across the regions and the range of fields. What's new in the European system is the duration of training, which is different from the previous system. [RU1, psychology, 22 years]

8. Boris O.: Undergraduate and Masters programmes, in general, work at the proper level. But PhD level in Kazakhstan is much weaker than Kandidat's thesis. [RU1, philosophy, 12 years]

9. Serik G.: With publications, of course, everything is difficult, since the main group of teachers is not fluent enough in English. Now the requirement is to get published in journals with an

impact factor. And these are mainly in English. There are some magazines in Russian, translated, where articles can also be published, but most are still in English. So there are, of course, difficulties. But even this is not so much a language problem. It can be overcome in principle. You can ask for translation. But there's also a financial problem, because publication in a good journal requires a good experiment, which must be conducted using good equipment and so on. Our material and technical base is still weak, unfortunately. [CU1, chemistry, 18 years]

10. Michael I.: The main difficulty is language and a mismatch between international research fields and ours. The requirement now is to publish in journals with high, and more recently, non-zero impact factors, and journals recommended by HAC RK. [RU1, psychology, 22 years]

11. Iliya R.: Previously it wasn't like this. How did we publish articles? If there's a reality, argument, originality, and everything, we could publish it. But today all articles are published on a paid basis. Everywhere. The journals with impact factor may be free of charge. But it's hard to get there. [CU1, journalism, 20 years]

12. Elena H.: We apply to translators to have a good translation, but publishing articles with an impact factor, it's a complex issue. It's rare throughout Kazakhstan. Now it's become mandatory to publish in journals with an impact factor. What are the main difficulties? Well, as usual, it's hard to obtain reliable results as everything goes through the lab to be processed. In addition, it should be an appropriate translation. Then the publication is considered over a long time. I'm not even mentioning that it costs financially. Teachers are beginning to get used to that and we can gradually adjust. [CU2, biology, 24 years]

13. Gulim A.: How can you write articles without research? So you have to start to be included in projects, to do research, and only then a good article can be written. [CU1, physics, 6 years]

14. Saule H.: Well, with the impact factors now it's difficult. The difficulties are with publishing in English. Therefore, for a non-zero factor, shall we say, in the university, there's few publications. First, many people lack time, and second, they lack the English language. Third, as they say, you need to comply with certain requirements to be published by Thompson Reuters. [RU1, physics, 32 years]

15. Raikhan K.: Great difficulties arise with publications in journals with non-zero citation indexes. [CU2, chemistry, 25 years]

16. Zarina M.: Basically publications in journals with non-zero impact factors are required. Due to the high cost of publications and the lack of knowledge of foreign languages, this is impossible. [RU1, sport, 16 years]

17. Maria A.: I personally publish articles, but again this is just my personal interest, while others absolutely don't care. Rather they care only for reports to show that at the Department, Faculty or University everything is okay. There are people who don't publish, write or even read articles, but they still receive the same salary. The question is why then would you put in the effort to publish and spend a lot of money, when you can live in peace. [CU2, philology, 30 years]

18. Said Z.: When someone teaches, they must have publications at an international level. Why do I emphasise this? Many people don't pay attention to it. In the West, it's respected, and we don't. Lectures should be given by a professor who has done something in the field. This is a minimum requirement, I can explain. Even if someone is an excellent lecturer and diligent professor, but they give lectures from books – it doesn't make sense. Books appear after research publications when a long time has passed. [CU1, physics, 6 years]

19. Iliya R.: We have almost no one who knows languages. They created the Centre now, which translates, but most of the scientists themselves don't know English. [CU1, journalism, 20 years]

20. Tatyana L.: There's a language problem. The Soviet Union dropped slightly out of this system, it wasn't a demand before, but today it is. The students only are beginning to make up this gap, because English or German is very important for their mobility. And let's say, the teaching staff for the most part doesn't speak the language at the appropriate level. [CU2, economics, 14 year]

21. Zarina M.: Lack of competency in English makes it difficult to participate in various projects and competitions. [RU1, sport, 16 years]

22. Boris O.: We have only a short time to study foreign languages because of the tremendous teaching loads. [RU1, philosophy, 12 years]

23. Demey E.: Language is getting not bad. We have courses. [CU1, physics, 13 years]

24. Elena H.: We have many teachers with a good command of a foreign language, others are actively learning, engaging. Yes, we feel time restrictions. In this sense, teachers work in their own time. [CU2, biology, 24 years]

25. Said Z.: In our science now the question of language arose. The same paper we translated into three languages. We just have to take the right approach. The Kazakh language, of course, should be developed in Kazakhstan. English, is also needed. The whole scientific world speaks English. Last year I was at Moscow University at the conference on nano-electronics – everyone spoke in English. And what are we doing? Each document we write in Kazakh, English and Russian. When we write in English, is it necessary to duplicate this in Russian? Those who are engaged in science, everyone understands English. And it saves time. [CU1, physics, 40+ years]

26. Urii N.: I don't know English and I'm not concerned much about this. I see this as a task for our younger colleagues, but for those of my age it's too late to change. [CU2, management, 21 years]

27. Galiya T.: Maybe things should be published in English. I don't know much about this. I myself don't speak the English language, and I don't have time for it. I am mostly devoted to teaching, and there's no time to engage in research at all. [CU1, biology, 18 years]

<sup>i</sup> Practically, in other states of the Central Asian region, the transfer to the Western education standards was conducted in the frame of the Eastern Partnership of EU. However, those changes were carried out under the sponsorship of the EU, and not funded by the state budget (Merrill et. al. 2011). Therefore, the reforms there are last as they are sponsored (Merill et al. 2011; Steiner-Khamsi 2006) and not global and at the societal system level as it is in the states-signators of the Bologna Process.

<sup>ii</sup> In Kazakhstan, the words “Western” and “European” are often used as synonyms. Similarly, these words are used synonymously in this study, although “Western” is applied in a wider sense to the education novelties that came to be implemented in Kazakhstan education.

<sup>iii</sup> “Soviet nationalities: Russians rule, others fume” is a title of an article by Barringer published in *The New York Times* on December, 18 1986.

<sup>iv</sup> The share of the Russian population in the Soviet republics according to the census of 1989 can be divided into three groups. The first group includes Kazakhstan, Latvia and Estonia, where the Russian population is 38%, 34% and 30% respectively. The second group includes Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan with around 22% of Russians. The third group includes all other countries, where the share of Russians varies from 1.6% in Armenia to 13% in Belarus and Moldova (from the data analysis by Goskomstat). The significance of language and writing should not be underestimated when it comes to the issue of the population of Russians in the Soviet republics. Historically the small percentage of Russian population in Armenia and Georgia can be explained by the preservation and use of traditional script there, which could be less attractive for Russian people. On the contrary the Muslim nations transferred from Arabic to Cyrillic at the beginning of the 1940s.

<sup>v</sup> This is translated by me from Russian with the saved morphological structure of the original sentence.

<sup>vi</sup> The date when Kazakhstan signed the Bologna Declaration and became the 47<sup>th</sup> member of the EHEA.

<sup>vii</sup> Practically, in other states of the Central Asian region the transfer to the Western education standarts is undergone in the frame of Eastern Partnership of EU. However, the changes there are carried out by the sponsorship of the EU, and not funded from state budget (Merrill et. al. 2011). Therefore, the reforms there are last as they are sponsored (Merill et al. 2011, Steiner-Khamsi) and not global and at the societal systm level as it is in the states-signators of the Bologna Process.

<sup>viii</sup> Here M. Olcott is talking about the natural resources of Kazakhstan.

<sup>ix</sup> Yet, all these and other Kazakh intellectuals had a tragic destiny, later being accused of bourgeois nationalism, sent to camps, and killed under the Stalin purges in the 30s. Among many of them: Bokeikhanov A., Baitursynuly A., Dulatuly M., Nurmakov N., Dosmuhameduly H., Tynyshbayev M., Ryskulov T., Nurmakov N., etc.

<sup>x</sup>There are some other differences. **In economics:** the approximate GDP of Kazakhstan in 2010 was about 130 billion US dollars (with an average per capita income of more than 11,000 dollars) while the combined GDP of other four Central Asian states was about 76 billion US dollars with an average per capita GDP income of 3422 dollars. **In land:** The territory of Kazakhstan is 2.7 million square km which is more than twice the territories of other four countries (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) combined. (Mostafa 2013:165).

<sup>xi</sup>The EU has remained the largest trading partner of Kazakhstan since 2002, followed by China and Russia (Avcu, 2013; Akiner 2010).

<sup>xii</sup>This directly relates to the deal within the Eurasian Custom Union founded between Kazakhstan, Russia, and Belorussia, which is not wholly supported within Kazakhstan, as it is being misused, as the opposition supposes, by officials in Russia (see: Satpaev 2015; Bordachev 2015; Barbashin 2015; Beitāne 2014; Jarosiewicz and Fischer 2015).

<sup>xiii</sup> Remarkably, for the study of English in Kazakhstan's primary and secondary state schools, textbooks have been specifically adopted for Kazakhstan and published by Cambridge University Press.

<sup>xiv</sup> Overall it is estimated that only about 30% of Kazakhstan citizens who study abroad are funded by state scholarships, while the remaining 70% are self funded (ICEFMonitor 2014).

<sup>xv</sup> Academic mobility is one of the core aspects of the Bologna Process, yet, in the literature and some statistical documents (for example, ICEF Monitor 2014; NARIC d n.a.; Teichler 2009), there is often no differentiation between academic mobility and internationalisation. The latter is understood in the following way: "Internationalisation is often discussed as in relation to physical mobility, academic cooperation and academic knowledge transfer, as well as international education" (Teichler 2009: 4). While this definition seems correct, it does not provide the specificity of the term "academic mobility" in the case of academics. I would point out that while these two terms are close to each other, they are not identical and are distinct in their purposes. I consider academic mobility to be a smaller, specific part of the wider concept of internationalisation. Academic mobility is focused on the teaching or research of academics, and thus on professional exchange.

<sup>xvi</sup> Overall, Kazakhstan has a quite well-developed system of education. By the statistics (TEMPUS 2014), there are 128 HEIs overall, including 46 public and 86 private. On average, while there are 232 students per 10 thousand people in the world, in Kazakhstan, this figure is 422.5 people. Thus, Kazakhstan has a higher percentage of people in higher education, but insufficient quality among training specialists (ibid.). Since 2012, the number of universities providing substandard education services has been reduced from 148 to 126 (TEMPUS 2012).

<sup>xvii</sup> This was preceded by 10 years of schooling, which became 12-year of schooling under the reforms.

<sup>xviii</sup> I was awarded a Kandidat Nauk degree for a Kandidat thesis in Culturology (Cultural Studies), which I defended in RIC in Moscow (Russia). After the 're-attestation' of qualifications in Kazakhstan, this degree was judged as equivalent to a PhD, according to the process I describe in this section.

<sup>xix</sup> The participants' showed interest in how things operate in international HEIs and I was asked much about the difference between the two research cultures and academic degrees. My previous research experience within the post-Soviet academic culture, ending with the award of a research degree, allowed substantive discussion about the differences between the two systems. Another set of questions from participants concerned the issue of publishing articles abroad in journals with high impact factors, as this is a new essential requirement for Kazakhstan scholars under the reforms. Three teachers of different disciplines (from capital and regional universities) asked for help with examples of articles published in such journals including asking for e-copies of these.

<sup>xx</sup> The title of the book edited by Iveta Silova in 2010 is *Post-socialism is not dead: (Re)-Reading the Global in Comparative Education. International Perspectives on Education and Society (Book 14)* (published by Emerald Group Publishing Limited).

<sup>xxi</sup> All public HEIs in Kazakhstan are divided between national and state universities. There are 9 national universities, and 37 state universities. Two of each group were included in this research.

<sup>xxii</sup> Red was a symbolic colour for Bolsheviks and Communists. All their attributes were in red or contained this word in their title, such as, the Red Army, Red Square, Red Banner, Red Star, etc. This symbolism was normally explained by red being the colour of blood.

<sup>xxiii</sup> In square brackets after each data extract I indicate: the participant's university, discipline and number of years of academic experience. RU stands for a Regional University and CU for a Capital University.

<sup>xxiv</sup> JV Coca-Cola Almaty Bottlers LLP (CCAB) was one of the first foreign companies established in Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet period, opening for business in 1994.

<sup>xxv</sup> Komsomol was the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League, the youth division of the Communist Party in the USSR.

<sup>xxvi</sup> There are a large number of Russian publications on this. Some examples are: Vasserman (2013) Rostovskii (2013).

<sup>xxvii</sup> A similar example of such reasoning can be found in the popular socialist phrase: "Marxist doctrine is omnipotent because it is true".



<sup>xxviii</sup> GROUP-STREAM IS THE LABEL FOR ALL STUDENT GROUPS IN A SINGLE YEAR OF STUDY, AS GROUPS ARE UNITED INTO A SINGLE STREAM THAT ATTENDS THE SAME LECTURES.

<sup>xxix</sup> UMKD (THE EDUCATIONAL AND METHODOLOGICAL KIT OF A DISCIPLINE) IS A SET OF DOCUMENTS DEVELOPED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONTENT OF THE GOVERNMENT STATE STANDARDS AND INCLUDES, AMONG OTHER THINGS: QUALIFICATION CHARACTERISTICS; TYPICAL AND WORKING CURRICULA; THE CONTENT, SCOPE AND PROCEDURE OF TRAINING; AND THE BASIC KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REQUIRED TO BE TAUGHT. THIS KIT OF DOCUMENTS BECAME A NEW REQUIREMENT AFTER TRANSFER TO THE CREDIT SYSTEM. ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS' MAIN COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE REFORMS IS THE INCREASED PAPERWORK AND TIME SPENT PREPARING VARIOUS DOCUMENTS, INCLUDING UMKD.

<sup>xxx</sup> THESE ARE TWO LEADING KAZAKHSTAN HEIS WHICH WERE NAMED AFTER PROMINENT KAZAKH FIGURES.

<sup>xxxi</sup> ZHUMAGULOV B. IS A FORMER MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE IN KAZAKHSTAN. HIS APPOINTMENT WAS DURING THE PERIOD OF THE MAJOR EDUCATION REFORMS.

<sup>xxxii</sup> THERE WAS ALSO A WRITTEN FORM OF EXAMINATIONS IN THE PAST, WHICH WAS LESS WIDELY USED THAN THE ORAL ONE. IT WAS UNDERTAKEN BY ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS POSED BY A TEACHER IN WRITING, WHETHER INDIVIDUALLY ON THE EXAMINATION SUBJECT OR WITH THE SAME QUESTIONS TO ALL. MOSTLY THIS FORMAT WAS USED FOR ASSESSMENT DURING MID-TERM EXAMINATIONS OR AFTER THE COMPLETION OF SOME UNITS.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> UNT (UNIFORM NATIONAL TESTING) IS A SYSTEM FOR ASSESSING THE KNOWLEDGE OF GRADUATES IN KAZAKHSTAN. UNT FORMS PART OF THE ASSESSMENT FOR THE FINAL STATE CERTIFICATION AFTER GRADUATION, AND PART OF THE ASSESSMENT FOR ENTRANCE TO HEIS.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> HERE, THE PARTICIPANT TALKS ABOUT THE WRITTEN FORM OF ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS POSED BY A TEACHER, USED IN THE PAST SYSTEM.

<sup>xxxv</sup> "A LOT OF WATER" OR "POURING WATER" IN A FIGURATIVE SENSE IN RUSSIAN USUALLY INDICATE WASTED WORDS AND EMPTY THOUGHTS.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> THE MAJORITY OF RESEARCH ARTICLES IN SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES WERE CREATED WITHOUT THE COLLECTION OF EMPIRICAL DATA AND ANY ACCOMPANYING METHODOLOGY. THIS ABSENCE OF METHODOLOGY IS ALSO TYPICAL OF KANDIDAT AND DOKTOR'S THESES IN THESE FIELDS, EVEN THOUGH THEIR WORK MIGHT CONTAIN ORIGINALITY. THERE IS A HARD EVIDENCE FOR THIS IN THE NUMBER OF WORKS THAT LACK A CHAPTER ON METHODOLOGY OR IN WHICH IT IS NOT EXPLICITLY EXPLAINED WITHIN THE TEXT. AS STERN AND HUSBANDS STATE: "EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND ITS METHODOLOGICAL TRADITIONS HAVE SUFFERED BADLY. THE MASSES OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DATA THAT SUSTAIN WESTERN SOCIAL RESEARCH WERE NOT DEVELOPED IN THE SOVIET UNION. FEW SOVIET SCHOLARS ARE TRAINED IN METHODS THAT ASSURE RELIABLE MEASUREMENT AND REPLICABILITY OF RESULTS. SOVIET SOCIAL SCIENTISTS DO FEW EMPIRICAL STUDIES, AND OF THESE, MANY WOULD

NOT MEET PUBLICATION STANDARDS IN THE UNITED STATES” (1989: 29).

<sup>xxxvii</sup> FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET CONTEXT, IT IS NORMAL TO CONSIDER CONFERENCE PRESENTATION AS RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS. THIS CATEGORY ALSO TYPICALLY ENCOMPASSES OTHER OUTPUTS SUCH AS BOOK REVIEWS, DISSERTATIONS AND THESES, TEACHING AIDS AND TEXT BOOKS, WHICH COMMONLY “CANNOT BE TREATED AS A PUBLICATION IN THE WESTERN VIEW”. (SMOLENTSEVA 2011: 77). IN OTHER WORDS, AN ACADEMIC ARTICLE IN THE POST-SOVIET CONTEXT IS NOT NECESSARILY A MEANS FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF ORIGINAL RESEARCH OUTCOMES AS THIS IS UNDERSTOOD WORLDWIDE. FOR SOME OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN MY STUDY IT WAS COMMON TO MIX UP “RESEARCH PUBLICATION” AND “CONFERENCE PAPER”, TAKING THEM AS SYNONYMS, WHILE ANSWERING THE QUESTION ON CHANGES IN THEIR RESEARCH ACTIVITY UNDER THE NEW REQUIREMENTS. THIS IS TYPICAL FOR KAZAKHSTAN, AS IT IS FOR OTHER POST-SOVIET COUNTRIES.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> THE POST-SOVIET CONCEPTION OF “A THEORETICAL ARTICLE” IN THESE FIELDS IS UNDERSTOOD DIFFERENTLY FROM THE WESTERN ONE. WHILE IN THE WEST A THEORETICAL ARTICLE IMPLIES AN ADVANCE IN THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING AND THUS A CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY (JAIN D N.A.), IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT “THEORETICAL” IS TAKEN SIMPLY AS AN OPPOSITION TO EMPIRICAL OR PRACTICAL.

<sup>xxxix</sup> THE MISUNDERSTANDING OF WESTERN STANDARDS SOMETIMES BECOMES POLITICISED, WHICH IS REMARKABLE: “RUSSIAN SOCIAL THOUGHT FOR WESTERN SCHOLARS EXISTS IN TWO FORMS: AS AN OBJECT AND AS A SUBJECT. AS AN OBJECT IT IS IMPORTANT PRIMARILY FOR WESTERN SLAVIC STUDIES, THE SUBJECT OF WHICH IS OUR HISTORY, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROCESSES, TRANSITIONS, AND SO ON. THESE TOPICS TRADITIONALLY GENERATE INTEREST, AS THERE ARE MANY CENTRES OF RUSSIAN STUDIES AND RELEVANT RUSSIAN RESEARCH. (HOWEVER, THERE ARE NOW FAR FEWER THAN THERE WERE DURING THE COLD WAR.) RELATIVELY, OUR RESEARCH IN THESE AREAS IS MORE IN DEMAND IN THE WEST. THE INTEREST IN OUR SOCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN DISCIPLINES AS SUCH IS MINIMAL AND AS A RESULT OUR SUBJECTIVE PRESENCE – THROUGH THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ARTICLES IN FOREIGN JOURNALS – TODAY IS NEGLIGIBLE. ... WE DO NOT WANT TO PUT THE BLAME FOR THE CURRENT SITUATION ON FOREIGN SCHOLARS. OF COURSE, AS WITH ANY SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY, IT IS TO SOME EXTENT CLOSED, AND TO SOME EXTENT, INVOLVED IN A COMPETITIVE STRUGGLE WITH ‘OUTSIDERS’” (SAVELIYEVA AND POLETAYEV 2011, PERSONAL TRANSLATION). I WOULD POINT HERE TO THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGICAL BELIEFS AND OF SOVIET HOSTILITY TOWARDS THE WEST. IT IS A SEPARATE DISCUSSION AS TO WHETHER THE CLOSED NATURE OF THE WESTERN ACADEMIC COMMUNITY OR ITS RESISTANCE TO OUTSIDERS ARE SIGNIFICANT. THIS IS A WIDESPREAD POINT OF VIEW, ESPECIALLY AMONG RUSSIAN ACADEMICS. FOR EXAMPLE, ANOTHER AUTHOR (USSACHEV 2013) STATES THAT IN ORDER TO PUBLISH IN INTERNATIONAL JOURNALS RUSSIAN ACADEMICS MUST ADOPT THE PARTICULAR ‘RULES OF THE GAME’. CERTAINLY THIS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE INFLUENCE OF IDEOLOGICAL MODELS FORMED DURING THE COLD WAR AND STILL CARRIED IN THE POST-SOVIET MENTALITY.

<sup>xl</sup> THIS SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH THE CONTRIBUTION OF SUCH FIGURES AS VYGOTSKY AND BAKHTIN, THE MOST FAMOUS RUSSIAN HUMANITIES SCHOLARS IN THE WEST, WHO ARE EXCEPTIONS TO THE NORM. POSSIBLY BECAUSE OF THIS, THEIR WORKS WERE BANNED AND NOT STUDIED IN SOVIET HEIS FOR A LONG TIME FOR IDEOLOGICAL REASONS. HOWEVER, I WOULD RELATE THEIR PROMINENCE PRIMARILY TO THE VALUE OF THEIR IDEAS

RATHER THAN TO THE ISSUE OF RESEARCH PERFORMANCE.