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**Academic mobility of students as a factor
in the internationalisation of higher education
in the regional university of the Republic of Kazakhstan**

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Declaration

I, Kundyž Mukatayeva, declare that this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the Palacký University in Olomouc. The work submitted as partial requirement for PhD study programme of Education is my original work and that all the sources is original except where indicated by special reference in the text.

Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and no way represent those of the Palacký University in Olomouc.

The dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination either in Czech Republic or overseas.

Kundyž Mukatayeva

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Abstract

Today, internationalisation has become a strategic goal of all universities worldwide. Kazakhstani higher education sector is at present significantly influenced by European higher education policy known as the Bologna Declaration. The aim of this research is to understand the current situation of students academic mobility programme, i.e. the programme realisation at the regional university.

This study presents a case study on the realisation of «Academic mobility» programme and its impact on the internationalisation process and determines the prospects for development of the programme at the regional university in Kazakhstan – Toraighyrov University.

The study includes a theoretical literature review, critical document analysis, and a case study carried out within a Kazakhstani higher education (HE) institution. Guided by a literature review, four hypothesis for quantitative research together and five qualitative research questions, questionnaires and in-depth interviews with students` of the regional university were carried out.

The findings of the research by the analysis of the county`s HE system and the document analysis of the MoES confirm that Kazakhstan operates with a national approach (top-down) towards HE internationalisation. The regional university, by realising the student academic mobility programme, which is one of the main objectives of the BP, uses an activity approach towards internationalisation (Knight & de Wit, 1995). It is possible to conclude that the studied university together with its activity approach uses a programme approach towards internationalisation, whereby the university, with the help of the MoES and different international programmes, provides the academic mobility programme to participate in international study activities.

The study includes the motivations and experiences of Toraighyrov University students who have spent a semester abroad. Firstly, study explores the perception about the «Academic mobility» programme before and after their participation. Secondly, the activeness of the students by fields of study who participated in the programme and their main motivation to study abroad are identified. Thirdly, the study analyses the impact of the programme by exploring the experiences of these students during their stay overseas.

Toraighyrov University sees the student academic mobility programme as a factor that facilitates the university's internationalisation process. Mobile students who go for study to different countries might be seen as a generation who might develop higher education internationalisation. Thus, their experiences are found out and the given recommendation by students for the improvement of the programme at the regional University could influence and be a trigger for further improvement of the programme at the regional university.

Future research that builds upon the case study could help towards a better understanding of realisation of the students' academic mobility programme that is seen as a way to internationalisation process of Kazakhstani HEIs.

Key words: students' academic mobility, internationalisation, Bologna process, Kazakhstan higher education, students' motivation, study abroad, mixed research design

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List of Abbreviations

BA	Bachelor of Arts
BP	Bologna Process
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
MA	Master of Arts
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
OECD	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
RK	the Republic of Kazakhstan
ToU	Toraighyrov University
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USCO	University of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

Chapter 1: Presenting the research topic

1.1 Introduction, the topic of study

The internationalisation of education is becoming one of the most important components of educational policy nowadays in all countries around the world. The internationalisation process has developed thanks to dynamically evolving political, economic, socio-cultural and academic factors. The combination of these factors, depending on the continent, country, and university, takes many forms. The Republic of Kazakhstan is a central Asian country, which also prioritises higher education internationalisation and adequately responds to accelerating processes of internationalisation due to the modernisation of the educational process, the use of a competency model in educational programmes, the strengthening of student mobility programmes, the increasing role of information technologies, the development of multilingualism and the improvement of the educational and methodological base in line with global educational trends (MoES, 2018). Therefore, the aim of the study is to explore students' understanding of the internationalisation process through the academic mobility programme at a regional university in the Republic of Kazakhstan (Kazakhstan).

After examining the higher education internationalisation process, the study concentrates on the Bologna Process (BP), and how it has influenced the country's education system and academic mobility, which is one of its main principles. In addition, the study examines the realisation of students' «Academic mobility» programme and its impact on the internationalisation process; defines the impact of the programme on participants; and determines the prospects for the improvement of the programme at this regional university in Kazakhstan. This research is the first step towards understanding the motivations for, and experience of academic mobility among regional university students in Kazakhstan and analysing how the programme impacts the internationalisation process.

1.2 Significance of and rationale for the study

The rationale for the research is presented in three sections. The first describes the wider, international significance. The second reviews the national relevance for the Republic of Kazakhstan, while the third presents my personal interest in the research. This research examines the student academic mobility programme as a factor in the internationalisation of higher education (HE) in a regional university of Kazakhstan.

The general rationale for choosing the topic is that the internationalisation process is regarded as one of the major forces that impacts and shapes higher education in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century (Knight, 2008). All countries are taking part in integration processes and the internationalisation process is shaped through various activities; one major activity associated with HE internationalisation is students' academic mobility.

The Republic of Kazakhstan also believes that HE is an important area for national development and economic growth. In September 2020, President Tokayev announced a national strategy whereby the new economic course of the country should be based on seven basic principles. The fifth principle concerns the development of human capital and investment in a new type of quality education (Tokayev, 2020). Higher education was always a priority in education development. Therefore, in order to increase the quality of education Kazakhstan joined the Bologna Process in 2010. The Bologna Process has become a main focus of attention for regional and national HE policy-making around the world (Westerheijden et al., 2010). At the level of national policies it can be observed that internationalisation is becoming a more integrated part of higher education (Wende, 2001).

In light of these national rationales, a study of the academic mobility programme as a factor in HE internationalisation could be helpful in identifying students' perceptions of the programme and their reasons for participation, students' personal and academic developments due to their participation and ways in which the programme could be further improved to meet the national goals.

My personal interest in this topic is based on a more personal as well as a professional level. My interest in the internationalisation process and the academic mobility programme comes from my contact with mobile students during my job as a coordinator of the academic mobility programme at the regional university. This personal and professional experience motivated me to explore further the current state of the academic mobility programme and the internationalisation process. I was part of it and I had a desire to find out about the development prospects of the programme at the regional university under study.

Even though there is no shortage of research from other national and international foundations on higher education and student mobility in EU countries, the situation of

Kazakhstani mobile students is rather unique and the findings from other contexts are not always applicable to them. Therefore, this study investigates students' opinions in relation to the academic mobility programme, namely, the realisation of the programme at the regional university, the students' main motivation factors, and experiences from the programme that added value.

1.3 Research aims

The aim of this study is to explore and analyse how the students' «Academic mobility» programme is realised and its impact on the internationalisation process, and to determine the prospects for development of the programme at a regional university in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In light of this broad aim, the thesis' specific aims are divided into 3 parts: theoretical, empirical and practical.

Theoretical aims:

1. Undertake a critical review of the international literature relating to the «Academic mobility» programme and internationalisation process and its influence on the higher education policy.
2. Provide an overview of the Kazakhstani context as a country in transition, which is moving towards a knowledge based economy.

Empirical aims:

1. Explore how the «Academic mobility» programme influences the process of internationalisation at the university.
2. Find out students' perceptions of the «Academic mobility» programme before and after their participation in the programme.
3. Describe the impact of the «Academic mobility» programme on the participants by exploring their study abroad experiences.

Practical aims:

1. Consider the importance of the study for the related theoretical literature and for future research.
2. Generate recommendations for the realisation of the «Academic mobility» programme and the development of the internationalisation process in Kazakhstani higher education.

In order to reach the above indicated aims of the study for the quantitative research 4 questions were created:

1. Do the conditions for participation in the academic mobility programme at Toraighyrov University comply with all of the requirements of the selection procedure?
2. Are the subjects taken by students useful and relevant to their education fields?
3. Is there a difference in the quality of education between the sending and receiving universities according to the students' opinion?
4. Are the participants satisfied with the study abroad experience?

In addition to the questions 4 topics were identified and related hypotheses were developed:

Topic 1 Degree of expectations from the «Academic mobility» programme and the degree of achievement of those expectations after participation

H1: It is predicted that the degree of expectations from the «Academic mobility» programme and the degree of achievement of those expectations after participation in the programme among the participants will be different.

H1₀: There is no statistical difference in the degree of expectations from the «Academic mobility» programme and the degree of achievement of those expectations after participation in the programme among the participants.

H1_A: There is a significant statistical difference in the degree of expectation from the «Academic mobility» programme and the degree of achievement of those expectations after participation in the programme among the participants.

Topic 2 Active participants among different fields of study

H2: Students of humanitarian and education fields are more active in their participation in the programme due to their foreign (English) language competences than students in the engineering science and technology field.

H2₀: There is no statistical difference in students' active participation in the programme between students of the humanitarian and education fields and the engineering science and technology fields.

H2_A: There is a statistical difference in students' active participation in the programme between students of the humanitarian and education fields and the engineering science and technology fields.

Topic 3 Main motivation factors

H3: It is assumed that there would be significance between BA and MA level of students highlighting the main factor as travelling opportunity to the motivation of receiving education in a foreign university through experiencing different learning and teaching practices in participation.

H3₀: There is no statistical difference between BA and MA level of students highlighting the main factor as travelling opportunity to the motivation of receiving education in a foreign university through experiencing different learning and teaching practices in participation.

H3_A: There is statistical difference between BA and MA level of students highlighting the main factor as travelling opportunity to the motivation of receiving education in a foreign university through experiencing different learning and teaching practices in participation.

Topic 4 Added-value from the «Academic mobility» programme

H4: It is assumed that the mobility period abroad will lead to a significant increase in social and communication skills rather than language improvement or academic performance among the BA and MA participants.

H4₀: There will be no statistical difference in terms of a significant increase in social and communication skills compared to language improvement or academic performance among the BA and MA participants.

H4_A: There will be a statistical difference in terms of the mobility period abroad leading to a significant increase in social and communication skills compared to language improvement or academic performance among the BA and MA participants.

The study was guided by the following qualitative research questions:

1. What are the links between the «Academic mobility» programme and the internationalisation process?
2. How can the «Academic mobility» programme contribute to the process of internationalisation?
3. What are the students' main motivations of participation in the «Academic mobility» programme?
4. What advantages can students obtain by participating in the «Academic mobility» programme?
5. How can the «Academic mobility» programme be improved at the regional university?

1.4 Dissertation structure

This dissertation consists of six chapters, including the introduction to the study. The second chapter consists of a critical review of the relevant literature on the internationalisation of HE, the Bologna Declaration, and academic mobility. Chapter 3 provides a brief exposition of Kazakhstani higher education (HE) and the integration of the country into the Bologna Process. Furthermore, the students' academic mobility programme as a major factor for the internationalisation process at the regional university is covered. The Methodology chapter (chapter 4) describes the nature of the qualitative and quantitative data obtained as a result of the questionnaires and interviews and outlines the method of the data analysis. The Methodology chapter also includes a discussion of ethical issues related to this research. In chapter 5, the Findings and Interpretations are organised by presenting firstly the quantitative data analysis followed by the qualitative data analysis. The last chapter, the Conclusions and Implications, maintains a practical focus through suggesting the stakeholders who might be interested in a particular finding. In addition, the final chapter offers some recommendations for practical actions about the programme's improvement at the regional university in Kazakhstan.

Chapter 2: Literature review: Internationalisation, Bologna Process and Academic mobility programme

The theoretical foundation of this chapter is based on three strands of research. The first strand of literature presents a review of the key research literature in the area of internationalisation of higher education and discusses some of the more frequently cited models and approaches of internationalisation that have emerged from the research. Special attention is paid to the definitions of internationalisation related to HE, with an exploration of how these concepts link to the Kazakhstani HE system.

Next, literature regarding the Bologna Declaration and its objectives will be discussed. Attention is paid to Kazakhstani integration into the BP.

The third strand is about the «Academic mobility» programme as one of the main principles of the Bologna process; particular attention is paid to students' academic mobility programme.

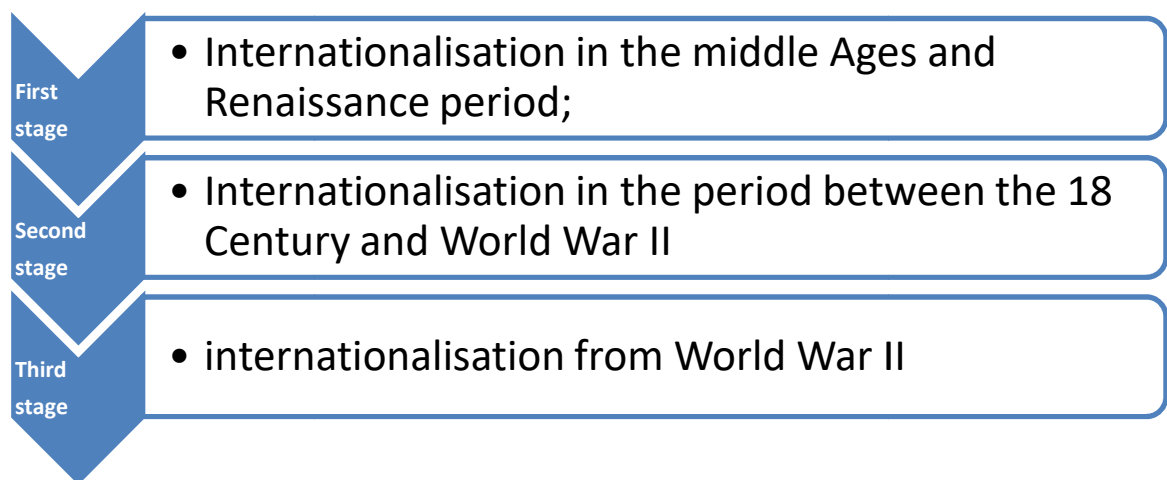
2.1. Meanings of Internationalisation of Higher Education

The concept of internationalisation is discussed in relation to HE amongst researchers. There are different understandings of the term and different scholars have various understandings about the term. The chapter outlines the search to find a proper definition of internationalisation of higher education to underpin the study and support the development of a framework to structure and support data analysis.

There are a considerable number of studies on higher education internationalisation (Knight, 2003, Knight, 2004, Stier, 2004, Altbach & Knight, 2007, Brookes & Waters, 2011, Knight, 2013, Al-Hague, 2015, Teichler, 2017, de Wit & Hunter, 2015, de Wit et al., 2017). In order to discuss higher education internationalisation process, there is a need to analyse what the term internationalisation means. Even though internationalisation is not a new term, for more than 25 years, there has been much discourse about definition of internationalisation among researchers (de Wit, 1995, Elliot, 1998, Rudzki, 1995, Teichler, 2004, Stier, 2004, Knight, 2004, Altbach & Knight, 2007, Knight, 2008); however, indigenous Kazakh definitions of HE internationalisation were difficult to find in the literature as the literature reviewed was mostly from English language resources and thus there is no research on Kazakhstani HE internationalisation.

In the history of higher education there were stages from an international perspective as: internationalisation in the middle Ages and Renaissance period; internationalisation in the period between the 18 Century and World War II; and internationalisation from World War II (de Wit, 1995). Even though in the past internationalisation was not well-known and not well researched phenomenon still the process has its existence from the past which can be seen from this stages proposed by Hans de Wit.

Figure 2.1. The internationalisation stages in the history of higher education by Hans De Wit (1995)



In addition, Kehm (2003) proposes the following three phases of internationalisation. The author drew on the work of Baron (as cited in Kehm, 2003) when describing internationalisation in the last half of the 20th century in Europe in detail. The first phase, 1950 to 1975, was characterised by the academic mobility of researchers and students. From 1975 to 1987 the mobility of students became more organised and the value of study abroad began to be more broadly recognised. A third phase, from 1987 to 1992, was highlighted by the introduction of the ERASMUS programme by the European Union.

While there is considerable evidence that universities have been international many centuries (Al-Haque, 2015, Welch, 2008, Kehm, 2003), it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that the term internationalisation came to be used to refer to a specific set of strategies that higher education institutions (HEI) should adopt in order to internationalise their institutions. According to Kehm (2003), the current phase of internationalisation is characterised by the professionalisation of internationalisation, increasing regionalisation, and globalisation. She stated “the age of globalisation has started turning higher education from a public good into a marketable service, adding competition

to cooperation, and re-interpreting exchange and mobility in terms of long-term economic investment, brain drain and brain gain” (p. 114). In addition, Kehm stated that international and supranational organisations such as the OECD and the European Union are becoming important players in the internationalisation of higher education.

The internationalisation concept is discussed in relation to HE amongst researchers and most widely used definitions of higher education internationalisation are given by Knight (1993, 2003, 2004, 2008). Most well-known and commonly accepted process view of internationalisation definition was proposed by Jane Knight (2003: 2) where she defined it as: “the process of integrating the international dimension into the teaching, research and service and service function of an institution”. Wende et al. (1999) share similar view on seeing internationalisation as a process which impacts curriculum at institutional and system levels. In 1995 Knight and de Wit gave the following definition to HE internationalisation: “any systematic effort aimed at making HE responsive to the requirements and challenges related to globalisation of societies, economy and labour market” (Knight & de Wit, 1995: 18). Another strategic management view on internationalisation of HE is given by (Rudzki, 1995), who highlights purpose and direction of internationalisation in terms of the relations between various parts of the process into a meaningful whole as: “a defining feature of all universities, encompassing organisational change, curriculum innovation, staff development and student mobility, for the purpose of achieving excellence in teaching and research”. Similar view to Rudzki is given by Teichler (2004: 22) who claims that:

“Internationalisation can best be defined as the totality of substantial changes in the context and inner life of HE relative to an increasing frequency of border-crossing activities amidst a persistence of national systems, even though some signs of ‘decentralisation’ might be observed”

Later Knight widened her definition beyond the institution and proposed that “Internationalisation at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2003). By this definition Knight proposes three levels of internationalisation process such as national, sectoral and institutional. This internationalisation definition is regarded as the most commonly accepted (de Wit & Hunter, 2015). In this work national and institutional levels will be covered as the study concerns HEI of a definite country and the university. Moreover, de Wit

et al. (2015) broadened Knight's definition as 'the international process of integration an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of higher education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society'(p.283). As can be seen from the definition of internationalisation, it is a process connected with the improvement of education quality where different stakeholders take part in the process.

As any process internationalisation consists of different stakeholders, from national level it is the Ministry of education and sciences, from institutional level it is a university, staff members and the consumers the students of a university. It is accepted that the internationalisation of education has a positive effect on all stakeholders of the educational process. From a student's perspective, international education provides an opportunity to study abroad, provides the best the quality and greater availability of educational services, expands the general horizons. At the institutional level, international education influences improving the reputation of the university, improving the quality of educational programmes. Finally, from a national point of view international education impacts on eliminating skilled workers for society by improving the overall quality of higher education.

Internationalisation is seen as the main force that impacts HE sector that transforms their activities in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century (Knight, 2008). All the above mentioned definitions emphasise the notion of internationalisation as a process that demands non-stop work and efforts to achieve the main aim. As the starting point for research undertaken in this study the definitions of HE internationalisation as substantial changes (Rudzki, 1995, Teichler, 2004) in the context of HE will be used.

2.1.1 Approaches and Models of Internationalisation

There are various approaches and models of internationalisation in higher education presented by scholars. The authors offer different views on HE internationalisation processes. For instance, Knight & de Wit (1995) offer four basic approaches to Internationalisation as: activity, competency, ethos and process (Table 2.1). Each approach has a key feature which distinguishes one approach from another. Widely used activity approach describes internationalisation in terms of categories or activity types such as academic or extracurricular. Activity approach including students' exchange pro-

gramme and process approach including international dimensions are closely related to this study that contains key features of the internationalisation process.

Table 2.1 Knight & de Wit's approaches to Internationalisation (1995)

Approach name	Key features
Activity	Academic and extra-curricular activities such as: curricular development and innovation; scholar, student and faculty exchange; area studies; technical assistance; intercultural training; international students, joint research initiatives.
Competency	Developing new skills, attitudes, knowledge in students, faculty and staff.
Ethos	Developing an ethos or culture in the university that values intercultural and international perspectives and initiatives.
Process	Integrate an international dimension or perspective into the major functions of the institution. A wide range of academic activities, organizational policies and procedures and strategies are part of this process.

Another approach is given by Knight (2004), who proposes two levels or approaches of internationalisation process: institutional (bottom-up) and national/sector (top-down) approaches. She highlights that national/sector level has a great influence on HEI by offering policy, programmes, funding and regulatory framework. However, the main process of internationalisation is delivered by an individual institutional level, in Kazakhstan HE system it might be highlighted that national approach is used on HE internationalisation. Further, five approaches were presented to Internationalisation at the national or sector level, which are programmes, rationales, ad hoc, policy and strategic by Knight (2004) (table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Approaches to Internationalisation at the National or sector level by Knight (2004:19)

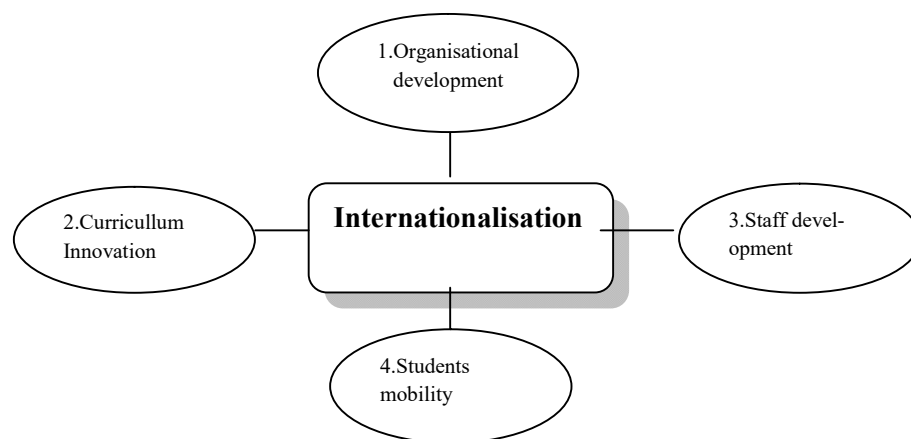
Approach	Description
Programme	Internationalisation of HE is seen in terms of providing funded programmes that facilitate institutions and individuals to have opportunities to engage in international activities such as mobility, research and linkages.
Rationales	Internationalisation of HE is presented in terms of why it is important that a national higher education sector become more international. Rationales vary enormously and can handle human resources development, strategic alliances, commercial trade, nation building, and social/cultural development.
Ad hoc	Internationalisation of HE is treated as an ad hoc or reactive response to the many new opportunities that are being presented for international delivery, mobility, and cooperation in postsecondary education.

Policy	Internationalisation of HE is described in terms of policies that address or emphasize the importance of the international or intercultural dimension in postsecondary education. Policies can be from a variety of sectors, for example, education, foreign affairs, science and technology, culture, or trade.
Strategic	Internationalisation of HE is considered to be a key element of a national strategy to achieve a country's goals and priorities both domestically and internationally.

According to Knight the programme approach is seen in terms of providing funded programmes that help individuals and institutions to have possibilities to participate in international activities such as mobility, research and linkages which is close to activity approach presented by Knight & de Wit in 1995. This work will apply Knight's programme, policy and strategic approaches, in addition, the approaches, given by Knight & de Wit (1995), such as activity, competence and process are also appropriate to the researched topic. The main and mostly used approach is programme approach to Internationalisation as students' academic mobility programme is used as means or factor of Internationalisation at the regional university. It is assumed that after analysing the data it might be possible to construct the approaches of Internationalisation for the regional university on the researched topic.

Apart from internationalisation approaches scholars present models of internationalisation. Two different models presented by Neave (1992) and Rudzki (1995) are reviewed in this work. Neave (1992) offered two models, first is based on university leadership or top-down model and the second, and is based on basic structural units or bottom-up model of internationalisation process. By using top-down and bottom-up models Neave distinguishes centralised and decentralised models of the internationalisation process. Rudzki (1995) views internationalisation in terms of relationship between the elements of a process and on the other hand, develops four key dimensions of internationalisation such as organisational change, curriculum innovation, and staff development and student mobility (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2. The four dimensions of internationalisation according to Rudzki (1995)



Altbach and Knight (2016) differentiated four types of internationalisation such as: traditional internationalisation which is rarely a profit-making activity; developing-country internationalisation, where developing countries host number of international students in order to improve the quality, gain prestige and earn income; individual internationalisation where individuals make key decisions about the destinations and study fields; and European Internationalisation, where European Union actively participates in this process for more than two decades and now with the creation of the Bologna process the scope of European regional integration even more expanded. As this work analyses of academic mobility programme as an internationalisation factor, which belongs to the key BP principles, it might be stated that the study a part of and belongs to the European Internationalisation, even though the university studied and country is located in central Asia. The importance of higher education internationalisation can be seen by international declarations, national policy and strategic plan of the university studied. These changes in Kazakhstani HE system will be covered on Chapter 3.

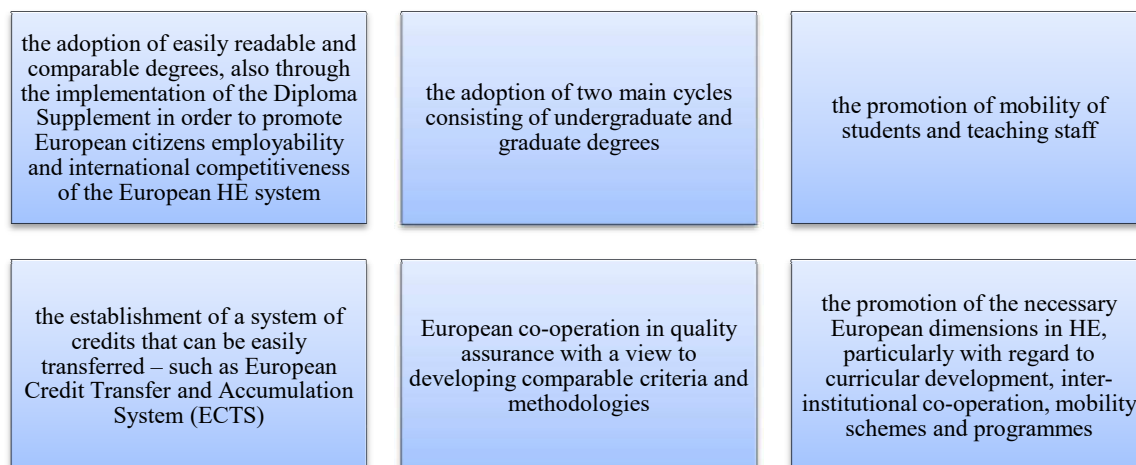
2.2 Bologna Process

In HE the most well-known and most successful sample of regional cooperation within Europe is the Bologna process, that covered major reformation (Knight, 2008). The Bologna Process launched with the Bologna Declaration (1999) and was begun by twenty-nine countries in Europe with the goal of establishing a European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It is one of the main voluntary processes at European level, as it is nowadays implemented in 49 countries from various nations, which define the EHEA.

2.2.1 Aims of the Bologna Declaration and Ministers' Meetings

The Bologna Declaration (1999: 3) states that, in order to establish the EHEA, the following specific objectives will have to be attained (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3. The initial objectives of the Bologna Declaration



We hereby undertake to attain these objectives – within the framework of our institutional competences and taking full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and of the University autonomy – to consolidate the European area of higher education. (Bologna Declaration, 1999: 4)

The above indicated quotation shows the position of education Ministers who signed the Bologna Declaration. Every two or three years the Ministerial Conferences are organised in order to assess the progress made within the EHEA and to decide on the new steps to be taken for the following years. Since 1999, the ministerial meetings have been held in different European cities, in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005), London (2007), Leuven (2009), Bucharest (2012), Yerevan (2015) and Paris (2018) in order to review the results achieved and to set priorities for the coming years. Full policy formulations from the year 1999 - 2009 meetings are given in detail in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Timeline of the Bologna Process (EACEA, 2010)

Timeline of the Bologna process

Mobility of students and teachers	Mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff	Social dimension of mobility	Portability of loans and grants Improvement of mobility data	Attention to visa and work permits	Challenges of visa and work permits, pension systems and recognition	Benchmark of 20 % by 2020 for student mobility
A common two-cycle degree system	Easily readable and comparable degrees	Fair recognition Development of recognised Joint degrees	Inclusion of doctoral level as third cycle Recognition of degrees and periods of studies Joint degrees	FQ-EHEA adopted National Qualifications Frameworks launched	National Qualifications Frameworks by 2010	National Qualifications Frameworks by 2012
		Social dimension	Equal access	Reinforcement of the social dimension	Commitment to produce national action plans with effective monitoring	National targets for the social dimension to be measured by 2020
		Lifelong learning (LLL)	Alignment of national LLL policies Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	Flexible learning paths in higher education	Work towards a common understanding of the role of higher education in LLL Partnerships to improve employability	LLL as a public responsibility requiring strong partnerships Call to work on employability
Use of credits	A system of credits (ECTS)	ECTS and Diploma Supplement (DS)	ECTS for credit accumulation		Need for coherent use of tools and recognition practices	Continuing implementation of Bologna tools
	European cooperation in quality assurance	Cooperation between quality assurance and recognition professionals	Quality assurance at institutional, national and European level	European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance adopted	Creation of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)	Quality as an overarching focus for EHEA
Europe of Knowledge	European dimensions in higher education	Attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area	Links between higher education and research areas	International cooperation on the basis of values and sustainable development	Strategy to improve the global dimension of the Bologna process adopted	Enhance global policy dialogue through Bologna Policy Fora
1998	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009
Sorbonne Declaration	Bologna Declaration	Prague Communiqué	Berlin Communiqué	Bergen Communiqué	London Communiqué	Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué

In 1999 the Bologna Declaration officially started and “set out a vision for 2010 of an internationally competitive and attractive European Higher Education Area where higher education institutions, supported by strongly committed staff, can fulfill their diverse missions in the knowledge society; and where students benefiting from mobility with smooth and fair recognition of their qualifications, can find the best suited educational pathways” (Budapest-Vienna Declaration, 2010: 1). Since stated objectives, which were to have been achieved by 2010, had not been fully achieved by that time, it was decided in the Leuven Communiqué (2009) to prolong the timeframe until the year 2020. The Bologna Process might be assumed to be governed by key concepts such as internationalisation, competitiveness and the knowledge based economy.

2.3 Academic mobility as one of the principles of the Bologna Process

Internationalisation in higher education is a complicated process comprising many different activities. For several decades, internationalisation in higher education was mainly discussed in terms of mobility of students; this theme continues to be in the

foreground (Kehm & Teichler, 2007). According to Teichler (1998: 90) “students’ mobility became the major and most visible activity” of the European Union in the domain of higher education. Moreover, a survey by the International Association of Universities found that respondents rank student mobility opportunities as the most important internationalisation activity (Ergon-Polak & Hudson, 2014).

According to Scott (2015) there are several aspects of internationalisation of higher education that impact on academic mobility programme. For instance, the direct and indirect impacts of the Bologna process, the development of the European Higher Education Area have helped to reduce barriers to academic mobility as higher education system in Europe have adopted increasingly corresponding policies and structures. All these initiatives directly supported the academic mobility programme.

Academic mobility is one of the key ideas of the Bologna Process and it is one of the main principles of integration into the EHEA. Students’ academic mobility was discussed as the main feature of HE internationalisation process. The importance of the academic mobility programme is highlighted in almost every document of the Bologna Process. In order to further discuss academic mobility as a principle of the Bologna Process, the meaning of the academic mobility is need to be analysed and defined.

2.3.1 Notion of students’ academic mobility programme and its realisation in the Bologna Process

It is difficult to evaluate the relevance and quality of the research unless the definition of the researched topic is defined. Therefore, there is a need to find a proper and official definition of the term ‘academic mobility’. In this work the definition given on the Appendix to Recommendation No. R (95) 8 Principles of the Committee of Ministers to Member states on Academic Mobility (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 2 March 1995 at the 531st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies) for the formulation of policies regarding academic mobility throughout Europe will be used, where the term ‘academic mobility’ defined as ‘a period of study, teaching and/or research in a country other than a student's or academic staff member's country of residence (henceforth referred to as the "home country"). This period is of limited duration, and it is envisaged that the student or staff member return to his or her home country upon completion of the designated period’ (Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, 1995: 2). Later the European Parliament and Council (2006) in the European Quality Charter for Mobility define it as

‘mobility undertaken by individual young people or adults, for the purposes of formal and non-formal learning and for their personal and professional development’ (p. 8). The mobility term refers to border crossing with the purpose of study or work, often for temporary study (Teichler, 2015). Academic mobility is one of the core elements of the Bologna Process that creates possibilities for personal growth and develops international cooperation between institutions and individuals (London Communiqué, 2007).

Internationalisation and mobility have been the key objectives of the Bologna process and integration into the EHEA from the very beginning of the process. The earliest document where mobility of students and staff is considered as the important direction of a university is in the Magna Charta Universitatum in 1988 (Magna Charta, 1988). An open EHEA facilitates and would enhance academic mobility by encouraging students to study at least a semester in a different university outside their own country (Sorbonne Declaration, 1998). The significance of the academic mobility was highlighted in all subsequent ministerial conferences of the Bologna Process. For instance, in Prague Communiqué (2001:1) written that mobility objective is an important aim and “the efforts to promote mobility must be continued to enable students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff to benefit from the richness of the EHEA including its democratic values, diversity of cultures and languages and the diversity of the higher education system”. In addition, the Berlin communiqué (2003) confirms that the mobility is the basis for creation of the EHEA and emphasises its importance for academic, cultural, political, social and economic spheres. Bergen communiqué (2005) restates that mobility of students, teachers and staff as one of the key objectives of the Bologna process for all participating countries. London Communiqué (2007) also confirms that mobility of staff and students is one of the core elements of the process, which offers opportunities for personal growth, developing international cooperation between institutions and individuals. In addition, the importance and value of the mobility is presented in Leuven Communiqué (2009). It is stated that mobility shall be the hallmark of the EHEA (Leuven Communiqué, 2009). It is believed that mobility will foster and strengthen the academic and cultural internationalisation of European higher education. In Bucharest Declaration (2012) the strengthening mobility for better learning is also stressed. Learning mobility is important to ensure the quality of higher education, enhance students’ employability and expand cooperation in the EHEA and beyond. Promotion of international mobility for study and work placement as a powerful option to expand the competence range (Yerevan Communiqué,

2015). Mobility together with internationalisation referred as powerful instrument to strengthen mutual understanding of all parties and to stimulate the future employability of graduates. In recent Paris Communiqué (2018) importance of mobility for beyond 2020 ambitious plan with an increase of mobility throughout the whole EHEA is also highlighted. Moreover, need to remember that in 2009 Leuven Communiqué Ministers agreed that an important strategic target up to the year 2020 which is the second phase of the BP is value of outgoing mobility. According to the Leuven Communiqué the proportion of graduates from HEI who have had at least a semester experience in another foreign country. Due to the different years of joining into the BP there would be differences in timeline for reaching the target set. It is unlikely that the set target of 20% of overall university students studied abroad. The 2015 Bologna Process Implementation Report states a big concern related to reach the EHEA target of 20% mobility by 2020 (Buchovac, 2018).

Therefore, the Bologna Declaration literature makes it possible to specify the notion of the academic mobility as a possibility to study at least one semester abroad at a foreign university with subsequent return to home university. Today students' academic mobility makes it possible to Kazakhstani students to continue their education in foreign universities. It is established that the main requirements to become a mobile student are knowledge of foreign language, return to home university after completion a semester study, recognition of all credits earned during study abroad and getting a transcript of records after graduation. It can be seen that in all documents of the Bologna process the importance of the students' academic mobility for personal development and fostering cooperation between HEIs are highlighted that shows its value in the higher education field.

2.3.2 Students academic mobility types

Even though a main internationalisation activity in higher education is student academic mobility, it needs to be noted that there are no studies that research the terms and definitions describing various types of students' academic mobility. However, different scholars give various types to students' academic mobility. The aims of the academic mobility of students are various. Bogoslovskii & Pisarev (2007) state that the main aim of the academic mobility is to give a student a possibility to versatile European education within the chosen field, to provide access to recognized centres of education and science, whe-

re leading scientific schools have traditionally been formed, to expand the student's knowledge in all areas of European culture, to instill in him a sense of European citizen.

There is a classification related to the direction of mobility flows, such as incoming and outgoing. Incoming considers the aspect of destination country where students go for a study. Outgoing mobility considers the aspect of country of origin from where students move (EACEA, 2018). This study will cover students' outgoing academic mobility of a regional university in Kazakhstan. Another classification is given by Murphy-Lejeune, where students' academic mobility is divided into two perspectives: outbound where students go study abroad from their home country; and inbound where students come to study from the perspective of the chosen country of study (Murphy-Lejeune, 2009). This mobility depends on whether host country wants to or can receive mobile students. For instance, the last 10 years saw notable statistics in number of mobile students, between 2008 and 2018, the first of which benefited mostly Australia and the UK. Further Murphy-Lejeune (2009) classifies mobile students as: the exchange students and free movers. Exchange students are selected by the home institution and their study abroad period is financed by means of a sending institution, whereas free movers, in contrast have to finance privately their study abroad period (Murphy-Lejeune, 2009).

There is another division of academic mobility programme into 'vertical' and 'horizontal'. However different meaning of these terms is given by scholars. Teichler (2017), for instance, states that 'vertical mobility' describes the move a student to a state and to a university which is considered to be greater in academic quality than the country and the university where the mobile student comes from. In contrast, 'horizontal mobility' indicates students moves by which the academic quality of a university and a country of destination are on equal position with that of the sending university and a country. Another definition of the terms is given by Mikovna (2011) and Sakhieva et al. (2015) who define vertical mobility as getting a full degree in a foreign country other than a country of origin and by horizontal mobility as a study for a limited period of time, a semester or a year.

Additionally, Knight (2012) presents six categories of students mobility (Table 2.4) experiences, where short-term study abroad term is proposed, which is a short term mobility experience in a foreign country at a foreign institution by a student. Similar definition is shared by Teichler, who states that study in another country just for a relative short period, such as one semester or one academic year is called "short-term mobility" or "credit-mobility" (Teichler, 2017).

From Kazakhstani higher education system another classification of students' academic mobility programme might be given, which is inner and outer academic mobility. Inner students' academic mobility is when a student can study from one semester up to one year within Kazakhstani HEIs, while outer academic mobility is when students study from a semester up to a year in a foreign university.

Table 2.4 Six categories of student mobility experiences by Knight (2012)

Type of mobility experience	Description	Who awards credential or credit
1. Full degree programme in foreign country	Students who move to a foreign country to enroll and complete a full degree in host institution. They are commonly referred to as international, foreign or visa students.	Degree awarded by host HEI in foreign country.
2. Short-term study-abroad experience as part of degree programme at home institution	Students who as part of their home institution degree programme undertake a short-term (one semester or one year) mobility experience in a foreign country at a foreign institution or at a branch campus of their home institution.	Degree awarded by home HEI in home country. (Academic credits from coursework at foreign HEI normally accepted)
3. Crossborder collaborative degree programmes between two or more institutions or providers	Students register in an education programme involving two or more HEIs or providers working collaboratively to offer a degree programme. Types of programme include: Twinning programme at home institution Franchise programme at home institution Joint degree programme at home institution Double or multiple degree programme Sandwich programme at foreign institution	Different models of degree awarding exits. One degree by foreign HEI One degree by foreign HEI One degree by both partner HEIs Two (or more) degrees by all partner HEI One degree by foreign HEI
4. Research and fieldwork	Research or fieldwork in fulfillment of degree programme at home institution.	To fulfill requirements of awarding institution.
5. Internship and practical experiences	Required or optional internship, placement or community service work in fulfillment of degree programme at home institution	To fulfill requirements of awarding institution.
6. Study tour, workshops	Required or optional study tour, summer programme, cultural or language course, conferences, workshops. Part of or independent of degree programme at home institution	Not usually credit based.

After analysing different types of the students mobilities by various scholars, this study will operate with the terms 'academic mobility of students' which is defined by Knight and Teichler as 'short-term' or 'credit mobility' and will cover only outgoing students' academic mobility programme of the regional university.

2.3.3 Studies on academic mobility programme

There are a considerable number of researches on academic mobility in the context of internationalisation, integration into the EHEA and Erasmus+ experiences. Academic mobility programme has been studied by many foreign scientists, such as Bohm and Meares (2003), Papatsiba (2006), Rivza & Teichler (2007), Welch (2008), Byram & Dervin (2009), Loveland (2008), Chistokhvalov & Filippov (2008), Sakhieva et al. (2015) and etc. Mostly well-known and cited international scholars on this topic are Teichler et al. (2000), Teichler (2017), Altbach & Knight (2007) and Sheremet (2009).

However, analysis of sources on the issue has shown that there is no research among Kazakhstani scholars who has considered this topic intensively. Only few articles were found on this topic (Bazhenova, 2012, Seidahmetov et al., 2014, Serikkaliyeva et al., 2019, Lee & Kuzhabekova, 2018, Rustemova et al., 2020), where mostly academic mobility of teachers, mobility with specific country and problematic aspects of the programme in the country were analysed. For instance, Seidakhmetov et al. (2014) state that the academic mobility will help acquire competences needed to adapt changing international labour market and will help to become active citizen. However, the authors highlight problems associated with the programme due to unplanned nature of the process in the country (Seidakhmetov et al., 2014). Recent work on students' academic mobility in Kazakhstan was done by Maratova et.al. (2019), who proposed a model of organizing academic mobility process which will help to organize effective organisation of the programme and will foster to the formation of a competitive workforce in future that will lead to the development of a knowledge-based economy and an advanced society in the era of globalisation and internationalisation.

In the international context, a comprehensive overview of more than a thousand international publications on student academic mobility issues is provided by Albert Over in his bibliography on academic mobility, which gives a good insight into the literature on this theme until the mid-1990s (in Blumenthal et al., 1996). These studies include evaluations of various mobility and exchange programmes in the US, Europe, and other regions and contain papers on regional and global trends. For example, Teichler evaluated the European Erasmus programme several times, with different accents in each study (Maiworm & Teichler, 1996; Teichler, 1996, 2002, 2007, Teichler et al., 1990, 1993). Recurring topics in these studies, in addition to others, are the flows and patterns in student mobility, its effects, the recognition of credits or credit transfer, the influence

of the use of foreign languages, and cultural aspects of mobility. Additionally, the experiences of students in the foreign countries and their knowledge on these countries were also researched. On the 2000 evaluations of the Erasmus programme (Teichler et al., 2000) took a closer look at the impact of the programme both on the institutional level and national policy level. They concluded that the view of the EU on internationalisation appears to be widening, looking further than just promoting the mobility of individuals and reaching into the policies and planning practices of higher education institutions and effects at the system level.

Most international studies are related to degree mobility within European countries and how mobility flow is balanced and highlights the challenges related to the mobility period (Wulz & Rainer, 2015, Ferencz, 2015). An interesting study was conducted by Erden (2016) who explored the perceptions of Turkish university students regarding their before and after academic mobility factors, where pull and push factors to study in another country were revealed. Bird (2017) studied students and staff perceptions of academic, personal and social factors influencing the international postgraduate students' experience at a UK university. The study found that at the initial stage international students have difficulties in adjusting to academic expectations and conventions; however the participants were mainly positive about their study experiences and highlighted improvements during the study.

The question on students' motivation was also analysed in the European Erasmus+ programme evaluation study conducted for the European Commission by researchers (Teichler, 1996, Maiworn & Teichler, 1996, 2002, Teichler, Gordon & Maiworn, 2000, Krzaklewska, 2008, Paunescu, 2009, King et al., 2010). The studies presented reasons for deciding to study abroad. The reasons included many categories related to the academic dimension of stay as gain academic experience in another country; cultural dimensions as understanding of a host country; linguistic motivation as improving foreign language skills and personal motives as self-development. Krzaklewska (2008) constructed a theoretical model of students' motivation to study abroad, which shows the situation of mobile students in Europe. In the previous researches the categories with the highest scores were opportunity for self-development and learning a foreign language (Maiworn & Teichler, 1996, 2002, Teichler et al., 2000, Krzaklewska, 2008).

Additionally, the contributions of students' academic mobility programme were also studied by various scholars (Lai, 2018, Mizikaci & Arslan, 2019). An interesting case

study on one of the Hong Kong universities experience on students exchange programme was conducted by Lai (2018), where the author identified benefits and added-value of the exchange programme for the participants. According to the results, the programme enables the participants to gain global attributes such as embracing cultural diversity, improving communication skills and critical thinking, evaluating the academic culture between home and host university, setting goals, adaptability, versatility, problem solving skills, power of decision making in life etc.

The findings of the studies demonstrated that academic mobility programme contributed to the personal, professional, cultural and academic development of the students (Maratova et al., 2019, Kehm, 2005, Cairns, 2017, Paunescu, 2009, Cushner & Mahon, 2002, Mizikaci & Arslan, 2019). The researchers conclude that students' mobility consists of broadly cultural, social and personal experiences and only to a lesser extent shows academic added value.

As seen from the reviews there are a great number of international researches on the topic. However, no research was found how the programme is realized with the focus on the lived experiences of participants for gaining an in depth understanding of the programme within context of Kazakhstani universities. Thus, this study will try to make a contribution to the studied topic.

2.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter the key literature on the concepts of internationalisation, and some background information concerning the Bologna Process was given in order to facilitate understanding of the aim of the process the Bologna Process and the main principle of the BP, namely academic mobility, types of academic mobility were examined and review on previous studies about the programme was presented.

It can be concluded that internationalisation is becoming a key integral part of HEIs policies. Students' academic mobility programme around the world is referred to as the most visible indicator of the internationalisation of higher education (Rajkhowa, 2017). The interest in academic mobility of students has arisen from the policy of the European Union, namely the Bologna Process. Formation of academic mobility of students is prioritised by the international and national policy of higher education. According to the Leuven communiqué in 2009, the ministers in charge of higher education of the countries collaborating in the Bologna Process reached the agreement that outgoing mobility is highly

desirable. The proportion of graduates of HEIs, who have had at least some period of study abroad experience, is the substantial strategic target for the second phase of the Bologna Process, which is up to the year 2020 and HEI need to reach the target of 20% of students who have studied in another country during their study. This target has various meaning to different countries of the Bologna Process as the countries joined at different years and to some countries set aim might be considered out of reach in the future.

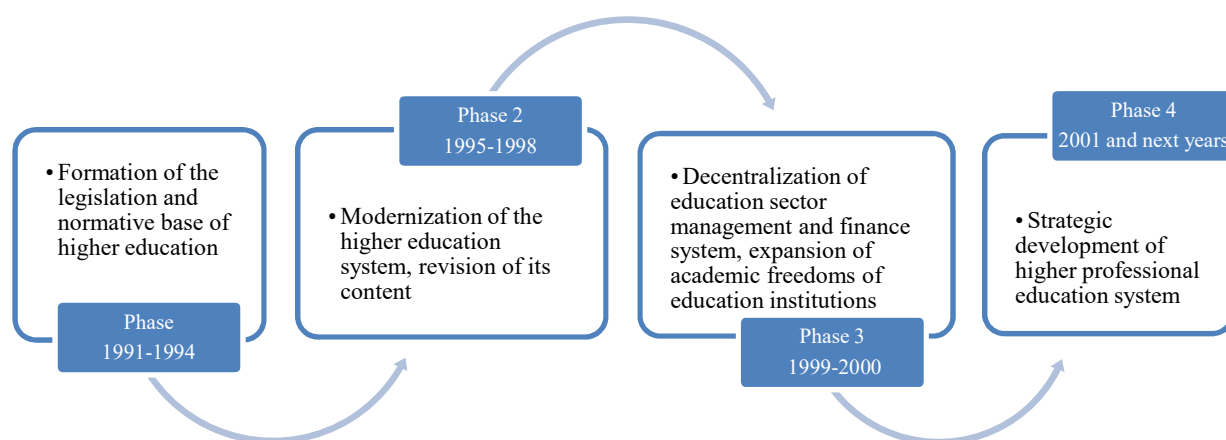
Chapter 3: The Republic of Kazakhstan and Internationalisation process

The purpose of this chapter is to give information about Kazakhstani HE system and find out why a central Asian country decided to be a part of internationalisation and the Bologna Process. From 1991, after Kazakhstan got independence there were significant transformations in higher education system. It is believed that all changes in the HE sphere are taking place in order to be in pace with world demands. Furthermore, the academic mobility programme as a factor for Internationalisation process at Toraihyrov University (ToU) will be discussed.

3.1 Higher Education system in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is a country with a population of over 18 million people. Its vast territory, equal to the entire territory of Western Europe, connects Europe and Asia. Kazakhstan is the world's ninth largest country and one of the youngest states in the world; almost 30 years have passed since the country's independence. Before discussion of internationalisation process in Kazakhstan and the country's integration into the BP, the background of Kazakhstan's HE system should be explained to give a clearer picture of the situation in the country. During the Soviet time, all higher education institutions were centrally administered under the Soviet system (McLendon, 2004). Education, in the changing world, is one important area in which reform is a recurrent issue. Since getting the independence, in 1991, Kazakhstan HE system has undergone significant and historic reformations. Piven & Pak (2006) state that 'there is no way that education can avoid becoming changed'. All this historic reformations in Kazakhstani HE sector were classified into four phases by Zhakenov (2002):

Figure 3.1. The Development phases of the Kazakhstan HE system



Since its transition to a market economy, Kazakhstani HE has undergone several significant changes. To increase HE quality with an aim to becoming a competitive country in the international arena, Kazakhstan took steps to join the BP. First, the 1999 Education Law was changed. The new 2007 Education Law then brought in some market-orientated reforms that reflected the country's new social and economic demands. For example, new sections were added to the 2007 Education Law, namely: 'Subjects of educational activities'; 'International activities in the education sphere'; 'State regulations in the education sphere' (Education Law of the RK, 2007).

Even though the 3rd phase was about decentralisation of education sector, the country still has a centralised education system, with central planning and a system of norms. However, constant efforts of over a decade have also been made to decentralise higher education. For example, in 2018 the country introduced new regulations to increase academic autonomy, where a HEI can open a programme if it receives a license on the speciality. Additionally, achieving a high quality assurance system, helps the country raise standards and encourages a university responsibility to lead improvement, and will be a key to increasing the planning of higher education governance (MoES, 2018). In addition, the Government plays a crucial role in the decision of education strategies and in the development of key initiatives of education. Currently Kazakhstani HE has been under the control of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The MoES of Republic of Kazakhstan is the competent central authority

on education. It is responsible for the implementation of education laws, as well as the strategic planning, funding and management of the education system. The Ministry also administers different key issues, including: standards development, educational plan and educational programmes, systems of student assessment, assigning and managing some financial resources (MoES, 2018). The main document that is currently in use in the field of education is the Government programme for the development of education and science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020 - 2025, adopted in 2019, which aims at firstly, improving the global competitiveness of Kazakhstani education and science, upbringing and training of personality based on universal values. Secondly, the increase in the contribution of science to the socio-economic development of the country (MoES, 2019b).

There are 130 HEIs in the country, which include 10 national, 32 public, 1 international, 14 military, 54 private and corporatized 19 (MoES, 2018) and all of them are under the control of the MoES. Kazakhstan also believes that education is a significant area for national development and its economic growth. Therefore, a central Asian country, Kazakhstan, is experiencing a long period of social and economic changes, driven particularly by the impact of globalisation, internationalisation, economic competition and the transition to a knowledge-based economy (UNESCO, 2003). In addition, Kazakhstan's education sector was also prioritised as part of a national strategy announced by the first President Nazarbayev several times. For instance, in 2006 the first President Nazarbayev announced a national strategy with an aim to become one of the fifty of the world's most competitive countries by the year 2015 (Nazarbayev, 2006) and six years later in 2012 another aim was set which is to make Kazakhstan one of thirty of the world's most competitive countries by 2050 (Nazarbayev, 2014). The importance of quality education and innovative technologies highlighted in the priority of supporting youth, education and innovative research. Kazakhstan invests in creating an education system that promotes the growth of the nation (Nazarbayev, 2014). Therefore, the outer forces and these set strategies are leading to national education policy transformations. For instance, the significant influence to Kazakhstani HE sector was done by the European policy development known as the Bologna Declaration. With integration into the BP new changes have taken place in HE sector in order to achieve further improvement in the country's HE system. Winch & Gingell (2004) state that education sector is the key to development of traditional society and a way of preparing nations to compete in a globalised economy. In a globalised world the HE interaction of various

countries is inevitable process. Therefore, it seems appropriate to add one more phase to Zhakenov's classification: Kazakhstani HE integration into the EHEA, after the country's decision to join the Bologna Process, which has been influenced by the internationalisation forces of the HE system.

3.2 Internationalisation and the Bologna Process in relation to Kazakhstan's higher education system

Education system is involved in the process of integration that is taking place worldwide in all aspects of human life. It is evident that if the country expresses eagerness to become a more competitive nation, HE should become more internationally minded (OECD, 2007). The internationalisation of HEIs has been a focus of attention in Kazakhstan for many years, and this is reflected at a top government level by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan Initiatives. In 1997, the Kazakhstani government started with signing and ratifying the Lisbon Convention on Recognition of Qualifications on HE in the European region (MoES, 2011) with the aim of developing a normative foundation in international cooperation in HE (Pak, 2010). Further, from 2004 to 2009 a great amount of work was done in order to help to integrate into the BP. Meanwhile, the Bologna process has expanded interest among non-European countries from other parts of the world. Firstly, Kazakhstan was invited to the bi-annual meeting of the Bologna follow-up group in Leuven in April 2009, where the integration of non-European countries into the Bologna Process was discussed (MoES, 2011). One year later in 2010, in Budapest and Vienna, Kazakhstan was invited as a full member of the Bologna Process and became the 47th country into the EHEA (Budapest-Vienna Declaration, 2010). The country is the first Central Asian state to be recognised as a full member of EHEA, which is very important for the international positioning of Kazakhstan's HE system.

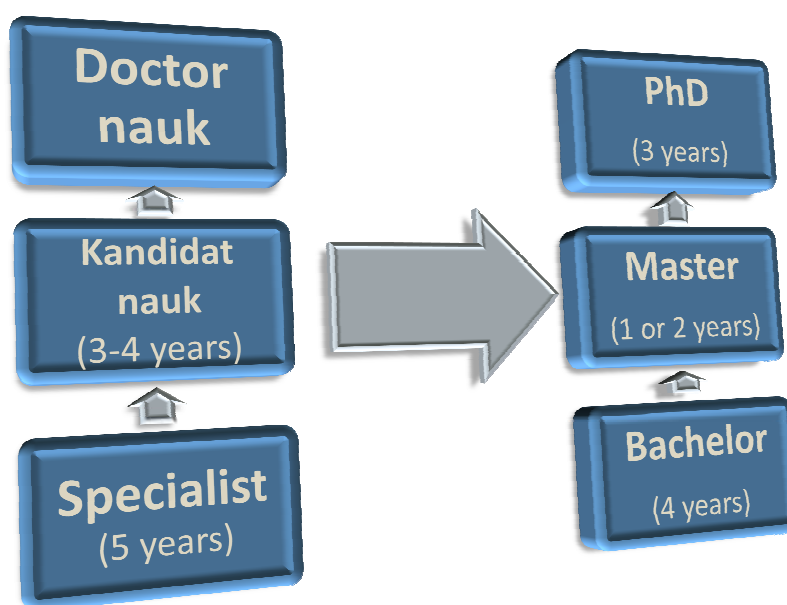
Brooks & Huisman (2009: 3) point out that the Bologna Process is '...an intergovernmental policy agenda supported by forty-six national governments, even beyond the geographical European borders'. The main aim of the Bologna process is the creation of a 'European Higher Education Area' (European Commission, n.d.). Kazakhstan joined the Bologna Process on 11 March 2010. Kazakhstan is the forty-seventh country to have joined to the Bologna Process and it is one of those countries which lie outside Europe. The aim of joining to the Bologna Process is the expansion of access to the Eu-

ropean education and further improvement of its quality in Kazakhstan, and an increase of students' and academic staff mobility (MoES, 2011).

As stated above, the joining to the Bologna Process was important to Kazakhstan. However, there were challenges with implementation of new policies, as the Kazakhstan education system differed significantly from European system. In accordance with the new Education Law (2007) it was necessary to implement three-cycle degrees: Bachelors, Masters and PhD which was a step towards becoming part of the BP.

With an ambitious national aim of integration into EHEA, the MoES has introduced some changes in the HE system before joining the BP. An important early policy was on the three-cycle degree structure. This policy was initiated even before Kazakhstan signed the Bologna Declaration. A three-level degree system to prepare highly qualified personnel at Bachelor's, Master's and PhD level was introduced in 2004. The three-cycle degrees currently take four years for a bachelor's degree, two years for a master's and three years for a PhD degree. The introduction and further use of degrees was confirmed under the Education Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2007 and now the system is used by all HEIs in Kazakhstan. The new system In Kazakhstan was introduced in parallel with the old system which was inherited from the Soviet era (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2. Kazakhstani transition to new three-cycle degree system

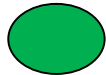
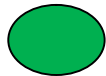






According to the European Commission (n.d.: 1), the aim of the BP is the creation of a 'European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in which students can choose from a wide

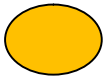
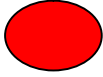

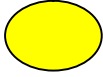
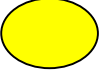
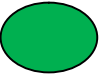
and transparent range of high quality courses and benefit from smooth recognition procedures'. The main objectives of the BP are: easily readable and comparable degrees, establishment of a system of credits, such as the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), promotion of mobility and promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

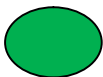


There are, however, a number of arguments against joining the BP. Palfreyman (2008), for example, contests that its main supporters are the nations of the former Soviet Union, who see the BP as a progression from the Communist regime. Further, he claims that 'it is depressing that other, non-European countries, are seeking to join the BP – the world needs variety, not a dominant BP model as a global' (ibid: 250). Despite all the arguments concerning non-European countries becoming part of the BP, Kazakhstan became the forty-seventh country to join. The main aim of joining the BP, according to the MoES (2011), is to ensure a corresponding level of Kazakhstani HE system to that of European standards, which, it is believed, will contribute to the improvement of the country's HE quality. It is also hoped that it will provide access for Kazakhstan citizens to European HE. From 2010 different institutions in Kazakhstan have been experiencing the process of transition with different degrees of success. Nowadays all Kazakhstani HEIs follow the objectives of the Bologna Process. In May 2018 on the Ministerial conferences of the EHEA Kazakhstani report on realisation of the Bologna process objectives were presented. The dynamics of the implementation of the parameters of the Bologna process and problematic questions are presented by the Bologna traffic light method in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Bologna traffic light

№	Indicator	Colour	Justification
1	First and second cycles programme implementation		All university graduates receive a bachelor or Master degree.
2	Access to the next cycle programmes		Annually access to the 3rd cycle is provided at the expense of the state (PhD)
3	Comparability of national credit systems with ECTS		Kazakhstan belongs to the category of countries where a national credit system that comparable to ECTS; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ all universities use ECTS when transferring teaching load; ▪ educational programmes and their components are described with taking into account the learning outcomes;

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> for external assessment of universities the ECTS Users Guidelines apply, approved at Yerevan Minister's Conference.
4	Issuance of Diploma Supplement		<p>Kazakhstan belongs to the category of countries where the Diploma Supplement issued to graduates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> free of charge; in English; upon request (not automatically).
5	Implementation of the National qualifications framework (NQF)		<p>During the implementation of the NQF, the following stages were completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The introduction of NQF began with the definition of roles and responsibilities of universities, accreditation agencies and other bodies. Curricula were redesigned based on learning outcomes included in the NQF All qualifications were included in the NQF. It is required to undergo a self-certification procedure.
6	External support qualities system development		<p>Kazakhstan belongs to the category of countries where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a national quality assurance system is functioning; All universities are subject to regular external quality assessment; accreditation agencies operate on the basis of European Quality Assurance Manual (ESG) and registered in EQAR.
	Cross-border quality assurance registered agencies in EQAR		<p>EQAR registered 46 world accreditation agencies. Compared to 2015, 14 agencies were added, the latter of which are based in Armenia and Kazakhstan.</p> <p>Two national agencies (IAAR and IQAA) for providing qualities registered in EQAR and are members of ENQA</p>
7	Student engagement in an external system quality assurance		<p>RK students participate in 4 of 5 possible levels of external quality assurance, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in external control groups; in the preparation of self-assessment reports; in the decision-making process for external reviews; in subsequent procedures.
8	The level of international participation in the process of quality assurance		<p>International experts in the Republic of Kazakhstan participate in 2 of 4 possible levels of external quality assurance, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agencies are members or affiliates ENQA; international experts / experts participate as members / observers in assessment

			groups.
9	Automatic recognition of qualifications		Fair recognition of foreign qualifications is task of the Bologna process, and part of the fundamental EHEA values. Kazakhstan is on the list of 29 EHEA countries, where automatic recognition of higher education qualifications is not implemented.
10	Recognition of the previous training received in formal or informally		Kazakhstan has not developed a procedure for recognition under traditional load training programmes received formal or informal way. Does not exist separate document at national and / or institutional levels.
11	Credit tolerance mobility		Credit mobility tolerance but with some geographic restrictions (restrictions on country) and/or types of programmes and/or field of study or time. Lack of degree tolerance or not all key measures taken to support portability degrees
12	Support of access to little learning represented groups		For support access or increase participation from represented groups in higher education of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2 out of 4 possible measures are being taken: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ there are political goals for student access / participation from underrepresented groups; ▪ financial support is given to little-oriented student groups.
13	Assistance of student mobility programmes from underrepresented groups		The following measures have been taken to increase participation students from underrepresented groups in the mobility programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - comprehensive monitoring of the participation of students from underrepresented groups in the mobility programme; - the objectives of quantitative participation policy are set For students from underrepresented groups in mobility; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - financial support is provided in the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Target mobility grants OR ▪ Portable Target Grants OR ▪ Total portable grants provided over 50% students - recommendations at the highest level for universities in order to implementation of targeted measures to facilitate participation of under represented groups in mobility programmes are developed. In Kazakhstan two of the four measures are taken.
14	Student academic mobility		Kazakhstan belongs to the category of countries where incoming and outgoing mobility are part of a national strategy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students from underrepresented categories

			<p>are provided 2 of 4 possible support measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ at the university level, student participation from underrepresented groups in mobility programmes is monitored; ▪ at the national level, there are recommendations for universities on supporting mobility of underrepresented students categories. <p>There are goals for developing academic mobility among students who are part of a central strategy.</p>
15	Staff academic mobility		Kazakhstan belongs to the category of countries where incoming and outgoing staff mobility are part of the national strategy.
16	Internationalisation and mobility		Kazakhstan has a national strategy for internationalisation of higher education. The percentage of universities that have adopted this strategy is 100% in Kazakhstan.
17	Matching learning results to the market needs		Kazakhstan is one of the countries where employer involvement in the planning and management of higher education is mandatory for all higher education programmes.

The Bologna traffic light method, where a green color indicator indicates that the indicator achieved, light green, yellow, orange - intermediate levels of implementation of the parameter, red – the indicator is not achieved, there are problems with its implementation, gray – Kazakhstan is not presented for this indicator in the EHEA Report 2018 (MoES, 2019a).

In 2012 Mobility strategy 2020 stated that all EHEA countries were encouraged to ‘develop and implement their own internationalisation and mobility strategies’ with specific aims and measurable mobility targets (Bucharest Ministerial Conference, 2012: 1). Starting from that year all EHEA countries started to adopt and strengthen the internationalisation strategies. According to the BP implementation report 2018 thirty three of the EHEA countries reported about the existence of internationalisation strategies in more than half of their HE institutions. In 2012 the MoES RK developed the national internationalisation strategy and all HEIs were encouraged to do the same at the institutional levels.

International cooperation of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the field of education carried out in accordance with the legislation of the country and international treaties RK. The state fulfils its international legal obligations in the field of education, using all branches

of government. Among the main legal acts on international cooperation, the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On education "; State programme for the development of education and science for 2020-2025; the Concept of academic mobility of students of higher educational institutions; the Rules for directions for studying abroad, including within the framework of academic mobility.

It is important to note that the Strategy of Academic Mobility in the Republic of Kazakhstan determines priority directions of internationalisation of Kazakhstani higher education. This document is intended to increase the attractiveness of Kazakhstani higher education and outline the main tasks in the field of academic mobility. Toraighyrov University also developed internationalisation strategy in 2014. Based on Knight's (2004) internationalisation approach, from the country's background information it is possible to highlight that the country operates with national approach (top-down) of internationalisation in HE system, where all main decisions are made and regulated by the MoES.

3.3 Academic Mobility programme as a factor for Internationalisation process at Toraighyrov University

Toraighyrov University, located in the northeast part of Kazakhstan, was founded sixty years ago as an industrial institute. Currently, the regional university is divided into eight faculties and its student body comprises approximately 9,000 students. According to the annual general ranking, Toraighyrov University is among top five best multidisciplinary universities of Kazakhstan (University webpage).

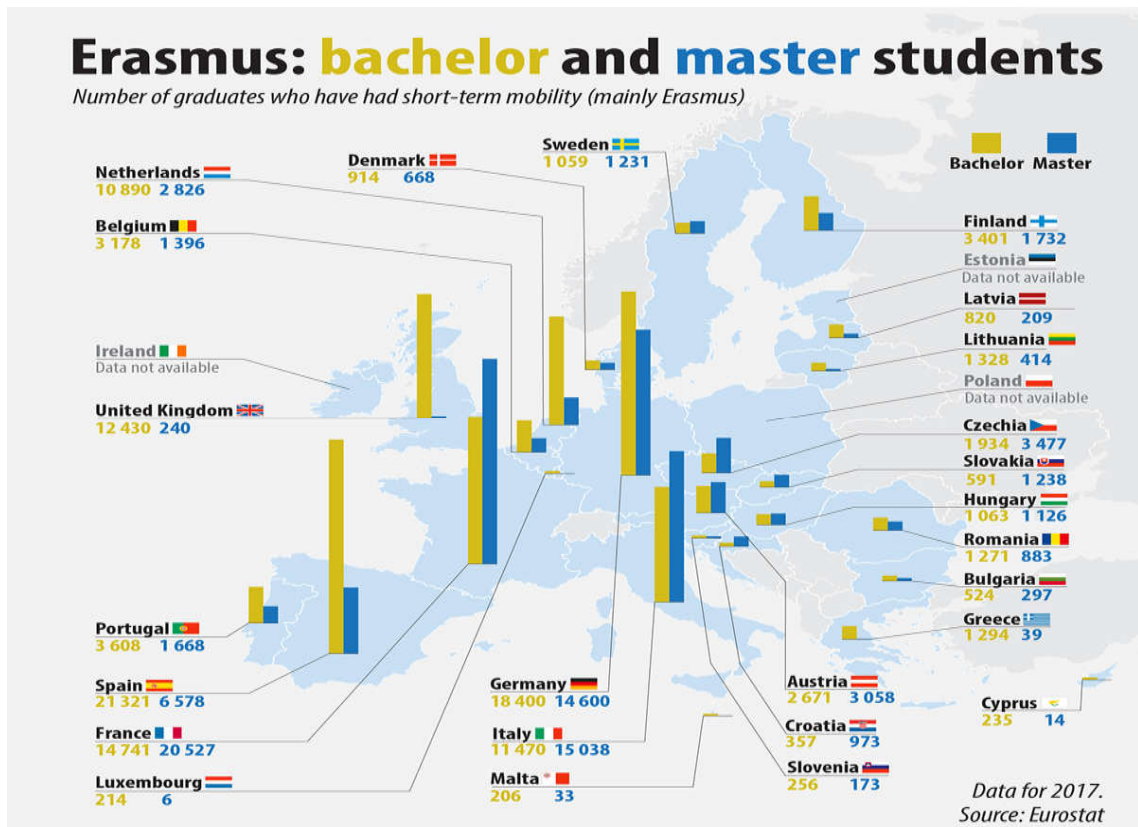
Internationalisation is viewed as one of the priority goals of all HE in Kazakhstan and Toraighyrov University is not an exception. The internationalisation process is also influenced the regional University. In 2008 Toraighyrov University signed Magna Charta in Bologna, Italy and now is a full member of the European educational process. Today, the regional University has more than one hundred agreements on international cooperation with foreign universities from different countries.

Students' academic mobility has been a key topic of analysis in higher education worldwide. However, Kazakhstan started to pay attention to this issue only after the joining the Bologna process in 2010. Kazakhstani integration into the BP created more positive conditions for the academic mobility of students and even reduced the barriers to the development of the programme. Thanks to the Kazakhstani Ministry of Education

and Science there is a state academic mobility programmes for students, where a student with a high level of education achievement and a high GPA score who is fluent in a foreign language has the possibility of studying abroad for one semester and being funded to do so by the state budget. In addition, in Kazakhstan, the Ministry also recommends that HEIs pay special attention to under-represented groups of students during the selection procedure for the academic mobility programme (MoES, 2019a). This shows a programme approach of the internationalisation process offered by Knight (2004), where the country provides funded programmes that facilitate universities and individuals to have opportunities to engage in international activities such as mobility.

The academic mobility programme has been in demand among students for many years. According to EU statistics in 2017, a total 1.7 of million mobile students came from abroad, including from both EU and non EU member countries, to the EU. This was an increase of 22% compared to the year 2013. Within the Erasmus+ programme temporary student mobility has been realised by the EU since the 1980s. Under the Erasmus+, which supports students to spend a semester or a year at another HEI abroad, in 2017, there were around 193 000 students (see table 3.2), out of whom 114 000 were bachelor level and 78 000 were masters level (Eurostat, n.d.). The increase in student mobility was expected, as the EU has set an aim that 20% of HE graduates will have had a study abroad experience by 2020.

Table 3.2 Short-term ERASMUS+ mobility students



Statistical data shows that higher education in Europe has become more attractive for students from other part of the world and Kazakhstani students are not an exception. In accordance with the State Education Development Programme of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 and for 2020-2025 the development of academic mobility as the main priority of the Bologna Declaration was defined by one of the target indicators. Thus, the academic mobility programme is administered at a national level by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and at the level of a higher educational institution that implements academic mobility. It is believed that it is easy to go abroad for study; however the academic mobility programme is not available for everyone in Kazakhstani HEIs. As for the Kazakhstani context, from 2011 till 2019 there were 16 834 mobile students going to study at a foreign university. According to the data from the analytical report, the number of foreign students increased from 305 in 2011 to about 2447 in 2018, i.e. more than 70% in seven years (MoES, 2019a).

Table 3.3 Outgoing academic mobility programme in Kazakhstan

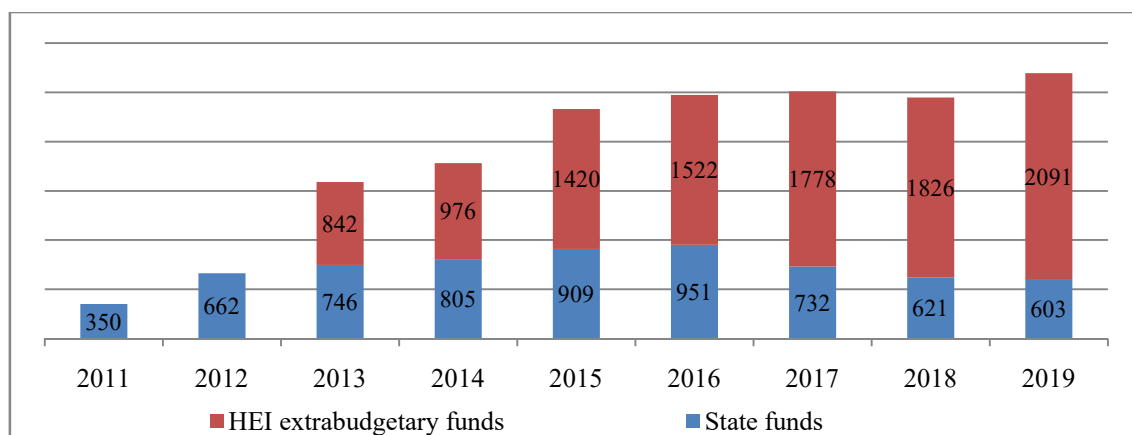
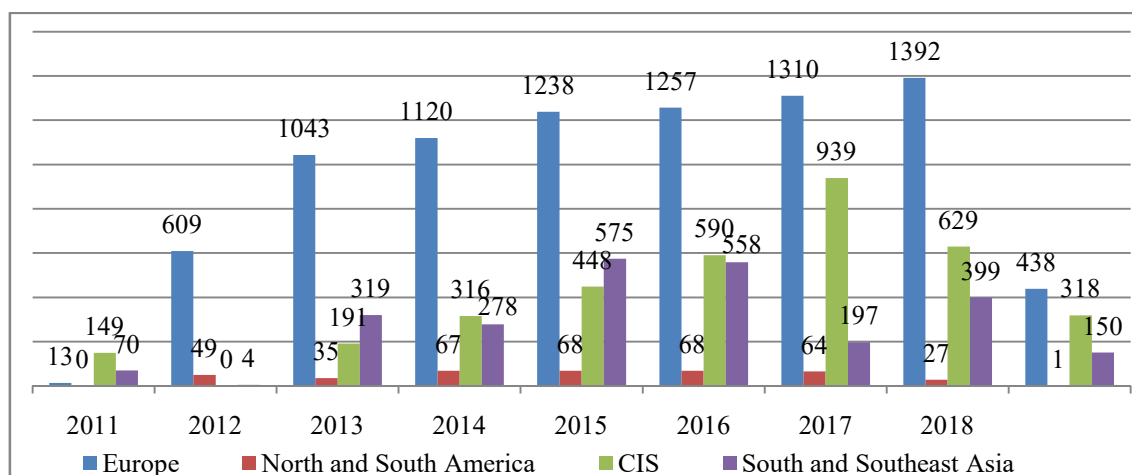


Table 3.4 Outgoing academic mobility programme in Kazakhstan by country



One of the areas of the academic mobility programme in Kazakhstan is the inner academic mobility of students. In the period 2012-2018, 7,310 students were on the inner academic mobility programme. In 2018, a total of 2,215 university students took part in the inner academic mobility programme (MoES, 2019a).

Toraighyrov University uses the academic mobility of students as a form of internationalisation of higher education. The academic mobility programme contributes to the expansion of cooperation within the framework of the EHEA, further internationalisation of higher education systems and organisations, and further improvement, by comparing them with each other, which increases the employability and personal development of mobile people and strengthens the cultural identity of Europe. In addition, academic mobility is an important basis for exchange and cooperation with countries in other parts of the world (MoES, 2011). At Toraighyrov University, the academic mobility programme is implemented in full compliance with the “Mobility Strategy of the European Higher

Education Area 2020”. As mentioned previously in Kazakhstan, two kinds of academic mobility programme operate, the outer and inner student academic mobility programmes. In Toraighyrov University, different students academic mobility programmes operate such as the state academic mobility programme, EU «Erasmus+», «Abai-Verne», which is a joint programme coordinated by the MoES RK and the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic, and the University of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (USCO) is a network university, an international educational programme in Asia. Students can choose from all of the presented programmes that are suitable for their mobility experience. The statistics on the academic mobility programme at the regional university are given in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Statistics on students` academic mobility at ToU

Inner academic mobility										
Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Outgoing number of students	2	37	68	24	9	30	26	17	11	96
Incoming students from partner universities	1	17	24	15	9	18	25	21	19	102
Outgoing academic mobility										
Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
BA students	0	28	41	22	25	33	31	20	33	6
MA & PhD students	20	21	30	11	10	7	6	9	8	0
Total outgoing number of students	20	49	71	33	35	40	37	29	41	6
Incoming students from partner universities	1	1	4	4	0	1	0	0	0	4

The “Mobility Strategy for the European Higher Education Area 2020” strongly recommends the use of national and regional sources of funding. In this regard, funding from the state is fully ensured through the implementation of the academic mobility of university students. Student financial support is essential for ensuring equal access and mobility opportunities. Student mobility is stimulated by various state and regional programmes. Thanks to the academic mobility programme of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Toraighyrov University has been providing budgetary funding for students’ academic mobility since 2011. In the period 2011-2019, at Toraighyrov University, the number of outgoing students on academic mobility

amounted to 355. Students spent a semester studying mostly in EU countries and the Russian Federation and a few in the US and Asia. Realisation of the academic mobility programme at the university is facilitated by credit technology of education; credits can be used throughout a student's studies.

The students' academic mobility programme in Kazakhstan is regulated by MoES documents, namely: the Strategy of academic mobility, and the rules for studying abroad, including in the framework of academic mobility by the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 19, 2008 No. 613 to which changes were made and implemented from 4 January 2019, №1. The student academic mobility programme represents one of the most important areas of the Kazakhstani HE institutions' integration into the EHEA. However, much less attention has been paid to the development of practical recommendations for the development of the student academic mobility programme in HEI. Therefore, this study seeks to develop the recommendations for the university studied.

3.4 Chapter summary

Internationalisation is a process in which all HEI are involved. This chapter has provided some background information on the Kazakhstani HE system and described the engagement of Kazakhstani HE in the Bologna Process, which is part of the internationalisation strategy of the country.

This chapter provides considerable evidence that the development of the academic mobility of students is defined by the Bologna Process normative documents and by being a part of the process the country has also developed national normative documents concerning the importance and future development of the academic mobility programme. The programme is one of the most essential directions of the Kazakh HEIs integration into the EHEA. Thus, the regional university's programme realisation is also presented.

Based on the literature review and the system of HE in Kazakhstan, it might be stated that Kazakhstan has a national approach (Knight, 2004) to HE internationalisation. Firstly, it has a national strategy to fulfil the set aims, which confirms that it uses a strategic approach. Secondly, the country is a part of the BP work under the regulations of the policies set by the process, which shows a policy approach. And finally, the country is engaged in international activities and the programme approach is in use, which is confirmed by the academic mobility programme funded by the MoES.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Methods

Planning is an essential element when conducting research and ‘every element of the research should not be arbitrary, but planned and deliberate and the criterion of planning must be fitness for purpose’ (Cohen et al. 2007:107). Therefore, this chapter outlines the general research strategy used in the study and discusses the methodology and research methods employed; the participant selection and the role of the researcher, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis and limitations are also discussed within this chapter.

4.1 Research Methodology and Methods

It is crucial that the researcher should try to answer the questions of “what kind of knowledge he or she is seeking to make, uncover or construct” (Davies, 2007: 10), and following that consider a proper methodology. Rubin and Rubin (1995: 34) state: “What is important to interpretivist social scientists is how people understand their world and how they create and share meanings about their lives”. As Creswell (2009) states, constructivism or social constructivism is often combined with interpretivism, where individuals seek to understand the world. The goal of this research depends, and is based on the participants' views on the topic studied. Accordingly, the research draws more on the interpretive paradigm, as it is focused around the perceptions of individual students at the university and aims to understand their subjective interpretations of the process.

In order to answer the research questions posed, a quantitative and qualitative study was conducted and the analysis was both quantitative and qualitative. The mixed methods study utilized an exploratory approach with a descriptive research design to explore the stated aims of the research. The data were collected by two means: firstly, a questionnaire and secondly, semi-structured interviews. The study adopted an interpretive methodology under a qualitative research paradigm. An interpretive approach was applied for the data collection process and the data were analysed using thematic analysis.

In the study, methodologically, the units of inquiry were the participants of the programme, namely the students. The choice of a qualitative approach fits with the research question, since, as stated earlier; the aim of this research was to explore the subjective meanings through which students interpret the situation.

The decision to focus on a case study stemmed from the fact that this design is chosen precisely because the researcher is interested in insight and interpretation. The case

study focuses on description and explanation (Merriam, 2009: 43). Case studies are a universally applied methodology for researching relatively small-scale research in higher education (Tight, 2003:185). It makes the main of the empirical research of the study as it helps the researcher to observe ‘the characteristics of an individual unit’ (Blaxter et al. 2006: 71). The choice of a case study for this research was based on two main rationales. First, the issue examined is this research is a process, namely the student academic mobility programme. The data could be gathered through an in-depth study of students who are or were in direct contact with the programme. Therefore, the case study focused on students' reactions to the process and enabled the researcher to understand their perceptions (Yin, 2003). Second, the case study was related to answering the research questions posed in depth. The intention was not to develop a theory, but to observe students' perceptions about the university programme in real situations, which, according to Cohen et al. (2011), enables understanding the ideas more clearly than presenting them with principles and theories. Case studies are valued for their ability to capture complex actions, perceptions and interpretations (Merriam, 2009). It is also argued by Cohen (2007: 137) that “researchers should provide sufficiently rich data for the readers and users of research to determine whether transferability is possible”. However, the researcher was aware that the data from a case study are difficult to generalize to other situations or other contexts, which is the main disadvantage of case studies (Yin, 2003, Gall et al. 2007).

4.2 Selection of Participants

In this study, a regional Toraighyrov University was chosen, as the researcher is a member of the staff and is therefore familiar with the situation at the institution. The sample selection procedure could be characterised as non-probability sampling: a purposive form (Cohen et al., 2011) intended to access people who have in-depth knowledge concerning a particular issue (Ball, 1990). The university's mobile students could provide relevant knowledge by sharing their first-hand experiences. The sample in the study included students from the regional university who had participated in the academic mobility programme. The data collected started from the year 2017. Davies (2007) claims that small samples can also have great validity and play an important part in research, as the sample can express the feelings, ideas and prejudices, and respondents can supply valuable data for the study. Therefore, 98 students took part in the questionnaire and 10 students were interviewed.

4.3 Design and Conduct of Questionnaires

The questionnaire design was not as easy as it seemed: it took time to make it brief in order that it did not take too long to fill in, and to make it clear and readable to the respondents. In order to research this topic it was decided to design two kinds of questionnaires; the first aimed to obtain the participants' opinions and expectations before their academic mobility experience and the second the students about their experience after the programme. Therefore, two types of data collection tools were used for the quantitative part: «Before Mobility» and «After Mobility» questionnaires, which consisted of several parts (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

The «Before Mobility» questionnaire was divided into parts A, B and C, where part A covered statistical information concerning students' age, gender, field of study, host country and the information sources they had used to find the programme. Part B covered the students' opinions about the programme at the regional University, their main motivation for participation and their expectations of the programme. Finally, part C covered the topic of education quality at the regional university. Part B and part C used questions with Likert scale evaluations, so that the answers could be analysed by means of statistical analysis.

The «After Mobility» questionnaire was also divided into several parts. Part A covered statistical information concerning students' age, gender, field of study, host country and the financial means used to participate in the programme. Part B covered information related to participants' opinions about the realisation of the program, the reality of their expectations and the impact of the programme on them; part C covered the assessment of the host education quality and Part D dealt with students' reflection on their study abroad experiences after they returned to their home university and their wishes and comments in regard to the improvement of the programme at the regional university and their level of satisfaction with the programme. In addition, in the questionnaire, students were asked to name their three most positive and three most negative experiences in the mobility period to identify their values and disappointments in regard to their study abroad experiences.

The main part of the «Before Mobility» questionnaire covered four main topics: the realisation of the Academic mobility programme, the motivation factors of participants, their expectations of the programme and education quality at ToU. The «After mobility» questionnaire covered topics regarding the realisation of the programme,

the achievement of their expectations, education quality at host university, added-value from the programme and feedback from the students about the programme and the improvement of the programme at the regional university.

In order to ease the completion of the questionnaires and to avoid misunderstandings among the participants, the questionnaires were prepared in Russian. After finishing the questionnaire design the next step was to pilot it in order to test how long it took recipients to fill it in, and to check that all of the questions and instructions were clear (Bell, 1999). In the process of piloting some technical mistakes were found and the completion time was obtained. A draft version of the questionnaire was initially piloted on a small sample of students at Toraighyrov University. The questions were revised on the basis of the results of this pilot study and the comments of the students who had participated in it. After some amendments, it was ready for the main distribution.

Reliability of the questionnaire can be assured by using Cronbach's formula of finding alpha values. Thus, to identify the reliability of the compiled questionnaires before and after the programme, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (α), was used, which was calculated automatically using the SPSS programme. For $\alpha > 0.7$, a sufficient value, $\alpha > 0.8$ good, $\alpha > 0.9$ a very good value of reliability. If the coefficient takes the value 1, then the test is completely reliable (Nasledov, 2013). The results of the survey of students before participating in the program have a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of $\alpha = 0.883$, the questionnaire after participation in the program $\alpha = 0.794$, which is a good indicator of reliability of the questionnaires.

4.4 Design and Conduct of Interviews

After the questionnaires had been completed, 10 in-depth semi-structured interviews were planned and conducted with participants of the programme. The one-on-one interview as a qualitative data collection process was used, in which the researcher asks questions and records the answers from only one participant in the study at a time (Creswell, 2012). This was a qualitative part of the research, which focused on the students' experiences in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the programme (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Opie (2004) states that interviews have the purpose of encouraging the interviewees to express their views and interpretations of the world, and therefore, the questions asked should help and assist such expression. The interviews contained nine core questions with additional subtopic questions (Appendix 3) to obtain an understanding of the topic being researched. As mentioned earlier, it was decided to prepare a set of semi-

structured open-ended questions in order to cover areas of particular interest while interviewing, which could further facilitate the process of data analysis (Cohen et al., 2011) and reduce the possibility of bias (Denscombe, 2010). Moreover, the choice of semi-structured interviews was based on the fact that the research conducted adopted a constructivist or social constructivist worldview. By using semi-structured interviews, it was possible to cover a list of topics and questions that were of the greatest importance for the research. Constructivism in combination with interpretivism (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002, Creswell & Creswell, 2018) attempts and seeks to understand the social world from the point of view of those participating in it. The study focused on the lived experiences of the participants in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the programme. It was believed that qualitative interviews would give the participants a way to express and to describe their motivations and experiences in their own words. Thus, the main goal of the research was to rely on participants' views of the topic being researched.

In order to check the questions that had been devised, and to omit any confusing or ambiguous questions and get valuable data, the interview procedure was piloted. First, it was important to get a sense of the length and timing of the interview. Lastly, it was important to consider the questions and how they were received and understood by the participants. There were no alternative equivalent individuals within the institution with whom the interview schedule could be piloted; therefore, it was decided to conduct the pilot with colleagues and students who had not taken part in the programme at the university. As a result, some minor amendments were made to the initial questions. The main interview questions were sent to the interviewees in advance, and 10 interviews were recorded and then transcribed.

An interview can develop into a highly interactive, two-way discussion when all of the participants are familiar with the researcher. However, being familiar with the interviewees can have both advantages and disadvantages. Since the researcher was 'an insider' at the regional university, there was a risk that the participants might tell the researcher what they thought the researcher would like to hear. Therefore, it was necessary to explain that the essential issue in the interviewing process was honesty in answering the questions.

The interviews were conducted in Russian as they were living in an environment where Russian is the second language and a medium of communication and instruction.

4.5 Recording and Transcribing

Conducting interviews requires the method of recording the interview data to be decided in advance. Taking notes during an interview may distract the interviewer from the free flow of conversation (Kvale, 2007). Thus, in order to avoid asking an interviewee to pause or repeat themselves during the interviewing, it was decided to use an audio recorder. Interview recording can speed up the process and provide a full verbal record, which diminishes bias from the accidental selection of data (Gall et al., 2007). Therefore, all of the interviews were audio-recorded. It could be assumed that the recording process might cause inconvenience to the participants. The interviewees were asked before the interview commenced whether they were comfortable with the interview being recorded. It can be stated that the interviewees did not feel inconvenience about being recorded, which contributed to the quality of the data collected.

As conducting and transcribing interviews is a time-consuming process, only a small number of participants could be interviewed (Bell, 2005, Roulston, 2010). Another challenge of this research was to cope with the processing of the audio recordings, as the interviews not only needed to be transcribed, but also translated into English. However, this was worthwhile as it could bring the researcher close to the data (Denscombe, 2010) and provide additional rich material and clarification of the questionnaire responses (Bell, 2005). The interviews lasted approximately 45-50 minutes, and 'every one hour of interview recording takes two or three hours of work to transcribe' (Denscombe, 2010: 197), which is a significant drawback of transcribing interviews. However, the transcribing process also allows the researcher to find data missed during the interview. In transcribing the interviews, all of the material that could identify the interviewees was removed. Some participants were given a chance to read over their interview following the transcription to make amendments or comment on their words, but none of them asked for changes to be made.

4.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is a demanding process (Bassegy, 1999). As Bell (1999) rightly points out, collected data means very little without analysis and evaluation. However, it was a struggle to transform the raw data into a meaningful and credible conclusion. It is expected that researchers will know in advance how to analyse the data and this depends on the type of research questions. Quantitative research data has its advantages; it contains numbers that can clearly represent the findings in the form of graphs, tables and

charts (Denscombe, 2003). It is well-known that computer software can provide help in this process; statistical packages can allow for undertaking statistical analysis, helping the researcher to group and regroup the data (Denscombe, 2003). There are a number of software programmes to help with statistical analysis. In this project all of the work on the computer was carried out by means of the SPSS statistical software. Presenting the data can sometimes be a daunting task. It is believed that the more varieties there are available, the more the researcher can get confused and spend time thinking about what is more suitable for the project. Even though the researcher is not an active user of statistical software, it was decided to use SPSS, as this software is able to produce a variety of possibilities for data analysis (Denscombe, 2003).

The data that emerge from a qualitative study are descriptive and reported in words rather than in numbers. The data were analysed by means of thematic analysis (Bryman 2008, Roulston, 2010, Seal, 2016). Thematic analysis is used for 'identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clark, 2006:6). The focus is on participants' perceptions and experiences (Merriam, 1988). Creswell (2009) proposes that during data analysis themes need to be identified. Therefore, by referring to the original research questions, the transcriptions were reviewed so that the data could be categorised according to basic themes defined from the interview questions. From the common themes in the analysis, broader categories were generated (Denscombe, 2010). During the data analysis, codes and theme were created in relation to internationalisation issues, the academic mobility programme, and students' main motivations and opinions regarding the programme, when there was a reference to such areas in the interview data. The data collected through the interpretative approach were analysed using a thematic approach.

Thematic analysis has been criticised for potentially omitting relationships between themes (Chase, 2008) and one concern is related to the possibility of different researchers getting similar findings when using thematic analysis on the same topic (Gomm, 2008); however, themes as components of analysis are effective for interpretation (Merriam, 2009).

The transcribed data were analysed using codes in line with the interview questions. Themes were identified manually. The data were put into categories and then themes and sub-themes were identified. Categories, themes and sub-themes were identified according to the research aims and were specifically related to the research questions. The

first theme concerned the internationalisation process and the links between the process and the academic mobility programme, and sought to answer the first and second research questions. The second theme dealt with the students' motivation for participation in the academic mobility programme in order to answer the third research question. The third theme considered added-value from the programme to answer the fourth research question. The fourth theme was generated from the responses that provided opinions concerning the improvement of the programme at the regional university, in order to answer the fifth research question. Using themes meant that it was possible to collect a significant amount of data within the pre-established themes from the interviews. To ensure the reliability and credibility of the data analysis quotations from each theme were described to indicate and support the findings.

4.7 Consent and ethics

Being a small-scale study in which participants were students from a single institution, the views of those participants may have given an indication of their identity. Participants were made aware of this issue before participating and were provided with an information sheet containing an explanation of the nature of the research and were asked to complete a consent form (Appendix 4) prior to their participation. In addition, before the interviews, the interviewees' consent to record the interviews was obtained and confidentiality and anonymity issues were also discussed beforehand. To make the reading fluent and hide the interviewees' names, codes such as Interview Participant №1, Interview Participant №2, etc. were used to identify quotations.

The interview questions (Appendix 3) were sent to the participants in advance and they were made aware of the fact that the interviews were semi-structured and that questions other than those in the interview schedules might emerge.

4.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined what was considered the best approach to achieve the research aims and objectives on the studied topic and what was both methodologically sound and practically achievable. By designing the study using mixed methods it was possible to gather in-depth and rich data to explore the experiences, motivations, opinions, and aspirations of the regional university students on the academic mobility programme.

Due to having a clear focus on certain topics, it was outlined that a form of purposeful sampling helped in recruiting a number of participants who had an in -depth knowledge concerning the topic.

The chapter covered topics related to conducting the research, namely the design of, and the procedure for completing the questionnaires, the design of the interviews, and the following steps of recording and transcribing the data and the data analysis. The chapter included a discussion of ethical issues, which is important when conducting research with individuals.

Chapter 5: Research Findings and Interpretations

This chapter comprises the empirical part of the study: the analysis of the questionnaires and the interviewees' opinions on the researched topic at the regional university. The participants in this study were students of Toraighyrov University, who had studied abroad for a semester during the period 2017-2020.

5.1 Quantitative data findings

5.1.1 Social and demographic characteristics

Descriptive statistics were utilized to characterize the demographic components of the student sample and Table 5.1 provides details of the findings for each group of participants. The demographic information reflected was collected from the questionnaires. 98 students, among whom 75 (76.5%) were Bachelor and 23 (23.5%) were Master's level participated in this study. Of these, 32 (33.7%) were male and 66 (67.3%) were female. 97 (99%) out of the 98 participants took part first time in the programme and only one student (1.0%) took part second time. Examination of the gender demographic data reflected in Table 5.1 revealed that female participation was higher in the study.

Table 5.1 Gender demographic data

Gender	Questionnaire		Interview	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Female	66	67,3	8	80,0
Male	32	32,7	2	20,0
Total	98	100	10	100

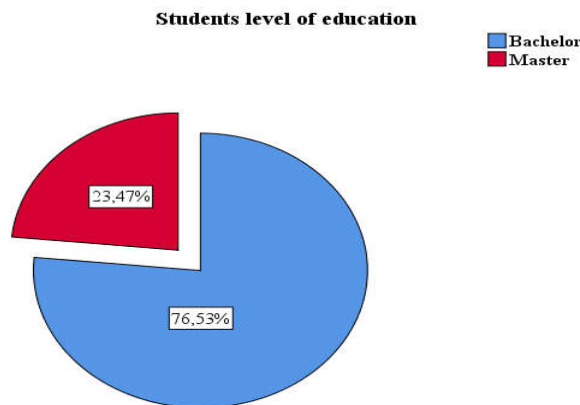
In addition to inquiring about the participants' demographic information, the age of the participants was also included. The students were aged between 17 and 32. As most of the participants were Bachelor level, 67.3% of the students were between 17-20 years old. It is important to mention that in Kazakhstan people tend to attend higher education immediately after school graduation as continuing education is a mandatory stage of socialisation.

Table 5.2 Participants` age

Age	Frequency	%
17-20	66	67,3
21-24	25	25,5
25-28	5	5,1
29-32	2	2,0
Mean	1,42	
Median	1,00	
Total	98	100,0

Examination of the education level of the participants (Figure 5.1) from the data source showed that students with BA level (76.53%) qualifications were the largest group that used the mobility programme; however, MA level students (23.47%) comprised the largest group participating in the student semi-structured interviews. This discrepancy occurred, firstly, because of the rules of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan; according to the rules from the year 2019 only BA level students can take part in the academic mobility programme funded by the state budget. Secondly, most Master's level students have families and are unable to go abroad to study for a long period of time.

Figure 5.1. Students level of education

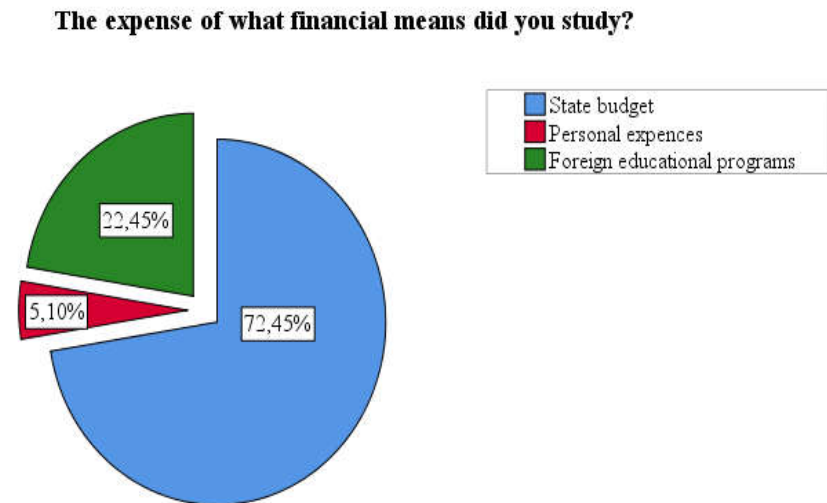


5.1.2 Mobility programme types used

Since 2011, Toraighyrov University has received a state budget for realisation of the student «Academic mobility» programme from the MoES. From Figure 5.2, it can be seen that the majority of students (71 (72.4%)) had state budget funding to participate in the programme, 22 students (22.4%) used foreign educational programmes such as

«Erasmus+», «Universities of Changhai Cooperation Organisation» and «Abay-Verne» and only 5 (5.1%) students were self-funded. The high percentage of participants funded by the state budget shows that the Kazakhstani MoES prioritises the student «Academic mobility» programme as one of the main principles of the Bologna process.

Figure 5.2. Financial means of the mobility programme



5.1.3 Information sources used about the programme

In Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Education and Science recommends that HEIs give more possibilities to under-represented groups or those from a disadvantaged background or students from not full families when selecting participants for the academic mobility programme. Therefore, the selection of candidates is done on a non-discriminating basis by the sending institution. The rules and selection procedure are published on the institution's official web site. Every potential participant has an opportunity to get complete information about the programme in advance. In this study it was decided to examine how participants got information about the programme. The results (Table 5.3) taken from the questionnaire show that 56.1% of participants obtained information from the website of their home university, 27.6% from the unit responsible for international cooperation, 9.2% from a tutor or a teacher, and 4% of students indicated that the information was obtained from friends and other participants of the programme. The rest (3%) indicated that they had obtained information from the website of the foreign university (1%), thematic seminars, meetings, sessions at ToU (1%) and ToU information bulletins (1%).

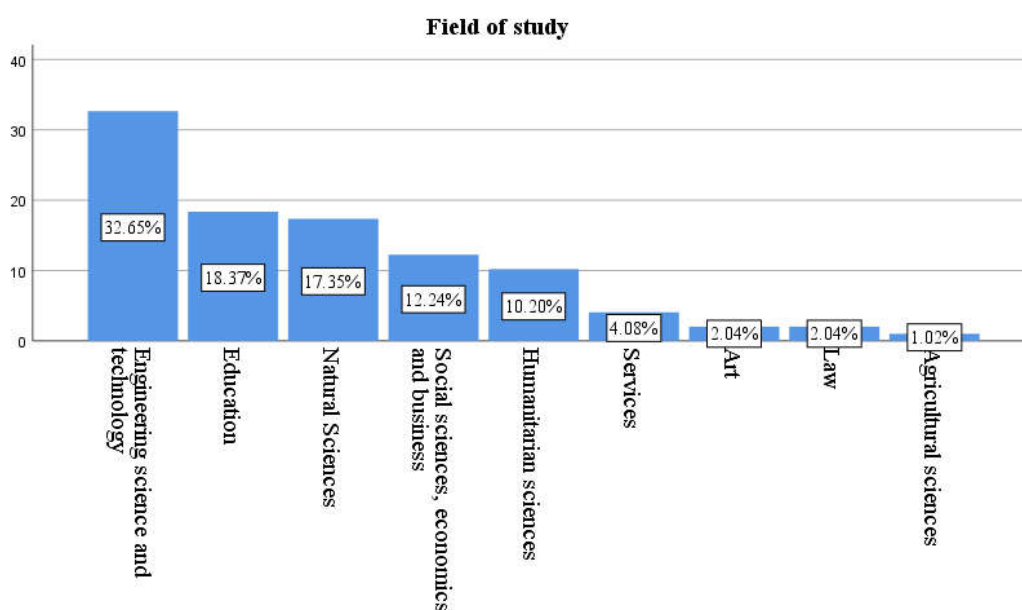
Table 5.3 Information sources used about the programme

What information resources did you use to find an appropriate mobility programme?		
	Frequency	In %
Official website of your university	55	56,1
Official website of a foreign university	1	1,0
Information came from the tutor or teacher	9	9,2
Unit responsible for international cooperation in your institution	27	27,6
Thematic seminars, meetings, sessions in your university	1	1,0
Information bulletins of your university	1	1,0
Other participated students and friends	4	4,1
Total	98	100,0

5.1.4 Participants fields of study

The academic fields were highly diverse. Students from nine fields of study (Table 5.4) took part in the programme and the analysis shows that the majority of the participants were from engineering science and technology and consisted 32.7% of the participants. This was followed by the education field, which makes 18.37% and the least number of students were from the agriculture field, which had the least 1% of the participants. The very low percentage of participants from the agricultural field might be explained by the fact that in this field the students come from villages, where the foreign language level is not high, which causes a barrier to participation in the programme.

Figure 5.3. Field of study



The top five fields of study among all of the mobile students were engineering science and technology (32.65%), followed by education and natural sciences, which occupied the second and third places with only marginal differences per student group, representing 18.37% to 17.35%. Social sciences, economics and business (12.24%) came fourth and humanitarian sciences (10.20%) fifth. Services, Arts, Law and Agricultural sciences showed much lower representation rates of below 5%.

It was assumed that the majority of participants would be from the humanitarian and education fields due to language competences. However, according to the participant numbers, it can be highlighted that students from engineering science and technology (mean=3.32) prevailed in the academic mobility programme at the regional university studied. This might be due to the fact that the Pavlodar region is qualified in technical specialities as the university researched is mainly strong in technical fields, and it has quite a lot of specialities in the engineering field. The data on the number of participants in the academic mobility programme show that students in the engineering science and technology field (32 students) prevailed over students in the humanitarian sciences and education field (28 students).

However, if we take into account the total numbers of students on each field and calculate it to the number of the participants on the programme, it is obvious that students in humanitarian sciences and education are more active (2.22%), compared to engineering science and technology (0.30%), which confirms the data in Table 5.4. The reason for the activeness of the students in this field is the knowledge of a foreign language among students in the humanitarian and education fields.

Table 5.4 Students' numbers by fields of study

Field of study	Students number by academic year				Total	Number of participants	Quantity of participants, in%
	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020			
Education	315	316	317	284	1232	18	1.16
Humanitarian sciences	297	262	246	134	939	10	1.06
Engineering science and technology	2779	3047	3342	1248	10416	32	0.30
Natural Sciences	382	378	406	161	1327	17	1.28
Soc. sciences, economics	569	525	537	385	2016	12	0.59

and business							
Services	158	180	222	124	684	4	0.58
Law	184	289	353	253	1079	2	0.18
Art	139	130	124	46	439	2	0.45
Agricultural sciences	402	376	317	109	1204	1	0.08

The results of calculating the data according to the Mann-Whitney U criterion (Table 5.5) show that $P = 0.039$, that is, less than $P \leq 0.05$, therefore, the activeness of participation of students of the humanitarian sciences and education differs from the activeness of participation of students of engineering science and technology fields in the studied programme by rejecting null hypothesis (H_2o). Consequently, the analysis confirms that there is a statistical difference in the students' activeness in participation in the programme between the group of students in the humanitarian sciences/ education fields and the group of students in engineering science and technology due to the knowledge of foreign language competences.

Table 5.5 Test statistics on Hypothesis 2

Test Statistics ^a	
	Level of English
Mann-Whitney U	366,000
Wilcoxon W	772,000
Z	-2,063
Asymp. Sig.	,039
a. Grouping Variable: Field of study	

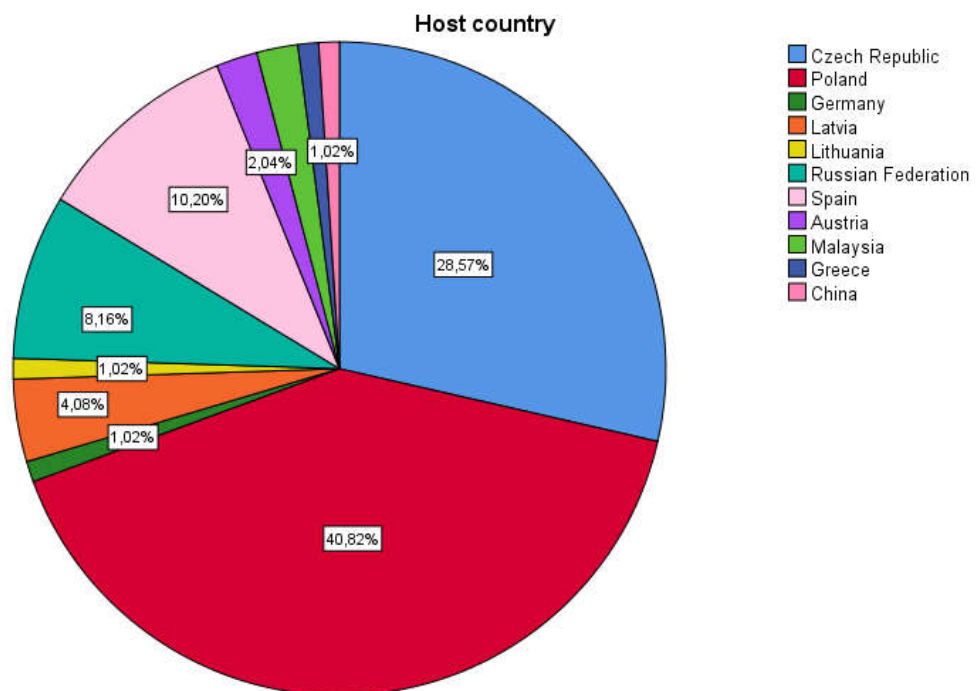
Considering the above analysis of the data, it can be concluded that there is a statistical difference in the activeness of students on the programme between the humanitarian/education and engineering science and technology fields, which confirms Hypothesis 2, where it was stated that students in the humanitarian sciences and education fields are more active in terms of participating in the programme due to their foreign (English) language competences than students in the engineering science and technology field.

5.1.5 Host countries

For the student academic mobility programme, the MoES of the RK has a list of priority destinations, where students can go with the state budget. The list includes countries of the EU, USA and Southeast Asia. Figure 5.4 shows the percentage of outgoing mobile students by country. Overall there are 10 destination countries where students stu-

died (Figure 5.4). Poland (40.82%) and the Czech Republic (28.57%) host very high shares of mobile students from ToU. The countries with the lowest shared of mobile students from the regional university are Germany (1.02%), Greece (1.02%), China (1.02%) and Austria (1.02%). The fact that Poland is a top priority destination among students can be explained by two main facts: firstly, universities in the country are always open to accepting international students, and secondly, the process of getting a visa is not complicated as in some other European countries, which can cause a real obstacle to choosing the host university during the application process. Interactions with countries with the lowest share of student mobilities, or rather their small achievements in cooperation, is explained by the fact that for the regional university these are new programmes that the university is starting to master.

Figure 5.4. Students host counties



As mentioned earlier, to obtain the quantitative data there were two questionnaires, «Before mobility» and «After mobility». The above covered statistical data were taken from part A of the questionnaires.

5.1.6 The realisation of the Academic mobility programme

The academic mobility programme aims to ensure that the study period in another country is administratively easier and supported academically by the sending university.

Administrative and academic assistance is seen as a key factor for realisation of the programme. The participation conditions, provision for preparation and preparatory activities before mobility are always a key issue. Thus, for the quantitative research, a question concerning the realisation of the programme was created as follows: «Do the conditions for participation in the academic mobility programme at Toraighyrov University in compliance with all requirements of the selection procedure?». This study aimed to explore and analyse how the student «Academic mobility» programme is realised at the regional university. Therefore the following five statements were stated in the before mobility questionnaire for the participants. By means of these statements, students were asked to give their opinions on the preparation and support provided by their home institution. 100% of the students reported that the conditions for participation are fair, transparent and available at the sending university and all of the participants reported that they had received full support from the sending university when preparing the documents to study abroad and get a visa. As for foreign language proficiency, 90.8% of the students confirmed that they had the appropriate level of English to study abroad and 9.2% expressed doubts about their level of English. The data in Table 5.6 shows that the process of realisation of the programme, as indicated by the responses, seems appropriate way in compliance with all requirements for the selection of programme participants.

Table 5.6 Realisation of the "Academic Mobility" programme at the ToU

	Agree	Difficult to answer	Disagree
The conditions for participation in the academic mobility programme are fair, transparent and available in the sending institution	98 (100%)		
Educational achievements and the level of knowledge of a foreign language were the main conditions for passing the competition in the programme of academic mobility	86 (87.8%)	10 (10.2%)	2 (2.0%)
The number of selected subjects is determined by the educational curriculum and corresponds to individuals' study programme	96(98%)	2(2%)	
I received full support from the sending university when preparing the documents to study abroad and get a visa	98 (100%)		
My level of English is sufficient to study at a foreign university	89 (90.8%)	9 (9.2%)	

5.1.7 Subject correspondence and recognition of credits and courses

As stated in the literature review, one of the main requirements to become a mobile student is that the student returns to their home university after completing the semester of study, where all courses studied and credits earned during their study abroad will be recognised. In order for the process to run smoothly before the mobility period participants fill in the Learning Agreement, where the courses and credits are indicated. In addition, participants prepare an individual study plan, in which all of the courses recognised are shown; this document ensures easy recognition of the courses taken.

The Bologna process countries use the European credit transfer and accumulation system, widely known as the ECTS. This has been designed to make it easier for students to use the academic mobility period in another country and to have their study periods abroad recognised by the home university. Full recognition of credits is a common practice at Toraighyrov University. Therefore, in the after mobility questionnaire the questions on correspondence of the courses to the field of study, credit transfer and home university recognition of the study period abroad were also raised and it was important to obtain students' opinions and knowledge regarding whether they were aware of the recognition procedure.

In order to get more information concerning the realisation of the programme and answer quantitative question №2, «Are the subjects taken by students useful and relevant to the education fields of participants?», firstly, in the «Before Mobility» questionnaire, students were asked if the number of selected subjects was determined by the educational curriculum and corresponded to their individual study programme. Participants' responses showed that 96 (98%) stated that all of the chosen courses corresponded to their study curriculum and individual study plan; only 2 (2%) had difficulty answering or showed uncertainty about the statement (Table 5.6).

Later, in the «After Mobility» questionnaire, students were asked about the correspondence of the courses taken. The data (Figure 5.5) obtained revealed that 88.78% (87) of the participants confirmed the usefulness and correspondence of the courses taken; however, 11.22% (11) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, showing doubt and uncertainty about the statement.

Figure 5.5. Correspondence of subject studied

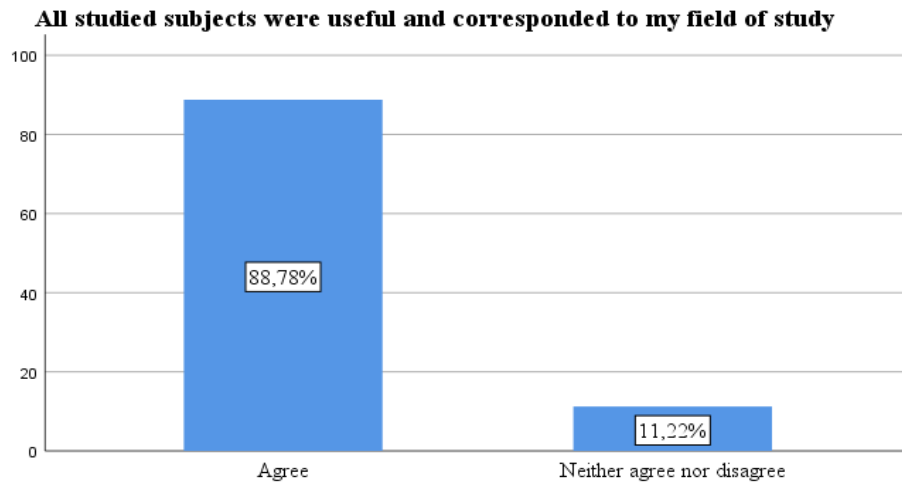


Figure 5.5 shows that 88.8% of the participants confirmed that they had received full recognition of the study achievements they undertook during their stay abroad and 11.2% of participants indicated that they had received only partial recognition of the courses studied. As shown in Figure 5.6, 72.45% of students confirmed full coverage and 27.55% indicated only partial coverage of the studied courses and credits earned.

Figure 5.6. To the question on credits obtained in the host university covered the credits needed by the home university

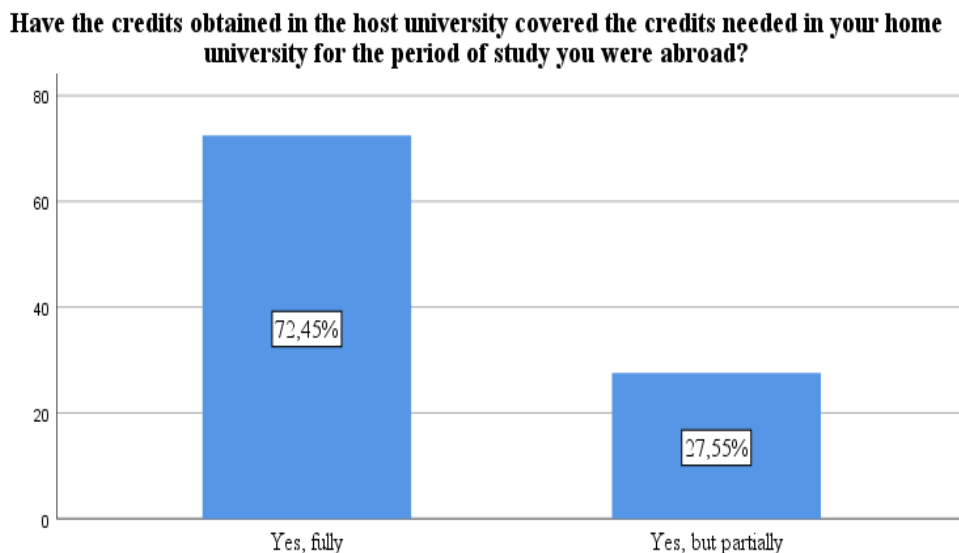
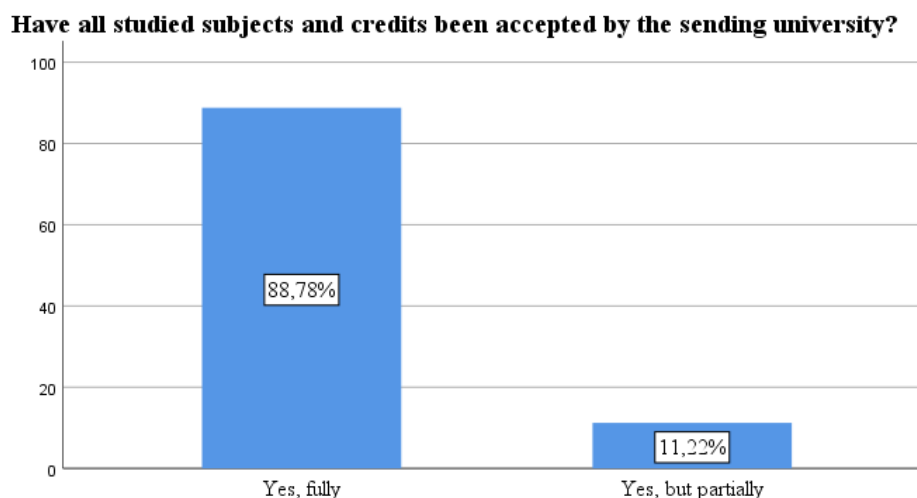


Figure 5.7. To the question on have all studied subjects and credits been accepted by the sending university



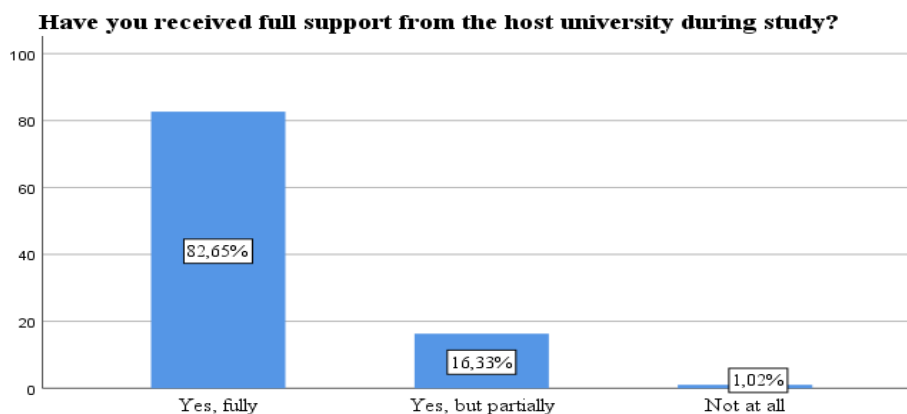
Toraighyrov University accepts all activities indicated in the Learning agreement. In the Kazakh higher education system, the educational programme for each specialty is formed on the basis of the general standard of education of the Republic of Kazakhstan and there are subjects in the compulsory component that it is not possible to study abroad, since these subjects may reflect the specifics of the state, for example, the History of Kazakhstan, and Kazakh business language. This might explain why 27.55% of respondents indicated only partial coverage of their courses and credits. However, the data show the fact that harmonisation of the curricula is the main objective of the exchange programmes to remove obstacles to the mobility programme. According to the data received from the questionnaires, it might be stated that the realisation of the programme at the university corresponds to the requirements set out by the MoES and participants gave positive feedback.

5.1.8 Support from Host University

Support from a host university plays an important role when students study abroad. Therefore it was also valuable to obtain participants' opinion about their host university, and the following statement was used for this purpose: «Have you received full support from the host university during the study?». This statement was included in the after mobility questionnaire and covered information about the host university. Most partner universities organise a buddy system for international students so that students can get first hand help at the beginning of their study period and pass smoothly through the adaptation period in the foreign country. Figure 5.8 shows that the Toraighyrov University students mostly

got valuable support from their host universities; 82.65% indicated that they had received full support, 16.33% had received partial support, and only 1.02% indicated that they had received no support from their host university. These statistics show that the majority of host universities take care of international students during their study period, which helps facilitate an increase in the number of international students.

Figure 5.8. Support from the host university



5.1.9 Motivation factors of participants

The next important issue covered in the study was to find out the main motivation factors of the participants in the programme. In the «Before mobility» questionnaire four areas were stated that seemed appropriate for students. These are given in Table 5.7 below, and included academic, linguistic, cultural and personal motivations (Krzaklewska, 2008).

Table 5.7 Motivation for participation

Motivation for participation in the "Academic Mobility" programme is ...	Agree	Difficult to answer	Disagree	Mean	St.deviation
to receive education in a foreign university through experiencing different learning and teaching practices	96 (98%)	2(2%)		1.02	.142
to improve the level of English	87(88,8%)	7(7,1%)	4(4,1%)	1.15	.462
acquaintance with new foreign friends	65 (66,3%)	29(29,6%)	4(4,1%)	1.38	.566
to travel	59 (60,2%)	28 (28,6%)	11(11,2%)	1.51	.692

The statistical analysis (Table 5.8) shows that the main goal of participation in the academic mobility programme is to receive education at a foreign university through exper-

riencing different learning and teaching practices. A high percentage ((98%) 96 students) stated that this was a motivating factor in comparison to the other three motives. Language improvement (88.8%) was in second position and travelling (60,2%) was in last position according to the statistical data.

King et al. (2010) suggest, through their research with UK mobile students, that many students state that an important motivation to study abroad is the opportunity to experience a new academic or learning culture. Surprisingly, the findings concerning receiving education at a foreign university through experiencing different learning and teaching practices are similar to the findings of King et al. (2010).

Table 5.8 Motivation for participation

Motivation for participation in the "Academic Mobility" programme is to receive education in a foreign university through experiencing different learning and teaching practices

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	96	98,0	98,0	98,0
Difficult to answer	2	2,0	2,0	100,0
Total	98	100,0	100,0	

Motivation for participation in the "Academic Mobility" programme is improving the level of English

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	87	88,8	88,8	88,8
Difficult to answer	7	7,1	7,1	95,9
Disagree	4	4,1	4,1	100,0
Total	98	100,0	100,0	

Motivation for participation in the "Academic Mobility" programme is acquaintance with new foreign friends

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	65	66,3	66,3	66,3
Difficult to answer	29	29,6	29,6	95,9
Disagree	4	4,1	4,1	100,0
Total	98	100,0	100,0	

Motivation for participation in the "Academic Mobility" programme is travelling

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	59	60,2	60,2	60,2
Difficult to answer	28	28,6	28,6	88,8
Disagree	11	11,2	11,2	100,0
Total	98	100,0	100,0	

The findings related to motivation factors where language improvement scored was in the highest position are similar to the findings of Maiworn & Teichler (1996, 2002) and Krzaklewska (2008). These similarities might be explained by the fact that all of the participants had been learning a foreign language prior to their mobility period and saw studying abroad as an opportunity to practice their language skills by communicating with different international students.

The result of comparing the mean values using the t-test is assessed to the level of significance (Table 5.9). Recall that the level of significance (p-level) is a measure of the statistical reliability of the result of calculations, in this case, the differences in means, and serves as a basis for interpretation. If the study showed that the p-level of the significance of differences does not exceed 0.05, this means that with a probability of no more than 5% the differences are random. This usually becomes the basis for a conclusion about the statistical significance of the differences. Otherwise ($p > 0.05$), the difference is recognized as statistically insignificant and is not subject to meaningful interpretation (Nasledov, 2013).

To test the hypothesis that the motivations between BA and MA level students, independent samples t-test was performed. T-test revealed that on motivation to receive education in a foreign university through experiencing different learning and teaching practices BA level students have $m=1.03$ and MA level students have $m=1.00$, where mean difference is 0.027. On t statistics $t=0.786$, and $p=0.434$. If $p > 0.05$, the means are not significantly different. Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H_{3A}) is rejected and it is possible to conclude that there is no statistical difference between BA and MA level students on motivation to receive education in a foreign university through experiencing different learning and teaching practices.

On motivation to language improvement BA level students $m=1.13$ and MA level students $m=1.22$, where mean difference is -0.084. On t statistics $t=-0.762$, and $p=0.448$. As $p > 0.05$, the means are not significantly different. On the third travelling motivation BA level students have $m=1.45$ and MA level students have $m=1.70$, where mean difference is -0.242. On t statistics $t=-1.447$, and $p=0.143$. The means are not significantly different as $p > 0.05$. Even though there are some differences in means between BA and MA students on the stated motivations, it is not possible to generalise to all participants of the programme. Thus, the H_{3A} is rejected and it is possible to conclude that there is no statistical difference between BA and MA level students on motivation of travelling.

As the data shows (Table 5.7), two of the most important motivations were academic and linguistic. The travelling motive scored considerably lower, and therefore the study shows (Table 5.9) that there is no statistical difference in the number of participants between BA and MA students who indicated that travel was the main purpose for their participation in the programme, which contradicts hypothesis 3, where it was predicted that a significant number of students would highlight that the main motivating factor would be an opportunity to travel to the motivation of receiving education at a foreign university through experiencing different learning and teaching practices.

Table 5.9 Test statistics on Hypothesis 3

Motivation	Level of education	N	Mean	Mean Difference	t	P
To receive education in a foreign university through experiencing different learning and teaching practices	BA	75	1.03	0.027	t=0.786	0.434
	MA	23	1.00			
Language improvement	BA	75	1.13	-0.084	t=-0.762	0.448
	MA	23	1.22			
Travelling	BA	75	1.45	-0.242	t=-1.477	0.143
	MA	23	1.70			

5.1.10 The expectations from and realities about the programme

The third topic concerned students' expectations from the programme, and students showed that their expectations could be categorised under four topics, as shown in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10 The expectations from the "Academic Mobility" programme

	Agree, in %		Difficult to answer, in%		Disagree, in %	
	BA	MA	BA	MA	BA	MA
Adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment will pass quickly and imperceptibly	70,6	73,9	29,3	26,0		
I will not have communication problems with teachers during my studies at a foreign university	82,6	100,0	17,3			
Participation in the programme of academic mobility will positively affect the quality of the education received	98,0	100,0	2,0			
The programme of academic mobility will promote personal development	100,0	100,0				

Prior to their departure, the students generally appeared to have high expectations of their stay abroad. According to the findings, before their mobility the students expressed very positive expectations about all four of the topics covered, i.e. adaptation, communication with teachers, quality of the education received and personal growth. It was interesting to find out that all of the participants, despite the level of their study, believed that they were well prepared (BA – 70.6% and MA -73.9%) for the study abroad period in terms of social and cultural adaptation in the host university, and their level of doubt was not so high (BA-29.3% and MA- 26.0%). However, after their mobility period the participants' reality was slightly different than their expectations (Table 5.11); the BA students expressed 44.8% doubt and disagreement about their adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment, and the MA students 31.0%. Regarding communication with teachers at the host university, participants felt well prepared before their mobility. The findings also show some discrepancies in the expectations and realities of students between the two levels of study. The MA students expressed that they were 100% confident about their communication with teachers; however after their mobility, in reality, 2.0% of them seemed to have had some difficulties in communicating with their teachers' during the period of study. As for the BA students, 17.3% expressed uncertainty about this issue, and in reality 18.2% had had some difficulties in communicating with their teachers, which was 0.9% higher than their expectations. The students' expectations regarding the quality of the education received and their personal development were high at the beginning of the mobility period and, in reality, after the participants' mobility, their level of achievement in this regard was at the same level. The expectations and results from the programme among the MA students turned out to be more positive than among the BA students with regard to the topic of adaptation to a new place, 55.2% of the BA students and 69.0% of the MA students gave a positive response, which can be explained by the age of the BA students and their lack of life experience and experience of staying abroad. The master's degree students had more work experience, including experience related to travelling outside the city and the country.

Table 5.11 Realities of the expectations of the "Academic Mobility" programme

	Agree, in %		Difficult to answer, in %		Disagree, in %	
	BA	MA	BA	MA	BA	MA
Adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment passed quickly and imperceptibly	55.2	69,0	20.0	19,0	24.8	12,0
I did not have communication problems with teachers during my studies at a foreign university	81.8	98.0	11.0	2.0	7.2	
Participation in the programme of academic mobility positively affected the quality of the education received	100.0	100.0				
The programme of academic mobility promoted my personal development	100.0	100.0				

The result of comparing the mean values using the t-test is assessed according to the level of significance. To test the hypothesis that the expectations about the programme and realities from the programme were equal or different, a paired dependent samples *t*-test was performed. A paired *t*-test (Table 5.12) revealed that the expectations and realities about adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment are different. As can be seen from the results, for a sample of size $N = 98$, the mean of ‘Adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment passed quickly and imperceptibly’ (achievement of the expectation about the programme after participation) ($m = 1.96$) turned out to be statistically significantly higher than the mean of ‘Adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment will pass quickly and imperceptibly’ (expectation about the programme before the participation) ($m=1.38$) with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. In addition, there is a significant correlation between the variables before and after participation ($r = 0.412$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that these variables can indeed be considered dependent samples. The null hypothesis of no statistical difference in the degree of expectations from the programme and the degree of achievements of expectations after participation in the programme was rejected, where $t = -8.198$, $p < 0.05$.

A paired *t*-test revealed that the expectations and realities concerning the communication problems with teachers during the study are different. As can be seen from the results, for a sample of size $N = 98$, the mean of the statement ‘I did not have communication problems with teachers during my study at a foreign university’ (achievement of the expectation about the programme after participation) ($m = 1.70$) turned out to be statistically significantly higher than the mean of ‘I will not have communication problems with teachers during my study at a foreign (expectation about the programme before the participation) ($m = 1.21$) with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. There is a sig-

nificant correlation between the variables before and after participation ($r = 0.383$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that these variables can indeed be considered dependent samples. The null hypothesis of no statistical difference in the degree of expectations from the programme and the degree of achievements of expectations after participation in the programme was rejected, where $t = -6.354$, $p < 0.05$.

Table 5.12 Test statistics on Hypothesis 1

The expectation from and realities about the programme	Before participation, mean	After participation, mean	T	P
Quick and imperceptible adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment	1.38	1.96	$t = -8.198$	$p < 0.05$
Communication problems with teachers during my studies at a foreign university	1.21	1.70	$t = -6.354$	$p < 0.05$

It was predicted that the degree of expectation from the «Academic mobility» programme and the degree of achievement of those expectations after participation in the programme of the participants will be different. The data in table 5.12 confirms that there was a statistical difference in the degree of expectation of the «Academic mobility» programme and the degree of achievement of those expectations after participation in the programme among the participants. The findings confirm that the participants expressed more positive expectations before the mobility experience, which confirms Hypothesis 1, where it was predicted that the degree of expectations from the «Academic mobility» programme and the degree of achievement of those expectations after participation in the programme among the participants would be different.

5.1.11 Quality of education

As the mobility period is a two-sided process comprising quality of education, it was also important to obtain the students' view on the quality of education at the host university. Quantitative research question №3 asked, «Is there a difference in the quality of education between the sending and receiving universities according to the students' opinion?».

In the «Before mobility» questionnaire, students were asked to rate the education quality (Table 5.13). In order to compare the education quality of the host university, the respondents were asked the same questions in the «After mobility» questionnaire (Table 5.14). Overall, the findings showed positive opinions of education quality at the home

university and host university where the mean in all categories was rated at four or above four points out of a maximum of five.

Table 5.13 Evaluation of quality of training at home university

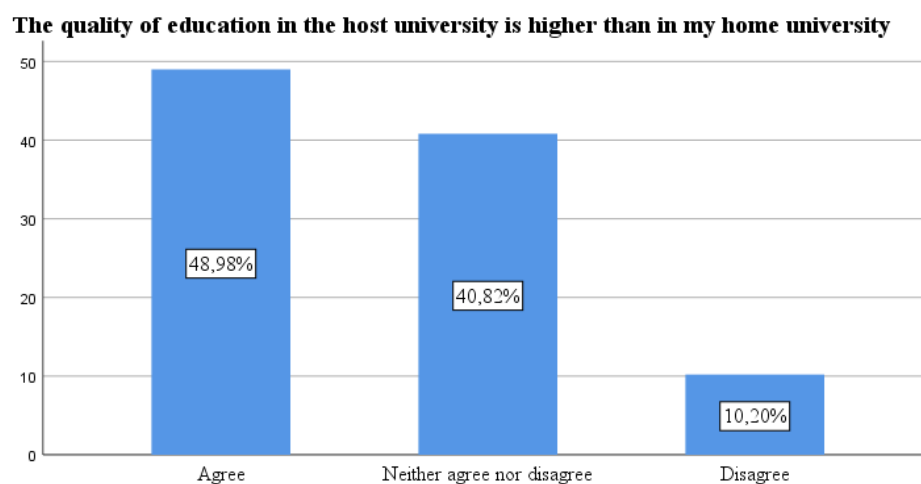
	N	Min.	Max.	Mean
<i>Quality of teaching courses</i>				
Mastery of explaining teaching material	98	3	5	4,45
Organization of independent work of students	98	2	5	4,44
Organization of independent work of students with a teacher	98	2	5	4,40
Availability of necessary equipment	98	1	5	3,96
Availability of scientific and educational literature	98	1	5	4,26
Correspondence to the profile of training (specialty)	98	3	5	4,42
<i>Quality of control of educational achievements</i>				
Compliance of test tasks with the content of the course	98	2	5	4,57
Objectivity of the evaluation of educational achievements	98	2	5	4,51
Variety of forms of control of educational achievements	98	3	5	4,51
Organization of the final control of educational achievements	98	2	5	4,46
<i>Quality of administrative and organizational maintenance</i>				
Receiving and issuing of relevant study documentation	98	2	5	4,51
Living conditions	98	2	5	4,35
Food service	98	1	5	4,08
Organization of leisure activities	98	1	5	4,07
Support measures (benefits for services, etc.)	98	1	5	4,38
Valid N (listwise)	98			

Table 5.14 Evaluation of quality of training at host university

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean
<i>Quality of teaching courses</i>				
Mastery of explaining teaching material	98	1	5	4.42
Organization of independent work of students	98	1	5	4.59
Organization of independent work of students with a teacher	98	3	5	4.53
Availability of necessary equipment	98	3	5	4.64
Availability of scientific and educational literature	98	3	5	4.64
Correspondence to the profile of training (specialty)	98	3	5	4.61
<i>Quality of control of educational achievements</i>				
Compliance of test tasks with the content of the course	98	3	5	4.64
Objectivity of the evaluation of educational achievements	98	3	5	4.54
Variety of forms of control of educational achievements	98	3	5	4.67
Organization of the final control of educational achievements	98	3	5	4.64
<i>Quality of administrative and organizational maintenance</i>				
Receiving and issuing of relevant study documentation	98	3	5	4.58
Living conditions	98	1	5	4.60
Food service	98	1	5	4.04
Organization of leisure activities	98	1	5	4.64
Support measures (benefits for services, etc.)	98	1	5	4.39
Valid N (listwise)	98			

Additionally, students were asked to choose a response to the statement, «The quality of education in the host university is higher than in my home university» (Figure 5.9). The answers showed that 49% of the students agreed with this statement, and 40.8% of students' responses were «Neither agree nor disagree», i.e. showing doubt and uncertainty regarding the statement. Only 10% disagreed about the low quality of education of the home university. It can be concluded from the findings that the quality of education is an important topic of discussion, as the responses illustrate that half of the participants confirmed that their home university needed to improve the quality of its education. However almost 41% of the students seemed unable to properly evaluate the education quality or compare the host and home universities. As Harvey and Green (1993: 10) claim, quality might mean 'different things to different people'; therefore the findings of the study express the subjective views of the participants on education quality in the home and host universities.

Figure 5.9. The quality of education in the host University



5.1.12 Added-value from the programme

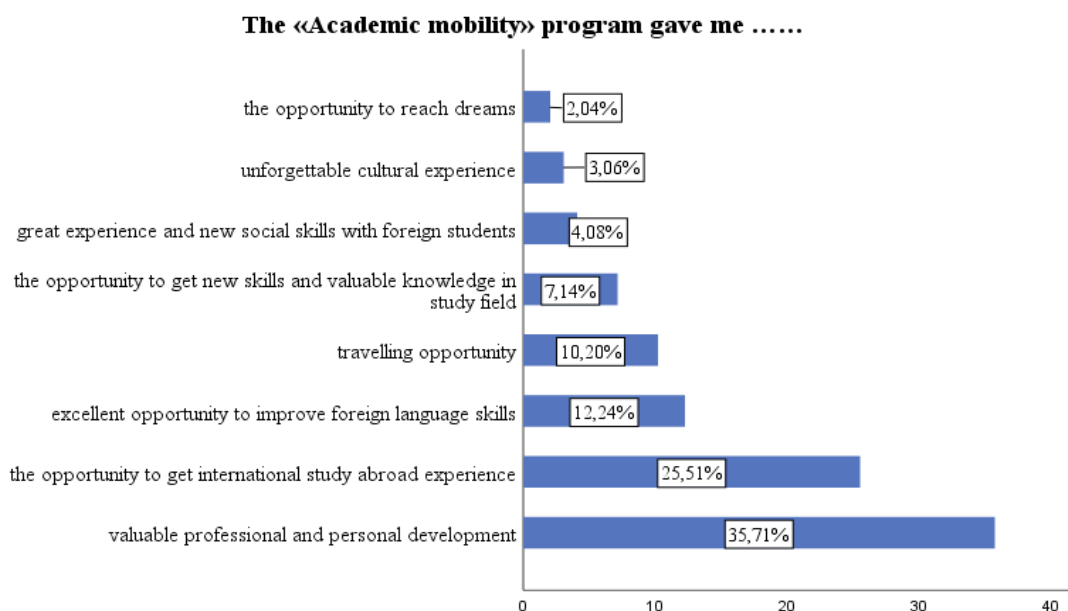
Obtaining students' opinion on what they had gained from the mobility programme was another important topic of this study. It was an open-ended statement, where students can continue received contributions from the programme. From all of the responses, eight major topics were generated, as presented in Table 5.15 and Figure 5.12. The top three most mentioned topics were as follows: 35.71% of the participants indicated that the programme gave them valuable professional and personal development, 25.5 % of the participants indicated that the programme gave them the opportunity to get interna-

tional study abroad experience and 12.24% indicated that the programme was an excellent opportunity to improve their foreign language skills.

Table 5.15 The answers to the statement «The Academic mobility programme gave me ...»

The «Academic mobility» programme gave me				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
excellent opportunity to improve foreign language skills	12	12,2	12,2	12,2
great experience and new social skills with foreign students	4	4,1	4,1	16,3
the opportunity to get international study abroad experience	25	25,5	25,5	41,8
the opportunity to get new skills and valuable knowledge in study field	7	7,1	7,1	49,0
the opportunity to reach dreams	2	2,0	2,0	51,0
travelling opportunity	10	10,2	10,2	61,2
unforgettable cultural experience	3	3,1	3,1	64,3
valuable professional and personal development	35	35,7	35,7	100,0
Total	98	100,0	100,0	

Figure 5.10. The «Academic mobility» programme gave me ...



The fact that foreign language acquisition and the development of social and communication skills were among the most stated personal outcomes of the student academic mobility programme was further confirmed by the quantitative data, as the figures below suggest. From Figures 5.11-5.13 it can be seen that 87.76% of the participant

mostly indicated that the programme had increased their social and communication skills. 84.69% stated that the programme had contributed to language improvement and 80.61% stated that it had contributed to their academic achievement. The rating of academic matters was also positive on average, though more cautious. The findings correspond to the findings of other international scholars about the added-value of academic mobility programmes, where a study abroad experience is more about individual or personal, cultural and social development (Maratova et al., 2019, Kehm, 2005, Paunescu, 2009, Mizikaci & Arslan, 2019). It can be argued that by improving social and communication skills, through communicating with foreign students from different countries, language skills are simultaneously improved. Nowadays, the main value among young people is their position in society, communication and their career, and the place of knowledge, as such, is not prevalent. Participants seemed to return to the belief that the academic mobility programme was a socially and linguistically valuable experience that also led to substantial academic progress. Students first and foremost perceived the academic mobility programme as a defining period in their personal and professional development, which had led to greater maturity and personal enrichment through social communication.

Figure 5.11. Answers to the question on academic performance questionnaire

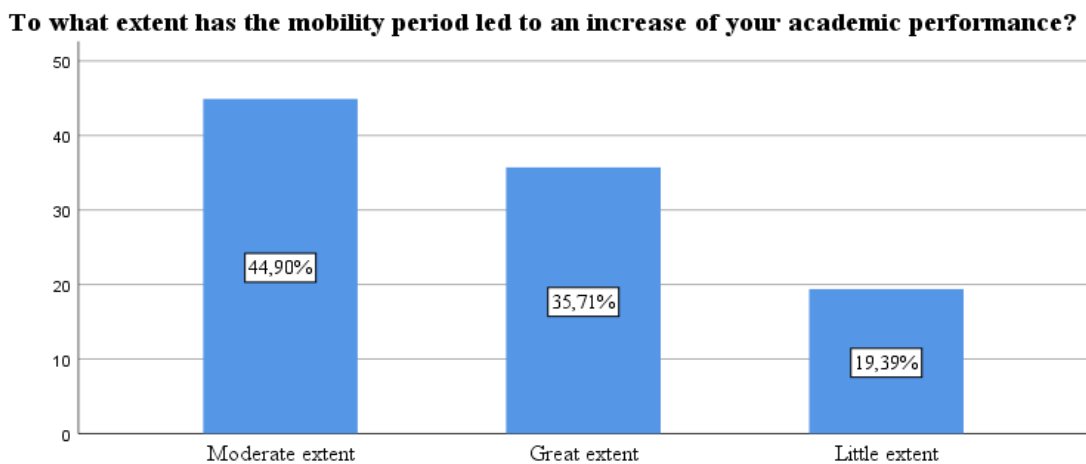


Figure 5.12. Answers to the question on foreign language skills improvement questionnaire

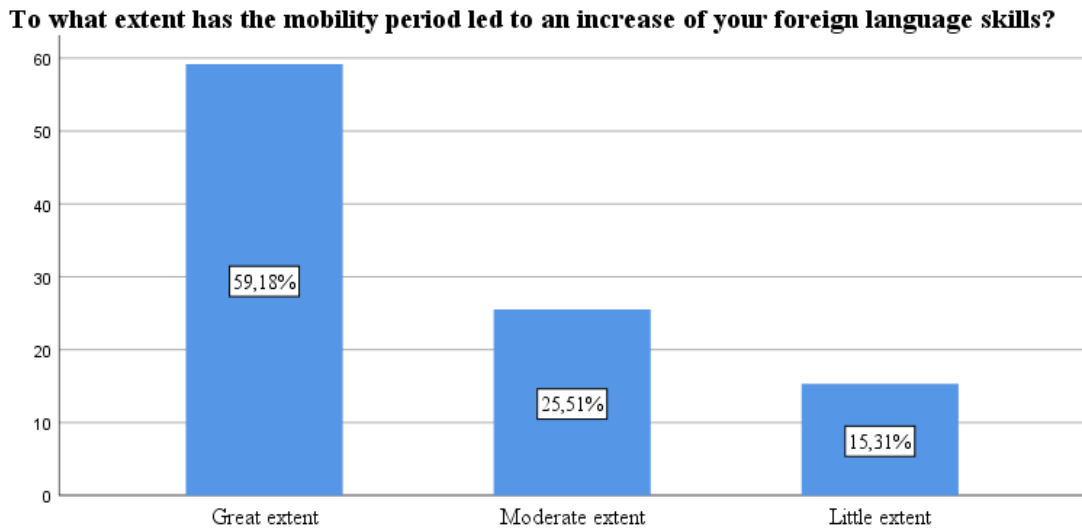
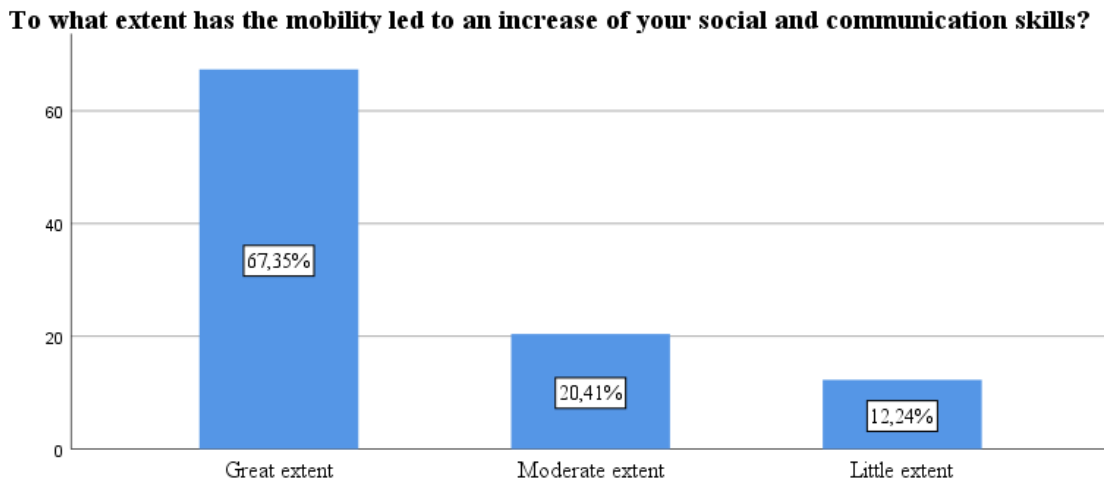


Figure 5.13. Answers to the question on increase of social and communication skills questionnaire



When compared to the figures related to the impact on academic performance, language skills improvement and social and communication skills were highly indicated results of the programme. The academic mobility programme creates conditions for the personal growth of participants, and the research data showed that studying abroad, along with improving language skills and academic performance, leads to a significant increase in the social and communication skills of the participants.

The results of calculating the data according to the Mann-Whitney U criterion (Table 5.16) was done by comparing the level of education and the results show that the added value from the programme on increase in social and communication skills $P=0.707$, that

is higher than $P \geq 0.05$. As for language improvement $P=0.886$ and academic performance $P=0.897$, that are also higher than $P \geq 0.05$, therefore, it could be concluded that there is no statistical differences on added-value between BA and MA students from the programme. The statistical data contradicts hypothesis 4 of this study, and alternative hypothesis (H_{4A}) was rejected, where it was assumed that a mobility period abroad leads to a more significant increase in social and communication skills compared to the language improvement or academic performance of the participants.

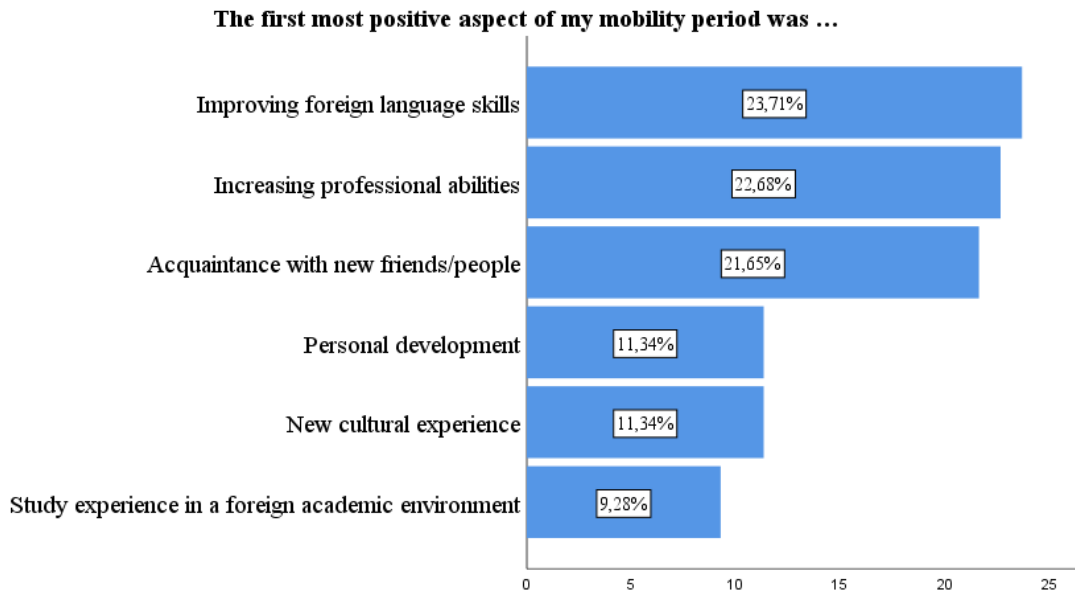
Table 5.16 Test statistics on Hypothesis 4

Test Statistics ^a			
	The mobility period led to an increase of your academic performance	The mobility period led to an increase of your foreign language skills	The mobility led to an increase of your social and communication skills
Mann-Whitney U	821,000	847,500	838,500
Z	-,376	-,143	-,129
Asymp. Sig.	,707	,886	,897
a. Grouping Variable: Level of study			

5.1.13 Positive and negative aspects of the programme

In the questionnaire, students were asked to name their three most positive as well as their three most negative experiences of the academic mobility programme. These questions aimed at identifying the topics that were most valued by, and that caused the most disappointment for students. The open answers were subsequently coded and as a result eight main topics are presented in the results in figures 5.14-5.16. As a general trend, participants for the first positive aspect mentioned six aspects in Figure 5.14, where foreign language improvement was in top position for 23.71% of the participants, and a slightly lower position was taken by increasing professional abilities (22.68%).

Figure 5.14. Answer to the open-ended question on most 3 positive aspects of the mobility



Interestingly, a high percentage of students indicated that the opportunity to travel was either the second or third most positive aspect, as shown in figures 5.15 and 5.16.

Figure 5.15. The second most positive aspect

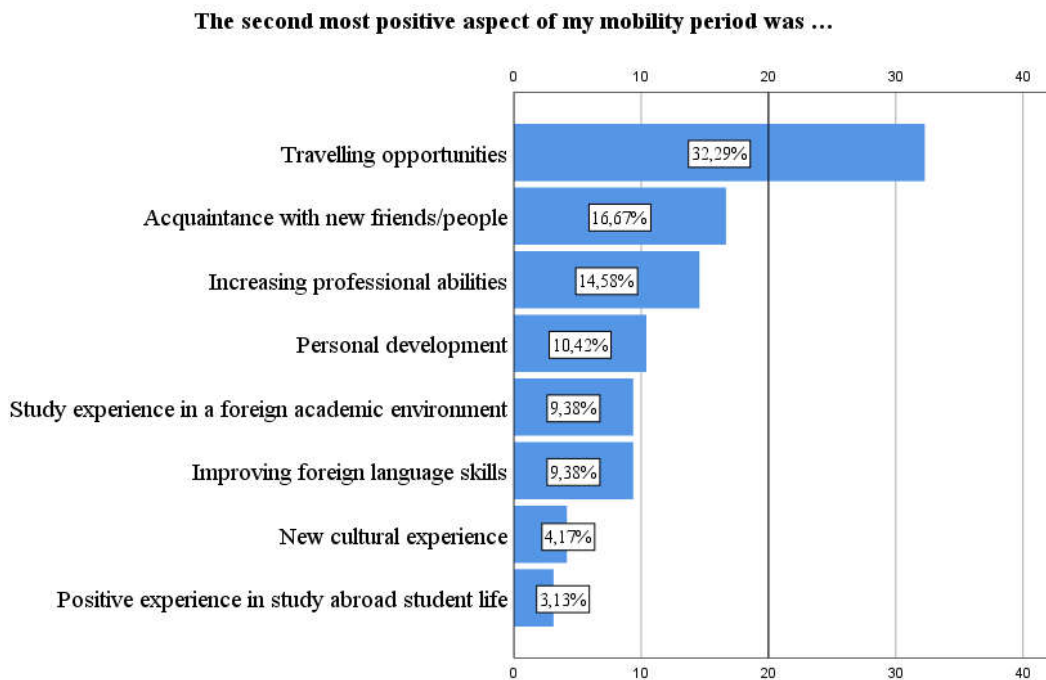
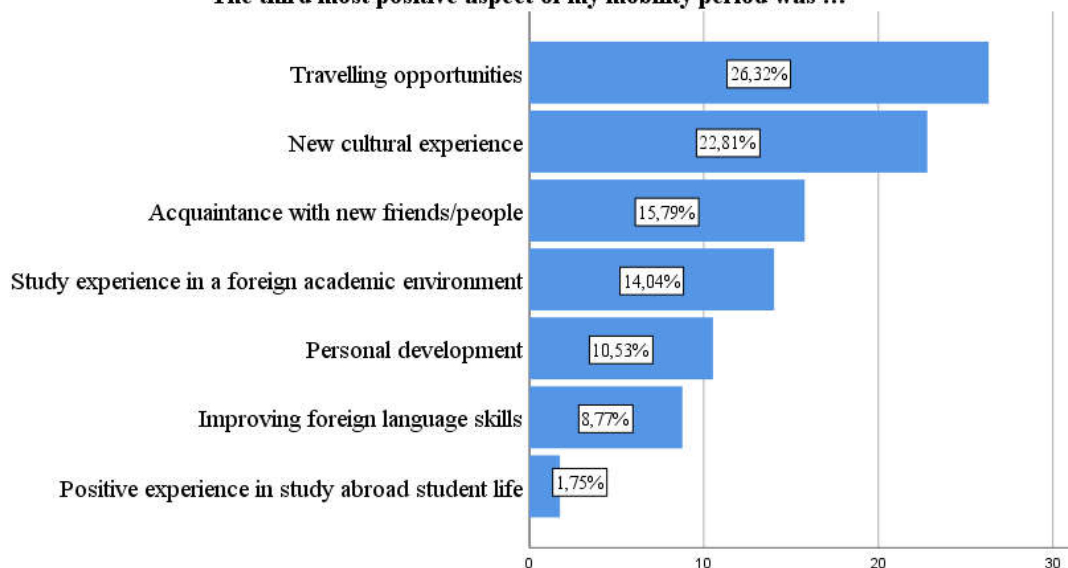


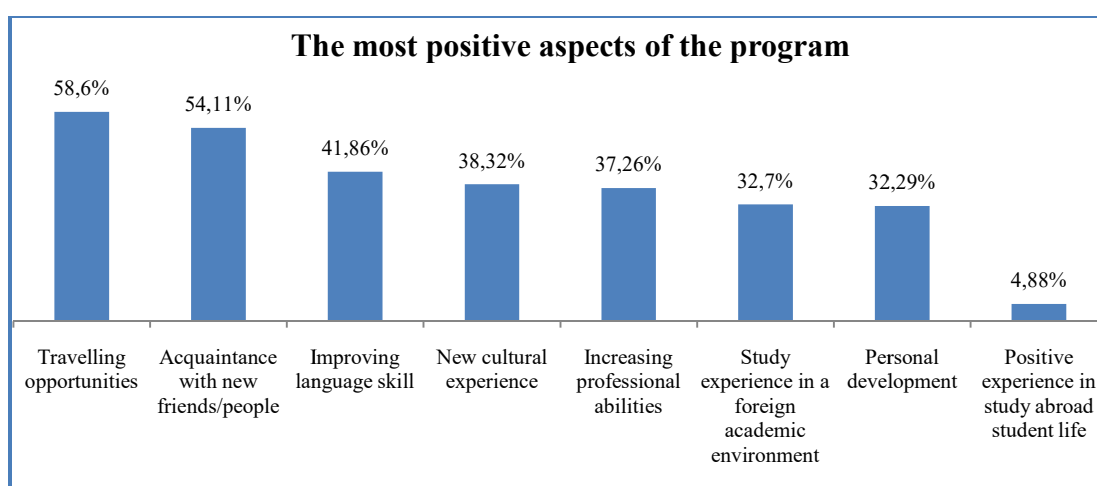
Figure 5.16. The third most positive aspect

The third most positive aspect of my mobility period was ...



From all three of the most positive aspects it was decided to make a calculation of all of the positive aspects. The calculations obtained from the statistical analysis of the questionnaires in Table 5.17 show that the top three most positive aspects for students were opportunity to travel (58.6%), making acquaintance with new friends/people (54.11%) and improving foreign language skills (41.86%). Even though participants did not prioritise travelling as the main motivation for their participation, this aspect seemed to be one of the positive ones according to the responses.

Table 5.17 The most positive aspects of the programme



The results of the analysis of the most negative aspects of the mobility period among the participants revealed only two negative aspects consisting of 11 topics. Most of the participants (58.6%) answered that there was no negative aspect of their mobility

period. However, 14.3% mentioned adaptation difficulties, which were seen as the most negative aspect of the mobility programme according to the participants, as shown in Table 5.20. As the statistical data shows, the top three most negative aspects for students were adaptation difficulties (14.3%), difficulties in living a long way from their parents and relatives (9.2%) and expensive living conditions (9%). Therefore, the participants referred mostly to the benefits of the academic mobility programme and saw it largely as a valuable experience.

Table 5.18 The first most negative aspect of the mobility period

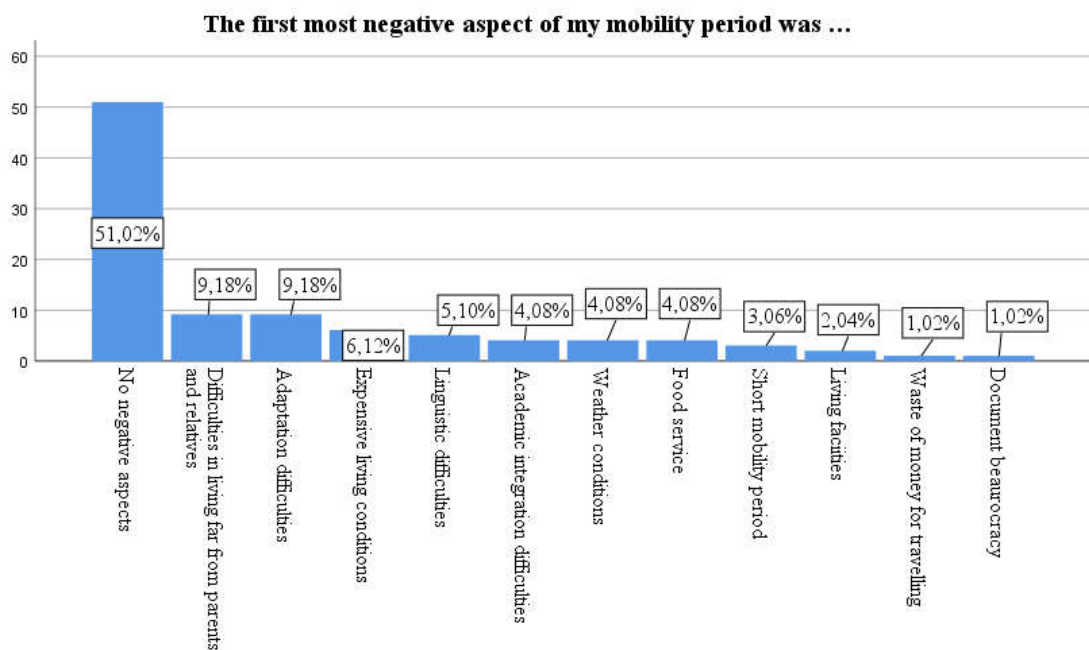


Table 5.19 The second most negative aspect of the mobility period

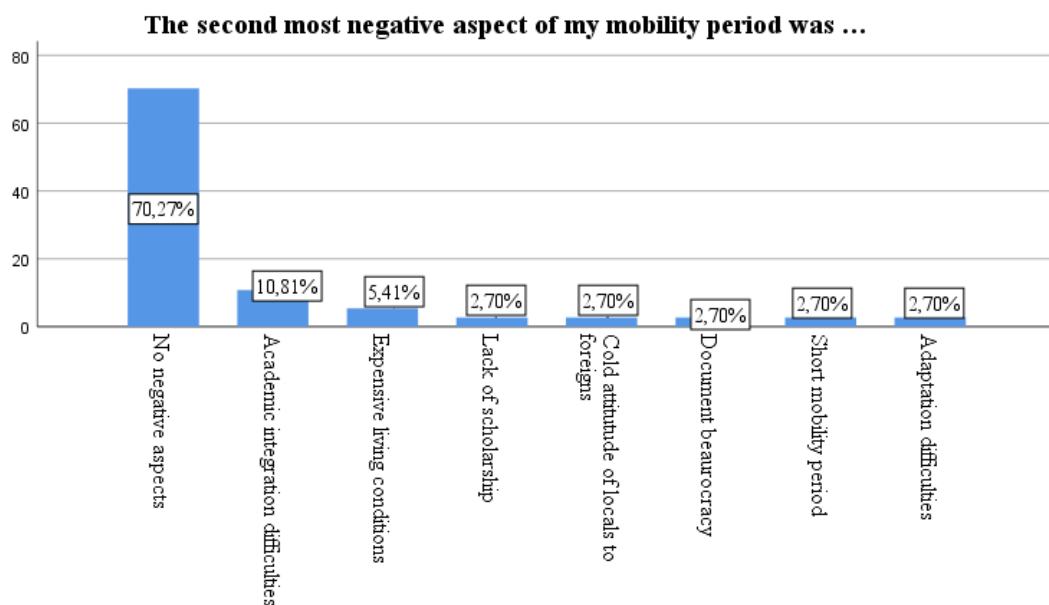
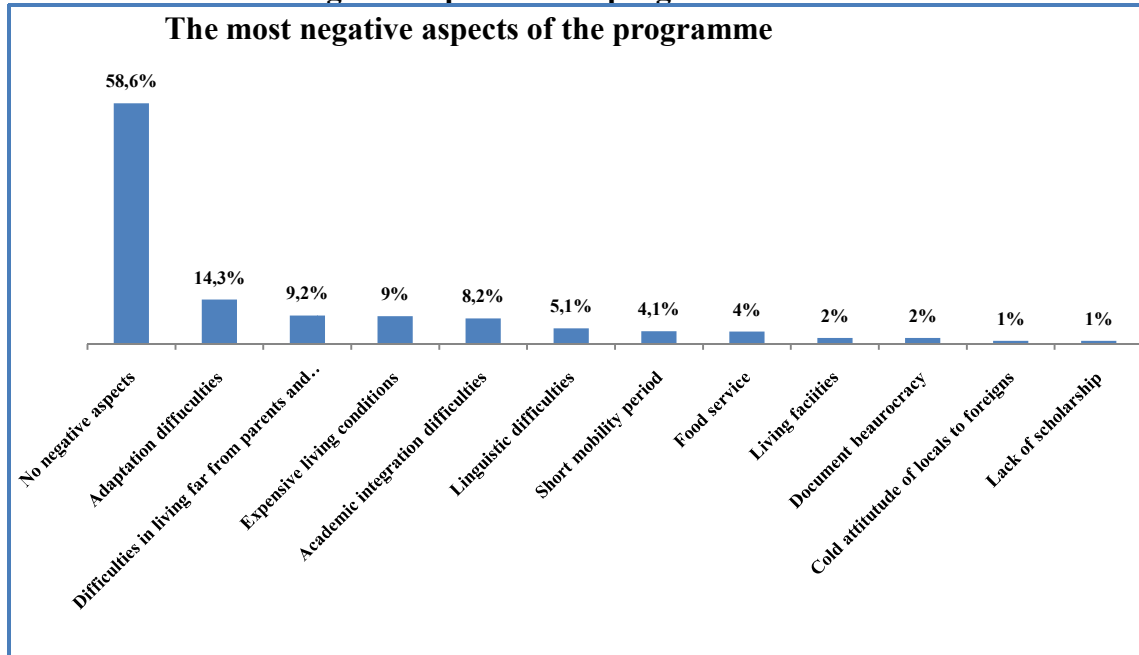


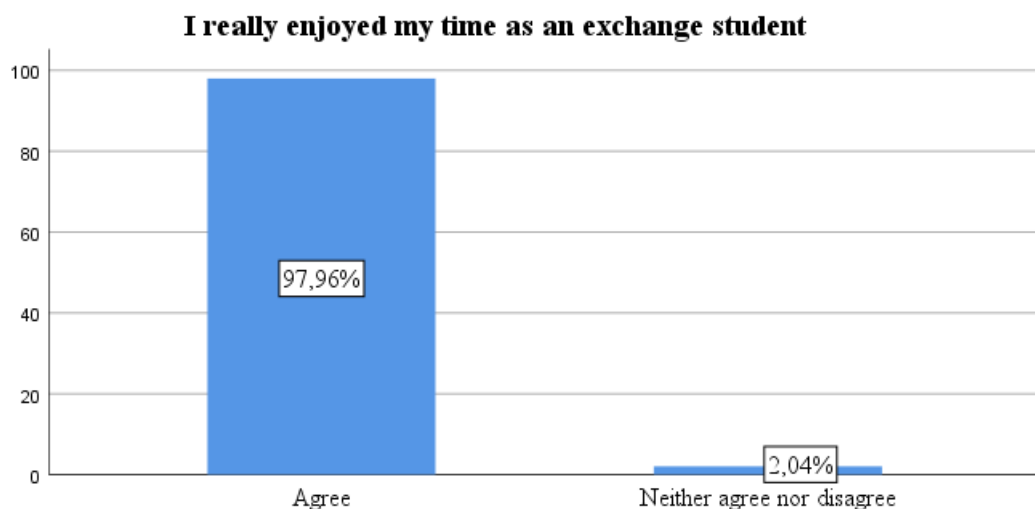
Table 5.20 The most negative aspects of the programme



5.1.14 Participants reflections about the programme

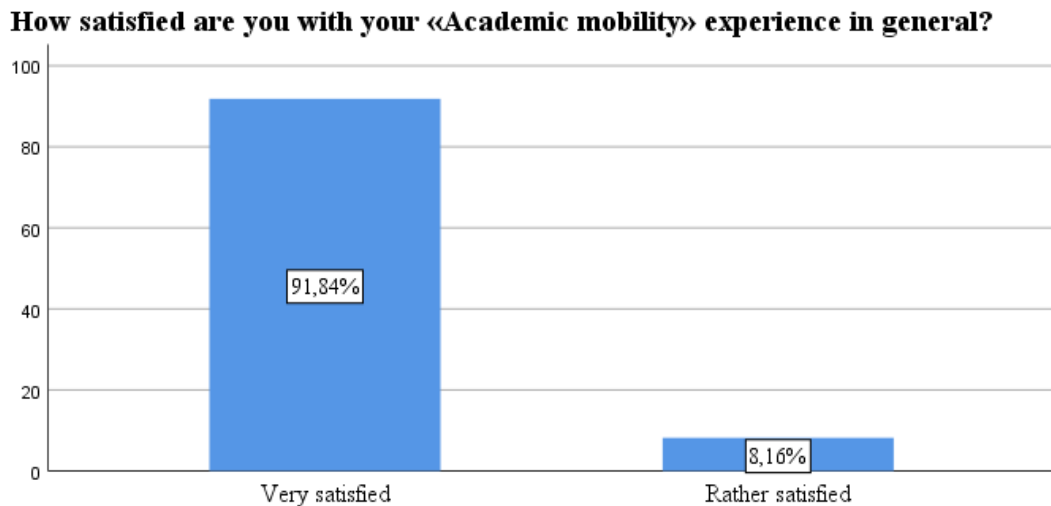
Overall, the participants assessed their study period abroad very positively. Figures 5.17 and 5.18 below show the students' reflections on the programme. Figure 5.17 shows that a very high percentage of participants (97.96%) stated that they had really enjoyed their study abroad time, and only a few students (2.04%) indicated that they neither agree nor disagreed in the responses.

Figure 5.17. Agreement with the statement “I really enjoyed my time as an exchange student”



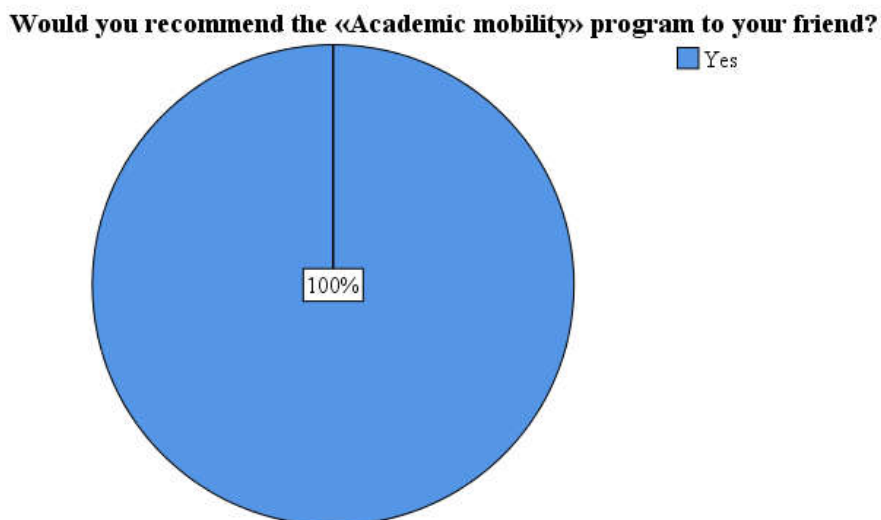
The participants' satisfaction rate can be seen in Figure 5.18, where 90 of the students (91.84%) expressed that they were very satisfied and only 8 students (8.16%) stated that they were only rather satisfied. The answers to quantitative question №4, «Are the participants satisfied with the study abroad experience? » showed that all of the students were generally satisfied with their study abroad period.

Figure 5.18. Agreement with the statement «How satisfied with «Academic mobility» experience in general?»



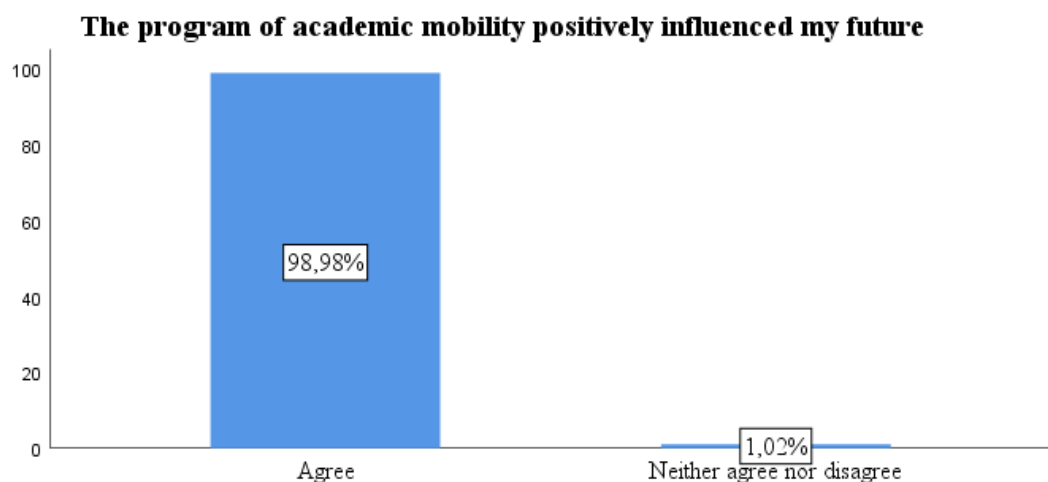
Overall, the data shows that participants highly appreciated their study abroad experiences and all of them had recommended the academic mobility experience to their friends, as shown in Figure 5.19.

Figure 5.19. Answer to the question “Would you recommend the «Academic mobility» programme to your friend?”



The participants were also asked to rate the influence of the programme on their future and 98.98% of the responses were very positive, while 1.02% neither agreed nor disagreed, or showed doubt about this. However, further research should be conducted in order to see what impact the programme actually has on the employability and future of the participants. The findings show that for most participants the academic mobility programme was seen as an opportunity and enabling experience.

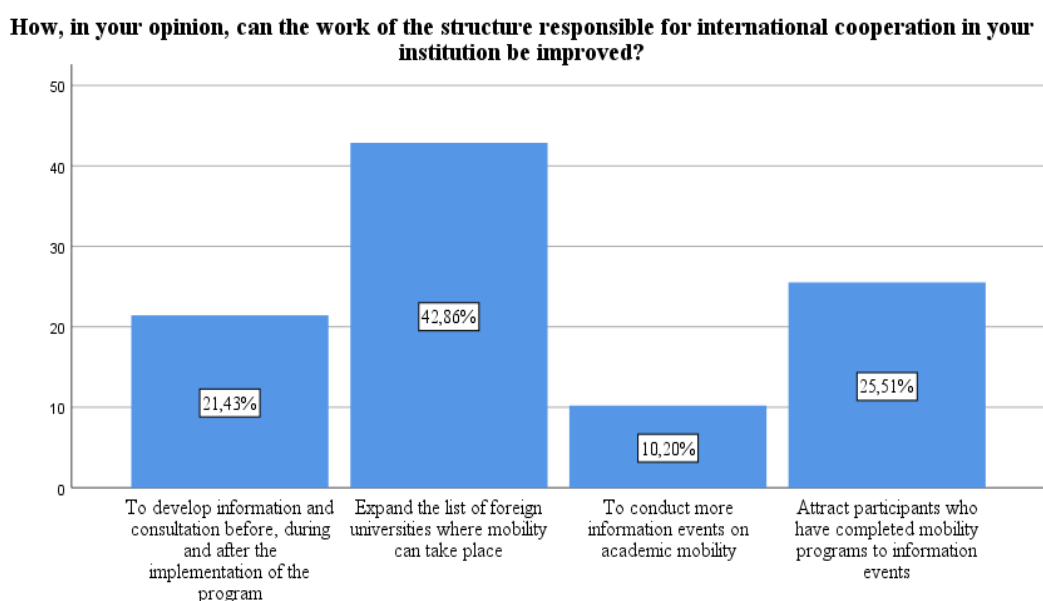
Figure 5.20. The influence of the programme to participants



5.1.15 Feedback about the programme

In order to obtain the students' view on the realisation of the programme at the regional university and how it might be improved in the future another important topic covered in the questionnaire was the students' view on the improvement of the work on the academic mobility programme at the regional university. Therefore, the question posed was, how, in your opinion, can the work of the unit responsible for international cooperation at the home university be improved?

Figure 5.21. Ways for improvement



The result shows (Figure 5.21) that, despite the good reviews of the programme in general, the regional university needs to do more work to improve the realisation of the programme, which will contribute to the further internationalisation of higher education in the region. Namely, it needs to expand the list of foreign partner universities (42.8%), taking into account the geopolitical position of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and refer to the experience of not only the West, but also countries in the East; it needs to attract ex-participants of the programme (25.51%) to information events, so that they can promote the ideas of the academic mobility programme through accessible means of communication (25.51%); it should systematise the information notification and support students in preparation for their participation in the programme as well as during and after the mobility (21.43%); and it should expand the format of events about the programme.

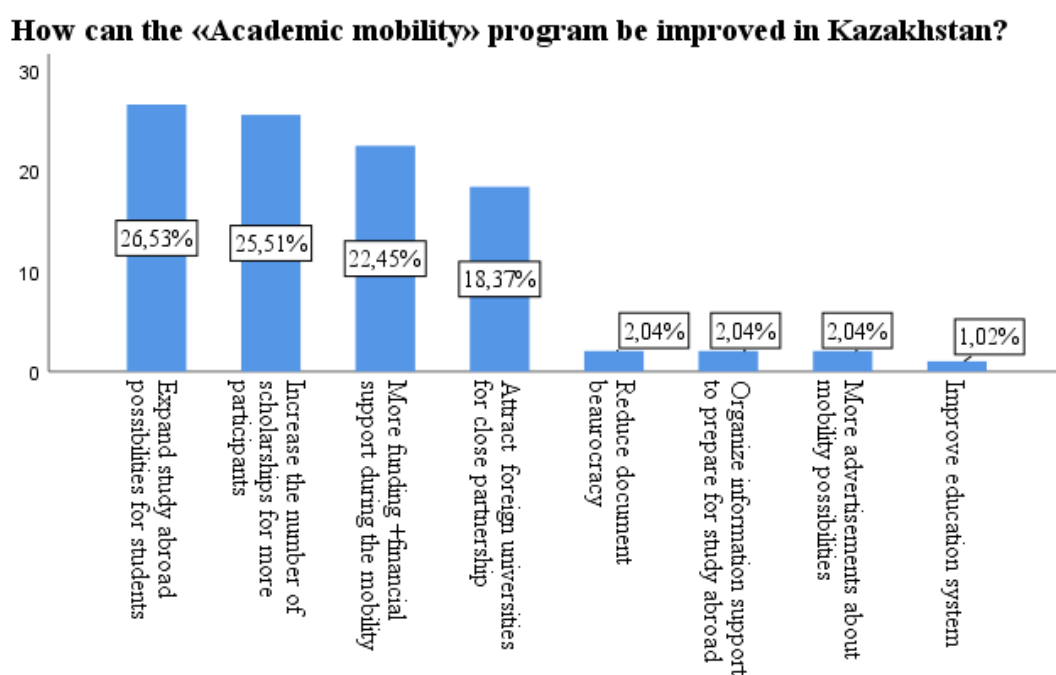
In addition, the questionnaire contained an open question related to the improvement of the programme in Kazakhstan; however, it seems that students' responses were related mostly to the university level, not the country. The responses to the question, «How can the «Academic mobility» programme be improved in Kazakhstan?» were coded and eight topics were found: attract foreign universities for close partnership; expand study abroad possibilities for students; increase the number of scholarships to attract more participants; create more advertisements about mobility possibilities; improve the education system; provide more funding/financial support during the mobility; organize information support to prepare students for study abroad; and reduce document beauro-

cracy; these are presented in Table 5.21. The statistics show that 26.5% of the participants indicated that there was a need for the expansion of study abroad possibilities for students, 25.5% stated that the number of scholarships should be increased to attract more participants and 22% highlighted the issue of funding and financial support during the mobility period.

Table 5.21 Improvement of the «Academic mobility» programme in Kazakhstan

How can the «Academic mobility» programme be improved in Kazakhstan?				
	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Attract foreign universities for close partnership	18	18,4	18,4	18,4
Expand study abroad possibilities for students	26	26,5	26,5	44,9
Improve education system	1	1,0	1,0	45,9
Increase the number of scholarships to attract more participants	25	25,5	25,5	71,4
Create more advertisements about mobility possibilities	2	2,0	2,0	73,5
Provide more funding/financial support during the mobility	22	22,4	22,4	95,9
Organize information support to prepare students for study abroad	2	2,0	2,0	98,0
Reduce document bureaucracy	2	2,0	2,0	100,0
Total	98	100,0	100,0	

Figure 5.22. How can the programme be improved?



5.2 Qualitative data findings

In addition to the questionnaire, ten students, six of whom were Master's level and the other four Bachelor level, were interviewed once they had returned from their international experience. During these interviews the respondents were asked to talk in detail about the studied topic. The qualitative data were then analysed using thematic analysis and the following five themes emerged: higher education internationalisation, academic mobility programme's contribution to internationalisation, motivations for participation, added-value from the programme and evaluation of the programme at the regional university.

5.2.1 Higher education internationalisation

In order to obtain the results for the qualitative question №1 «What are the links between the «Academic mobility» programme and the internationalisation process?», the first question in the interview touched on the topic of internationalisation, so that students could discuss this in their own words. Participants' responses included such phrases as student and teaching staff exchange, academic mobility, the process of introducing new teaching methods, high level of education, educational development, globalisation, knowledge exchange and communication with foreign universities. Some respondents gave a full description of the term, for instance:

Participant N 2:

“For me, the term “internationalisation” in the context of higher education means the exchange of cultural values, knowledge, skills, and skills in a particular field of activity, which subsequently leads to a positive modernisation of world society as a whole”.

Internationalisation was understood in relation to the context of education quality by participant N4:

“Internationalisation is one of the important indicators of the quality of higher education; in order to attract foreign students, a university must have a certain set of criteria that meet international standards. Academic mobility, as part of internationalisation, also improves the educational level of students”.

According to participant N9, the term internationalisation is defined in relation to the number of foreign students and staff members, which will lead to an increase in education quality:

“Internationalisation of higher education is a process of increasing the accessibility of high-quality higher education by attracting foreign students to the university, developing and using foreign languages in the educational process, attracting popular teachers from top international universities, etc”.

Participant N6 thought that it was important for the university to be international in order to keep its position in the rankings:

“Our University is in the top 5 in the country, and now it is the desire of all universities to develop in international directions. So, I believe that by being open to other countries and new cooperation, realising exchange programmes it is always possible to keep the university position”.

As seen above, no single definition of internationalisation was agreed on by the different participants. This is not surprising, as even in the literature review it was found that various definitions of internationalization were given by different scholars. Underlying the participants' views may be differences in individuals' worldviews. However, during the interviews, most of the participants noted that student exchange is a word that is closely related to the process of internationalisation. The results showed that all of the participants were familiar with the term internationalisation and could fully define their vision of this topic and characterise its relationship with, and role in the higher education system.

5.2.2 Academic mobility programme`s contribution to internationalisation

Responses were received to the question, "How can the Academic Mobility programme contribute to the internationalisation process?" that reflected a positive impact of internationalisation:

According to participant N2:

“The Academic Mobility programme fully and completely contributes to the internationalisation process, as students exchange is not only knowledge, but also the intercultural values of each country. As students during study can share cultural experiences”.

Participant N4:*“I believe the Academic Mobility programme will have a positive effect on internationalisation, as student exchange leads to cultural exchange and the development of relations between countries”.*

Participant N1 thought that the number of international students contributed to the internationalisation process, believed that the university had all possibilities to be international and stated some possible solutions to attract more international students:

“I understand it as attracting foreign students or for international research. I think, of course, it is possible to develop this in our university, we have a good enough university to attract foreign students to study, we still have students from different countries and we can easily invite others to study with us. Of course, if they provide a grant and housing or a good scholarship. I was pleasantly surprised that our university cooperates with excellent foreign universities, and using this it would be possible to allocate grants to each foreign university, 2 or 3 grants per year, so that they can learn the great Kazakh culture and of course the beautiful nature of our land.”

From the interviews it was seen that most of the participants saw student exchanges and the academic mobility programme as key activities that might lead directly to the process of university internationalisation. Through these processes the education system changes and the university makes steps towards improving the quality of its education by inviting foreign scholars and attracting international students. This topic was covered by the quantitative data as well; the majority (93.9%) of the participants (92) agreed with the statement that «the programme of academic mobility is one of the main parameters of the internationalisation of university education» and only 6.1%, (6 students) expressed difficulty giving an answer regarding this statement.

5.2.3 Motivations for participation

The question, "What are students' main motives for participation in the «Academic mobility programme»?" was used to find out what had motivated the students to undertake the mobility programme. In the questionnaires, the participants identified their main motives for participating in the programme. The qualitative research also aimed to identify students' main reasons for participating in the programme. This topic was also covered in the interview, where the participants revealed more deeply their main motives for participating in the programme. When asked about their motives for participation in the academic mobility programme, students indicated that personal motives, together with academic and professional development were the major driving forces; others included gaining new knowledge, experiencing anew education system, knowing what it is like to live abroad for some period of time, being away from home, meeting other people, getting to know other cultures, travelling, seeing other countries and gaining new experiences. Many of the respondents wished to get acquainted with an international educational system.

For instance, participant N2 noted that:

“The main motivation for participating in this programme is the opportunity not only to get an indelible experience of gaining knowledge in one of the best universities in the European Union, but also to have a chance to get acquainted with the culture of the Schengen countries. The above not only broadens a person's horizons, but also contributes to the development of critical thinking skills.”

Participant N1 also talked about gaining knowledge and life experience:

“For me, firstly, it was important to get high-quality knowledge, improve skills in English, see the general education of a foreign university. I believe that every student should use such a wonderful chance in their development, as well as those who want and love to learn about foreign culture. This is a huge experience in life, and it can turn out to be a big plus in the future.”

Students wanted to live outside of their own country and have new cultural experiences while at the same time improving their linguistic skills. Participant N7 stated that he had several motives:

“I had a firm decision to participate in the academic mobility programme for several reasons. First, I saw in this a great opportunity to go abroad and live outside my country, that is, to “get out of the comfort zone” and study another culture, meet people from different countries. Second, since I was already studying a foreign language, for me it was an opportunity to get into a real situation and practice speaking skills with native speakers. Thirdly, it was very interesting for me to get acquainted with the education system in other countries and to improve my professional knowledge and skills.”

Participant N6 commented:

“Do you want to visit another country and have a unique learning experience? Then, do not sit just like that; achieve your goals, use the Academic Mobility programme”.

During the interviews, the participants noted such motivations as gaining knowledge and skills at a foreign university, improving their foreign language skills, cultural enrichment, and travel and intercultural communication; all of the mentioned areas were included in the questionnaire. It is important to note that the results of the qualitative

analysis also confirm the results of the statistical analysis, where the interviewees identified that their main motivation was to obtain knowledge/education and skills at a foreign university.

5.2.4 Added-value from the programme

The qualitative research question №4 was stated «What advantages can students obtain by participating in the «Academic mobility» programme?». It is expected that this study abroad experience will have a positive impact on the personal development of the participants and in particular on their intercultural understanding and foreign language proficiency, as well as their academic development. Therefore, the interview also covered added-value from the programme and below are the responses given by the participants to the question, “What have you achieved from participation in the programme?”

Table 5.22 Added-value from the programme

Participant N	Responses
P1	It was one huge step into a brighter future, so to speak, because I got acquainted with the wonderful culture of historical Spain, made friends with friendly Spaniards. Exchange of experience and knowledge in their field of specialty.
P2	I received a huge store of knowledge not only as a specialist in my field, but also learned how to communicate with people from different parts of the world, and also overcame the language barrier and manage my daily problems by myself.
P3	Got tremendous experience, mastered new skills, learned a lot.
P4	The invaluable experience, I visited the cultural and historical sights of many European countries, the revision of views on European values, friends from around the world.
P5	Unforgettable experience and gained invaluable learning and communication experience and improved my English accordingly.
P6	Improved English, found new friends from different countries, got a huge amount of impressions
P7	Thanks to my participation in the Academic Mobility programme, I developed a love for travel. Perhaps now I can adapt to any situation in life. I also fully mastered the European education system and was surprised at how, depending on the country, and what is taught in your specialty (in my case, Cultural studies).
P8	I improved my language skills, got acquainted with the European culture and education system, and also adequately represented our country and culture. New friends from around the world.
P9	Participation in the academic mobility programme allowed me to expand my own horizons, to meet other people with cultural differences from all over the world and to realize that there is another world and another life to which I need to strive for.

P10	Got international experience. I expanded my knowledge. Practice of English. I met great guys, looked at the European education system from the inside and I think it will help me in the future to bring them to our society.
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The responses given in the interviews (Table 5.22) illustrate that for the vast majority of the participants the experience of the academic mobility programme greatly exceeded their expectations and enabled them to learn a lot. The participants noted that due to their participation in the programme, many positive aspects had been achieved, including making new acquaintances, gaining knowledge, improving their language competence, broadening their horizons, and at the same time giving them an opportunity to travel. Participants also acknowledged that their study abroad had enabled them to grow on a personal level. These skills included: managing day-to-day activities, problem-solving in a new and unfamiliar cultural context, gaining communicative skills in diverse cross-cultural contexts, making them more open minded and gaining respect for other cultures. In addition, participants confirmed that they had made progress in their foreign languages. From the findings it is possible to conclude that competency approach to internationalisation offered by Knight & de Wit (1995), where the participants developed new skills, attitudes and gained knowledge, was also presented in the study. These results confirm that internationalisation in the form of academic mobility allows the formation of competencies that contribute to the personal, professional and cultural development of students. According to participants it was an unforgettable experience and during their studies every student has a chance to undertake this programme.

5.2.5 The evaluation of the academic mobility programme at the regional university

The fifth qualitative research question stated as «How can the «Academic mobility» programme be improved at the regional university?». The evaluation of the academic mobility programme at the regional university is another important topic. Nine out of ten participants rated the academic mobility programme at the regional university 5 out of 5, and only one participant rated it 4. In order to get a clear picture of the programme from students' perspective, in addition to the evaluation, students were asked to give recommendations for the improvement of the programme. Some students thought that the level of the programme was high and there was no need for improvement:

“For the period of my academic mobility experience everything was perfect, from assistance in organizing the collection of documents and obtaining a visa to support during my studies”.

Another participant commented:

“I liked everything, they helped with the documents and, in general, gave the main advice, that is, how to do and what to do in Spain, what to avoid, because this was my first trip abroad”.

For example, participant N2 expressed:

“I believe that the programme "Academic mobility" at my university deserves the highest mark (5), since every student has the opportunity to participate in this programme, the main rule is to keep track of information updates on the official website of the university”.

However, some students also gave subjective opinions on improvements that could be made to the programme at the regional university. According to the responses three topics regarding improvement emerged from the responses: an increase in funding, increasing the number and geographical spread of partner universities and offering additional courses prior study for mobile students. The most commonly indicated recommendation from the students concerned increasing the scholarships for the mobility programme. For instance, participant N9 stated:

“It won't hurt to increase funding a little for academic mobility programme”.

More scholarships for the student mobility programme were also mentioned by participant N1. The expansion of new partners was another topic that was highlighted during the interviews. Participant N9 stated:

“I think it is possible to expand cooperation with new universities”.

Participant N8 also mentioned that, *“To improve the programme, I would suggest expanding the geography of universities”.*

As far as the evaluation of the programme is concerned, it might be concluded that there are still several points about the programme at the regional university that could be improved. Students expressed dissatisfaction about the number of scholarships for the mobility programme. Additionally, students mentioned the need to broaden the range of partner universities for the mobility programme. According to the participants, the existing package of information provision and supervision from the home university is always useful and all of the participants were positive about the programme. However, improved provision could stimulate more students to participate in the programme. Par-

ticipants indicated that they did not sufficiently prepare for their mobility abroad and they did not get a clear vision about the study conditions prior to departure. A few students mentioned that it might be useful to provide short courses before going abroad as solid preparation would generate an understanding and allow them to be prepared to live and study abroad. For instance, participant N10 stated that:

“The university can create a course where the guys would share their study abroad experience, learn and improve foreign language level”.

This means that there is also a need to organize courses before departure for all students who are planning their study abroad. On the other hand, students expressed that they would appreciate more contact with the home university while studying abroad. Being in contact with the home university helped them to solve some issues while studying abroad and students felt less left on their own and were sure that could get support from the home university.

5.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter the results of the quantitative and qualitative research of the study were presented. With the data analysis, the participants` main opinions on the academic mobility programme at the regional university were analysed. The findings presented add to the evidence base on the academic, personal and social experiences of mobile students from the regional university.

It is important to recognize that the findings from this study should not be generalized to a wider study as the focus was specifically on one Kazakhstani university and the sample size was not large either.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and implications of the study

6.1 Supporting theoretical literature

This study's findings reflect a number of characteristics of different theoretical works reviewed in Chapter 2 and throughout the study. HE internationalisation is becoming the subject of a targeted policy by the state in more countries, and the focus is on solving specific national political, social and even economic problems. In order to support the internationalisation process governments and HEIs are making great investments in this process. There is no doubt that the internationalisation process has radically altered the face of higher education worldwide. The Bologna process, which started in 1999 with the goal of creating a European Higher Education Area, even in the Kazakhstani context, has made considerable progress in harmonising university degree structures and increasing the compatibility of higher education systems. Universities also pay great attention to the internationalisation process. The regional university (ToU) studied for this research also promotes the internationalisation of the European Higher Education system. In order to be a part of the internationalisation process the country has made substantial changes to the HE system, which is an organisational change, as stated by Rudzki (1995). Later on Kazakhstan started to implement one of the main objectives of the BP – the academic mobility programme. In accordance with the State Education Development Programme of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 and for 2020-2025, the development of academic mobility as the main priority of the Bologna Declaration was defined by one of the target indicators. Last year Kazakhstan celebrated being part of the BP for 10 years. During this 10 year period the country has made some achievements in several aspects, which are indicated in Table 3.1. The analytical report on the implementation of the principles of the Bologna Process in the RK also confirms that the internationalisation and academic mobility indicators have been achieved. The Kazakhstani report on the realisation of the Bologna process objectives confirms that the academic mobility programme together with the internationalisation strategy are in force and can be seen as a way to achieve the internationalisation of higher education. The analysis of the country's HE system and the document analysis of the MoES confirm that Kazakhstan operates with a national approach (top-down) towards HE internationalisation (Knight, 2004). Firstly, the higher education system of Kazakhstan has adequately responded to accelerating the process of internationalisation through the use of a competency model in educational programmes, by enhancing student mobility pro-

grammes, and by developing multilingualism in accordance with world educational trends. Joining the BP triggered HEIs to use the process approach towards internationalisation (Knight & de Wit, 1995), where universities integrate international dimensions into the major functions of the university. Secondly, the Kazakhstani MoES encourages HE internationalisation through steering documents, has an active strategy for the internationalisation process and belongs to the category of countries where incoming and outgoing mobility is part of a national strategy.

Therefore, the internationalisation of higher education - bringing an international dimension to goal-setting and the implementation of the activities of universities – has clearly manifested itself as a global trend for many years and continues to gain strength at the international and national levels, as well as at the level of individual universities, and ToU is no exception. The international mobility of students for part of their degree programme forms an important component of universities' internationalisation strategies (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014). The student mobility programme has undergone considerable growth over the last thirty years (OECD, 2015). It is the most observable, vivid feature of the internationalisation of the Kazakhstani HE system and the programme has been supported since 2010 by the Ministry of Education and Science. For instance, between 2011 and the first half of 2019, 15,047 mobile students studied at a foreign university (MoES, 2019a).

This regional university, by realising the student academic mobility programme, which is one of the main objectives of the BP, uses an activity approach towards internationalisation (Knight & de Wit, 1995). The findings confirm that ToU sees the internationalisation process as a means of improving the quality of education, and an important factor in the vitality and prosperity of the university. Analysis of the regional university in terms of the realisation of the academic mobility programme and the participants' responses showed that it is possible to conclude that the studied university together with its activity approach uses a programme approach towards internationalisation, whereby the university, with the help of the MoES and different international programmes, provides the academic mobility programme to participate in international study activities. This confirms that on the national level the country operates with a programme approach towards internationalisation (Knight, 2004). For instance, Kazakhstan has a specific state budget for funding the academic mobility programme. Therefore, students'

mobility might be considered as a key component in the internationalisation strategy of the regional university.

The programme is considered as the most important one in relation to the internationalisation process. Valuable findings from this study suggest that students' academic mobility provides significant contributions to their individual, academic and institutional development. Apart from the effects on students, the academic mobility programme has an impact on international cooperation and strategic aspects of the university's internationalisation. During the interviews, the participants confirmed that the programme had made a valuable contribution to them and to the university. Overall, the impact of the academic mobility programme on students and the university is substantial at both the individual and institutional levels. Through the process the education system may change and the university will be able to make steps towards improving the quality of its education. It was seen that most all of the participants saw student exchanges and the academic mobility programme as a key activity that might lead directly to the process of university internationalisation.

In relation to the literature on the student mobility programme, the findings also reflect the added-value, motivations and perceptions of the programme that have been identified in the findings of other studies (Maiworn &Teichler, 1996, 2002, Krzaklewska, 2008, Maratova et al., 2019, Kehm, 2005, Paunescu, 2009, Mizikaci & Arslan, 2019 and etc.). This suggests that, despite the culture and the unique environment of the HE sector in Kazakhstan, students' opinions, views and perceptions regarding the realisation of the programme are similar to those of students in other countries around the world.

6.2 Main Findings and Recommendations

The study involved 98 students, participants of the academic mobility program of a regional university in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Ninety-eight students, of whom 75 (76.5%) were Bachelor students and 23 (23.5%) were Masters students participated in this study. Examination of the education level of participants showed that students at Bachelor level were the largest group that used the mobility program. Of these, 32 (33.7%) were male and 66 (67.3%) were female. Examination of the gender demographic data revealed that female participation was higher in the study. The students were aged between 17 and 32 and 67.3% of the students from Bachelor level were between 17-20 years old.

It can be concluded that the Kazakhstani MoES prioritises the student «Academic mobility» programme as one of the main principles of the Bologna process, where the majority of students (71 (72.4%)) had state budget funding to participate in the programme, 22 students (22.4%) used foreign educational programmes and only 5 (5,1%) students were self-funded. Overall there were 10 destination countries where students studied. Poland (40.82%) and the Czech Republic (28.57%) host very high shares of mobile students from regional university. The countries with the lowest shared of mobile students from the regional university are Germany (1.02%), Greece (1.02%), China (1.02%) and Austria (1.02%).

Students from nine fields of study took part in the programme. The top five fields of study among all of the mobile students were engineering science and technology (32.65%), followed by education and natural sciences, which occupied the second and third places with only marginal differences per student group, representing 18.37% to 17.35%. Social sciences, economics and business (12.24%) came fourth and humanitarian sciences (10.20%) fifth. Services, Arts, Law and Agricultural sciences showed much lower representation rates of below 5%.

The main findings from quantitative research questions are shortly indicated below. The process of realisation of the programme seems in appropriate way in compliance with all requirements for the selection of programme participants. 100% of the students reported that the conditions for participation are fair, transparent and available and all of the participants reported that they had received full support from ToU before their study abroad period. This findings answered the first quantitative research question: «Are the conditions for participation in the academic mobility programme at Toraighyrov University in compliance with all requirements of the selection procedure?».

«Are the subjects taken by students useful and relevant to the education fields of participants?» asked in the quantitative question №2. The data obtained revealed that 88.78% (87) of the participants confirmed the usefulness and correspondence of the courses taken; however, 11.22% (11) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, showing doubt and uncertainty about the statement. The data show that harmonisation of the curricula is the main objective of the exchange programme and the participants confirmed that the subjects taken were useful and relevant to their field of study. Participants' responses showed that 96 (98%) stated that all of the chosen courses corresponded to their study curriculum and individual study plan. Bucharest communiqué high-

lights the importance of removing obstacles to students' mobility. Recognition of ECTS was the most important aspect of the organisational framework with regard to students' academic mobility and full recognition of credits is a common practice at Toraighyrov University. However, there is still a minor barrier related to the general standard of education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which is that there are subjects in the compulsory component that it is not possible to study at a foreign university.

Quantitative research question №3 asked, «Is there a difference in the quality of education between the sending and receiving universities according to the students' opinion?». It is important to highlight that the issue of education quality is not easy to define and quality might mean 'different things to different people'. 49% of the students agreed that foreign universities offer high quality education. However, almost 41% of the students seemed unable to properly evaluate the education quality or compare the host and home universities. Thus, the findings of the study cover the subjective views of the participants on education quality, which might not be able to be generalised.

The participants' reflection about the programme was a valuable finding in this study. The answers to quantitative question №4, «Are the participants satisfied with the study abroad experience? » showed that all of the students were generally satisfied with their study abroad period. Overall, the participants' satisfaction rate was very high, where 90 of the students (91.84%) expressed that they were very satisfied and only 8 students (8.16%) stated that they were only rather satisfied. The overall impression from the participants indicated that the academic mobility programme period was a positive and enjoyable experience full of bright moments. Participants were pleased with the study abroad experience received at the foreign universities and with the development of new skills. The findings presented add to the evidence base on the academic, personal and even social experiences of participants from the regional university.

The quantitative research hypothesis with the qualitative research questions of the study led to the following findings that were divided by topics accordingly.

Topic 1 Degree of expectations from the «Academic mobility» programme and the degree of achievement of those expectations after participation

According to the findings, before the mobility the students generally appeared to have high expectations of their study abroad and expressed very positive expectations about all four of the topics covered, i.e. adaptation, communication with teachers, quality of

the education received and personal growth. The findings showed that students opinions concerning the topics on quality of the education received and personal growth were the same in the before mobility and after the participation in the programme. However, the findings showed some discrepancies in the expectations and realities of students in two topics concerning the adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment and communication problems with teachers during studies at a foreign university. A paired *t*-test also revealed that the expectations and realities concerning covered topics were different. In hypothesis 1 it was predicted that the degree of expectations from the «Academic mobility» programme and the degree of achievement of those expectations after participation in the programme among the participants will be different. The null hypothesis of no statistical difference in the degree of expectations from the programme and the degree of achievements of expectations after participation in the programme was rejected. Therefore, the data confirms that there is a statistical difference in terms of the degree of expectation from the «Academic mobility» programme and the degree of achievement of the expectations after participation in the programme among the participants. From the findings the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the findings confirm Hypothesis 1 stating that the degree of expectations of the students before their mobility period are higher than the degree of achievement of those expectations after participation in the students` academic mobility programme at the regional university.

Topic 2 Active participants in different fields of study

Students from nine fields of study took part in the study. The top five fields of study among all of the mobile students were engineering science and technology (32.65%), followed by education and natural sciences, which occupied the second and third places with only marginal differences per student group, representing 18.37% to 17.35%. Social sciences, economics and business (12.24%) came fourth and humanitarian sciences (10.20%) fifth. Services, Arts, Law and Agricultural sciences showed much lower representation rates of below 5%. However, in order to see the whole situation we took into account the total numbers of students on each field and calculated it to the number of the participants on the programme, it was obvious that students in humanitarian sciences and education are more active (2.22%), compared to engineering science and technology (0.30%).

It was important to find active participants in the programme at the regional university. Thus, hypothesis 2 stated that: Students in the humanitarian and education fields are

more active in their participation in the programme due to their foreign (English) language competences than students in the engineering science and technology field.

Active participants in different fields of study at the regional university were confirmed by the Mann-Whitney U criterion. The result confirmed the activeness of participation of students of the humanitarian sciences and education differs from the activeness of participation of students of engineering science and technology fields in the studied programme by rejecting null hypothesis (H_2o). Consequently, the analysis confirms that there is a statistical difference in the students' activeness in participation in the programme between the group of students in the humanitarian sciences/ education fields and the group of students in engineering science and technology due to the knowledge of foreign language competences, confirming that knowledge of a foreign language is one of the core requirements for participation in the programme at the regional university.

Topic 3 Main motivation factors

The next important issue covered in the study was to find out the main motivation factors of the participants in the programme. The study covered four areas in motivation, such as the academic, linguistic, cultural and personal. The calculations obtained from the statistical analysis of the questionnaires allowed to determine that the main motives of students for participating in the academic mobility programme, where the priority position is to receive education in a foreign university through experiencing different learning and teaching practices, comprising 98.0%, in the second position is improving the level of English - 88.8%, in the third position is acquaintance with new foreign friends - 66.3% and in the fourth position is traveling -60.2%. According to the findings academic area was in the first position in comparison to the other three motives. The result of comparing the mean values using the *t*-test is assessed to the level of significance. Even though there are some differences in means between BA and MA students on the stated motivations, it is not possible to generalise to all participants of the programme. Statistically the means are not significantly different. The travelling motive scored considerably lower, and therefore the study shows that there is no statistical difference in the number of participants between BA and MA students who indicated that travel was the main motivation for their participation in the programme, which contradicts hypothesis 3, where it was predicted that a significant number of students would highlight that the main motivating factor would be an opportunity to travel to the moti-

vation of receiving education at a foreign university through experiencing different learning and teaching practices.

The topic of motivations was further developed in the qualitative part of the research. The findings of the qualitative and quantitative study show that such motivations as gaining knowledge and skills at a foreign university, improving a foreign language, cultural enrichment, travel and intercultural communication were among those mentioned the most by the participants. The results of the qualitative analysis also confirm the results of the statistical analysis, where the interviewees identified the main motivation for obtaining knowledge/education and skills at a foreign university.

Topic 4 Added-value of the «Academic mobility» programme

The academic mobility programme creates conditions for the growth of the participants. Regional university students' opinion on what they had gained from the programme was another important topic. The findings related to the impact on academic performance, language skills improvement and social and communication skills were highly indicated results of the programme. The research data showed that studying abroad, along with improving language skills and academic performance, leads to a significant increase in the social and communication skills of the participants. According to the findings the participants mostly indicated that the programme had increased their social and communication skills. 84.69% stated that the programme had contributed to language improvement and 80.61% stated that it had contributed to their academic achievement. In hypothesis 4 it was assumed that a mobility period abroad leads to a more significant increase in social and communication skills compared to the language improvement or academic performance among the BA and MA participants. The Mann-Whitney U criterion was done by comparing the level of education and the results show that there are no statistical differences on added-value between BA and MA students from the programme. The statistical data contradicts hypothesis 4 of this study, and alternative hypothesis (H_{4A}) was rejected, where it was assumed that a mobility period abroad leads to a more significant increase in social and communication skills compared to the language improvement or academic performance among the BA and MA students.

The academic mobility programme creates conditions for the personal growth of participants, and the research data confirmed that studying abroad, along with improving language skills and academic performance, also, leads to a significant increase in the social

and communication skills of the participants. In addition, the qualitative research question №4 was «What advantages can students obtain by participating in the «Academic mobility» programme?». The findings showed that foreign language acquisition and the development of social and communication skills were among the most commonly stated personal outcomes of the student academic mobility programme; 87.76% of the students mostly indicated that there had been an increase in their social and communication skills, 84.69% stated that it had led to language improvement and 80.61% stated that it had helped with their academic achievement. The outcome in terms of academic matters was also positive on average. This proves that by improving social and communication skills, by communicating with foreign students from different countries, language skills are simultaneously improved.

The academic mobility programme results in an important change at participants' personal level. Through internationalisation, universities deliver graduates who are open and respectful towards other cultures and ideas, and who have knowledge in their field on an international level. Students who use a mobility period abroad can be seen as a valuable group of people who can contribute to higher education internationalisation. In the interviews, students commented that participants can contribute to the internationalisation process. Social and intercultural interactions bring about personal development that is likely to make mobile students the future change agents in the regional university and probably increase the internationalisation aspect of the university, which has been a core strategic mission of the university since it became part of the BP. Therefore, the results of the study correspond to the findings of international scholars, whereby study abroad experiences are more about individual or personal, cultural and social development (Maratova et al., 2019, Kehm, 2005, Paunescu, 2009, Mizikaci & Arslan, 2019).

To conclude, the findings of the research revealed how the programme is realised and the ways in which the programme could be improved were also highlighted by the participants. The findings established that the internationalisation process is within the discourse on students' mobility. It was important to find out how students experience the academic mobility programme at the regional university, in particular in relation to the internationalisation process. There was broad agreement among the participants that the academic mobility programme follows all of the parameters and conditions set by the regulations. The study confirms that the student academic mobility programme – one of the main parameters of the BP - is a key activity that leads directly to the process of

university internationalisation. 93.9% of the participants agreed with the statement that the programme of academic mobility is one of the main parameters of the internationalisation of university education. Most of the participants noted that student exchange is a term that is closely related to the process of internationalisation. Therefore, in order to improve the strategic management system processes in the realisation of the academic mobility programme as the main factor for the university internationalisation process it seems appropriate to adopt a set of measures that will be relevant to improve the students' academic mobility, its management experience and the development of higher education at the studied university. The study identifies numerous recommendations as to how the findings might be used to enhance and improve the realisation of the students' academic mobility programme and allows for formulating recommendations for the improvement of the programme at the regional university. From the findings three topics for the improvement emerged; an increase in funding, expansion of the geography of partner universities and offering additional courses prior to their study abroad period for mobile students. Therefore, firstly, there is a need to develop a preparation course for the participants to support them prior to the academic mobility programme. The participant interviews confirmed the importance of a course to prepare them for living abroad and the study abroad conditions that await them. These courses could form the basis of the academic mobility programme at the regional university and enable the home university to inform participants beforehand on what is expected during their study abroad. Secondly, the university needs to expand its partner countries, so that students have chance to choose from a broad list of partners. However, there is also a limitation from the MoES, as there are priority countries where the mobile students can go to study with state budget. The regional university could offer some international programmes and there is a need to find new programmes, so that not only wait a state budget for the mobility programme. It is also recommended that organisations should be found that can cover all of the expenses of the student mobility programme and after graduation the students could be employed at the organisation and bring some positive influence into the organisation's work. This solution would also cover the third topic of the recommendations, which is the need for increased funding for the mobility programme. In addition, in the qualitative study, some participants stated that the bureaucracy surrounding the academic mobility programme could be improved. As long as the programme includes financial issues, it might be a challenge to decrease the bureaucracy as the money spent needs to be appropriate for its purpose and it is necessary to

comply with the requirements and conditions of the organisation from which the funding comes for the implementation of this programme.

The existing national and institutional differences in terms of internationalisation are constantly changing, as are the differences between approaches to internationalisation used in different universities. At Toraighyrov University the outgoing mobility rates are below 5% (close to 1% or less than 1%) of the total student population and the target of 20% seems unreachable for the set year. The year 2020, with the pandemic, brought some new challenges to the internationalisation process all over the world and impacted on the realisation of the student academic mobility programme. For, instance, the Kazakhstani MoES set some regulations concerning all travel abroad. The MoES put restrictions on all study abroad and students were only allowed to use an online mode of study as part of the academic mobility programme, which led to a decrease in the number of students undertaking the programme. In addition, in the EC, the EU Erasmus+ programme also underwent some changes; student mobilities were cancelled or postponed. All of these issues caused additional barriers to the student academic mobility programme.

Internationalisation is becoming part of higher education and its development strategies. Therefore, it might be concluded that there is no universal model of internationalisation, as every HEI might develop its own model depending on its demands and even possibilities. After the analysis of the study, it is possible to propose a discourse for the academic mobility programme at the ToU (Table 6.1) in the context of the internationalisation of higher education.

Table 6.1. Discourse of the academic mobility programme in the context of the internationalisation of higher education at ToU

Aim	Realisation of the academic mobility programme and internationalisation process
Used approaches of Internationalisation	Programme and activity approaches by Knight & de Wit (1995)
Participants	Students of various fields of study
Motivation factors of participants	-receive education in a foreign university through experiencing different learning and teaching practices; -improvement of foreign language level; -travelling.
Added-value of the	<i>Participants:</i>

programme for:	-improvement of language competences; -development of social and communication skills; -academic achievement; -personal development.
	<i>HEI:</i>
	- improvement of internationalisation process by means of academic mobility programme; - upbringing and training of personality based on universal values; - prepare specialists who are ready to work in an international environment.
Results	Ways of improvement: -increase in funding; -expansion of geography of partner universities; -offering additional courses prior study for mobile students.

6.3 Implications for the Kazakhstani higher education system and significance of the study

The impact of internationalisation on Kazakhstan's HE system is related to the ideas of cooperation and competition, which are indicated in the State Programme of Educational Development for 2020-2025. The study shows that integration into the EHEA was the government's idea, and therefore, the State programme of education development for 2020-2025 aims at increasing the global competitiveness of Kazakhstani education and science, and education and training of the individual based on common human values. The academic mobility programme could facilitate the achievement of the stated goal. Therefore, if the government and HEI want to contribute to the achievement of this goal, they could choose to invest in additional funding, which is needed in order to stimulate the country's HEIs to achieve the goal.

These research findings contribute to the body of international research that defines, recognises and quantifies the benefits that the academic mobility programme and international education bring to the participants. The key contributions of this research lie in the students' perceptions of the mobility experiences, an area that is relatively unexplored in Kazakhstan HEI to date. It seems appropriate to mention that the further development of the student academic mobility programme has favourable prospects in terms of the personal development of students, the expansion of professional and cultural competence, and opportunities for their good employment, and for increasing the competitiveness of universities in Kazakhstan (Maratova et al., 2019).

The participants' opinions on the realisation of the academic mobility programme and its impact on the internationalisation process that have been identified in this study should be valuable for the university and the MoES. The significance of the research is that the case study on the perceptions of the realisation of the programme towards the internationalisation process is being presented for the first time. It could be helpful for the improvement and development not only of ToU but also other HEIs in the country, as the challenges and perceptions regarding the programme's realisation may be similar in other HEIs in Kazakhstan. In addition, the MoES and administrative staff of the university and other HEIs in Kazakhstan could gain some useful information in order to further improve the realisation of the mobility programme as one of the objectives of the Bologna Process. Finally, the study could serve as information for other researchers interested in similar topics.

6.4 Limitations and Possibilities for future research

There were certain limitations of the study. Firstly, it is important to recognise that the findings from this research should not be generalised as the sample was small and the focus was specifically on students of a regional university. The study looked at individual participants, and the information is specific to each experience and the participants' vision about the programme. Therefore, it is not possible to make sweeping generalisations about the findings on the basis of the information provided by the participants. Secondly, the results of a case study might not be transferable to another university, as people, perceptions and settings vary so much. However, the aim of the study was to uncover the perceptions and experiences of a small number of people in depth as opposed to producing representative data. From the data, it was possible to examine the responses of the participants to look for common traits that may be helpful to other Kazakhsani HEIs. Thirdly, it was not possible to correlate the data from the findings of the study due to the limited number of participants.

This study raises a number of questions that are not fully addressed and there are issues surrounding some of the processes and conclusions that require further investigation. Therefore, the conclusions from this research and the limitations described above give rise to a number of particular areas for future research. Firstly, further studies are necessary to determine whether students at other HEIs have similar or different experiences and views about the programme's realisation and the impact of the programme. Second-

ly, it would have been interesting to extend the sample by including other stakeholders, such as teachers who participated in the academic mobility programme, and comparing their views about the realization of the programme and their perceptions about the programme and the university internationalisation process. This would have provided a wider sample and the possibility of drawing more definite conclusions. Thirdly, it would be interesting to compare mobile students with non-mobile students regarding their opinions about the internationalisation process and the academic mobility programme and to see how study abroad experiences make a difference to their understandings. Moreover, this study could be broadened by further research over the long term to see what impact the programme has had on the employability of the mobile students in the university studied.

A continuation of this study, including a larger sample of other stakeholders of HE, could measure the impact of the process on Kazakhstan's HE internationalisation process in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the approaches used by HEIs.

Conclusion

The study by analysing the students' academic mobility programme has attempted to analyse how internationalisation process is realised in national and institutional levels by an example of a regional university. The student academic mobility programme is introduced as the most evident factor for the higher education internationalisation process. As seen in the literature review the interest in academic mobility of students has arisen from the European Union policy - the Bologna Process. This study has attempted to examine and analyse how the student «Academic mobility» programme is realised and its impact on the internationalisation process, and to determine the prospects for development of the programme at a regional university in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Overview of the Kazakhstani context was covered and by analysing international documents and related literature on internationalisation process, the BP and the «Academic mobility» of students it can be stated that theoretical aims of the study were reached.

One of the empirical aims of the study was to explore how the programme influences the process of internationalisation at studied university. As seen in the study the country and ToU in particular use internationalisation process by integrating international and intercultural dimensions into the purpose, functions and delivery of HE in order to enhance the quality of education. The main conclusion is that Kazakhstani HEIs have been developed with an influence of internationalisation. The country's policy is focused on a knowledge based economy, the competitiveness of the country and human capital as a major force for the country's prosperity. "The role of the university is that of engine of economic growth of countries and regions, contributors to economic competitiveness of nations or suppliers of highly-qualified and well-trained workers for the new knowledge-driven economy" (Kwiek, 2004: 761). Therefore, HEIs need to prepare highly qualified, well-trained specialists based on universal values and prepare specialists who are ready to work in an international environment as well. By the realisation of the academic mobility programme, it is possible to state that studied ToU is preparing students with universal values.

The students' perceptions about the «Academic mobility» programme before and after their participation found out. Prior study abroad it was important to know about the realisation of the programme at ToU. As a result of the study all participants reported that the conditions for participation in the programme are fair, transparent and available at

the sending university and all of the participants reported that they had received full support from ToU before the study abroad preparation period. The process of realisation of the programme seems appropriate way in compliance with all requirements for the selection of programme participants at the regional university.

The findings showed that overall all participants were satisfied with the programme and study abroad experience is more about personal, cultural, social and professional development. The analysis of the case study suggests that mobile students who go to study to different countries might be seen as a generation who might develop higher education internationalisation. By these findings the second and the third empirical aims of the study were reached.

It is important to mention that the academic mobility programme and system of higher education at the regional university are developing in line with global trends, including the internationalisation process, by realising the student academic mobility programme. ToU sees the student academic mobility programme as a factor that facilitates the university's internationalisation process. Thus, their experiences have been found and the recommendations given by the students for the improvement of the programme at the regional University could influence and be a trigger for further improvement of the programme at the regional university. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the aim of the study together with stated theoretical, empirical and practical aims were reached.

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Students Questionnaire before Mobility

Dear participant of the "Academic mobility of students" programme! The questionnaire is anonymous. Filling the form will take you no more than 10 minutes. We hope for your active participation!

Part A

Please choose the appropriate answer

1. Sex: Female Male
2. Your age: 17-20 21-24 25-28 29-32 33-36 37-40 41-44 45-48 49 and over
3. Level of education: - Bachelor - Master -PhD
4. Choose the field of study or indicate your specialty:

Education

Humanitarian sciences

Engineering science and technology

Natural Sciences

Social sciences, economics and business

Services

Law

Art

Agricultural sciences

5. Indicate the country of study in the host institution _____

6. Participation in the academic mobility programme:

First time Second time

7. What information resources did you use to find an appropriate mobility programme?

Official website of your university.

Official website of a foreign university.

Information came from the tutor or teacher.

Unit responsible for international cooperation in your institution.

Thematic seminars, meetings, sessions in your university.

Information bulletins of your university.

Other (specify) _____

Part B

8. Please choose the appropriate answer: Agree- A; Difficult to answer -DA; Disagree-DA

№		A	D	D
		tA	A	A
Realisation of the "Academic Mobility" programme at the Toraighyrov University				
1	The conditions for participation in the academic mobility programme are fair, transparent and available in the sending institution			
2	Educational achievements, the level of knowledge of a foreign language were the main conditions in passing the competition in the programme of academic mobility			
3	The number of selected subjects is determined by the educational curriculum and corresponds to individual study programme			
4	I received full support from the sending university when preparing the documents for study abroad and for getting visa			
5	The programme of academic mobility is one of the main parameters of the internationalisation of university education			
6	My level of English is sufficient to study at a foreign university			
Motivation for participation in the "Academic Mobility" programme is ...				
7	to receive education in a foreign university through experiencing different learning and teaching practices			
8	to travel			
9	to improve the level of English			
10	acquaintance with new foreign friends			
The expectations from the "Academic Mobility" programme				
11	Adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment will pass quickly and imperceptibly			
12	I will not have communication problems with teachers during my studies at a foreign university			
13	Participation in the programme of academic mobility will positively affect the quality of the education received			
14	The programme of academic mobility will promote personal growth			

Part C

9. Please rate the quality of training at the sending university on a 5-point scale, where "1" is very low, "2" is low, "3" is medium, "4" is high, and "5" is very high.

Assessment parameters	Scale				
	«1»	«2»	«3»	«4»	«5»
1 Quality of teaching courses					
1.1 mastery of explaining teaching material					
1.2 organization of independent work of students					
1.3 organization of independent work of students with a teacher					
1.4 availability of necessary equipment's					
1.5 availability of scientific and educational literature					
1.6 correspondence to the profile of training (specialty)					
2 Quality of control of educational achievements					
2.1 compliance of test tasks with the content of the course					
2.2 objectivity of the evaluation of educational achievements					
2.3 variety of forms of control of educational achievements					
2.4 organization of the final control of educational achievements					

3Quality of administrative and organizational maintenance					
3.1 receiving and issuing of relevant study documentation					
3.2 living conditions					
3.3 food service					
3.4 organization of leisure activities					
3.5 support measures (benefits for services, etc.)					

Thank you for your participation! ☺

Students Questionnaire after Mobility

Dear participant of the "Academic mobility of students" programme! The questionnaire is anonymous. Filling the form will take you no more than 15 minutes. We hope for your active participation!

Part A

Please choose the appropriate answer

1. Sex: Female Male
2. Your age: 17-20 21-24 25-28 29-32 33-36 37-40 41-44 45-48 49 and over
3. Level of education: - Bachelor - Master -PhD
4. Choose the field of study or indicate your specialty:

Education

Humanitarian sciences

Engineering science and technology

Natural Sciences

Social sciences, economics and business

Services

Law

Art

Agricultural sciences

5. Indicate the country of study in the host institution

6. At the expense of what financial means did you study within the «Academic mobility» programme?
 - For public funds (at the expense of the sending university).
 - At the expense of personal funds.
 - At the expense of a foreign university.
 - At the expense of the foreign educational programme, international scholarship.

Part B

7. Please choose the appropriate answer:
 Agree- A; Neither agree nor disagree-NAnD; Disagree-DA

№		A	NAnD	DA
1	The programme of academic mobility positively influenced my future			
2	The quality of education in the host university is higher than in my home (sending) university			
3	All studied subjects were useful and corresponded to my specialty			
4	Academic mobility contributes to the emergence of a versatile and harmoniously developed personality with a broad outlook and high intellectual potential, which strives for continuous education and self-education			
5	The programme "Academic mobility of students" positively affects all participants: sending and receiving universities, students, parents and society as a whole			
6	I really enjoyed my time as an exchange student			
7	Adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment passed quickly and imperceptibly			
8	I did not have communication problems with teachers during my studies at a foreign university			
9	Participation in the programme of academic mobility positively affected the quality of the education received			
10	The programme of academic mobility promoted to personal development			

8. Please choose the appropriate answer:

Little extent- LA; Moderate extent-ME; Great extent-GE

	LA	ME	GE
To what extent has the mobility period led to an increase of your academic performance?			
To what extent has the mobility period led to an increase of your foreign language skills?			
To what extent has the mobility led to an increase of your social and communication skills?			

9. Please choose the appropriate answer:

	Yes, fully	Yes, but partially	Not at all
Have the credits obtained in the host university covered the credits needed in your home university for the period of study you were abroad?			
Have all studied subjects and credits been accepted by the sending university?			
Have you received full support from the host university during study?			
Have you reached the main goal in participation the «Academic Mobility» programme?			

Part C

10. Please rate the quality of training at the receiving university on a 5-point scale, where "1" is very low, "2" is low, "3" is medium, "4" is high, and "5" is very high.

Assessment parameters	Scale				
	«1»	«2»	«3»	«4»	«5»
1 Quality of teaching courses					
1.1 mastery of explaining teaching material					
1.2 organization of independent work of students					
1.3 organization of independent work of students with a teacher					
1.4 availability of necessary equipment's					
1.5 availability of scientific and educational literature					
1.6 correspondence to the profile of training (specialty)					
2 Quality of control of educational achievements					
2.1 compliance of test tasks with the content of the course					
2.2 objectivity of the evaluation of educational achievements					
2.3 variety of forms of control of educational achievements					
2.4 organization of the final control of educational achievements					
3 Quality of administrative and organizational maintenance					
3.1 receiving and issuing of relevant study documentation					
3.2 living conditions					
3.3 food service					
3.4 organization of leisure activities					
3.5 support measures (benefits for services, etc.)					

Part D

11. How, in your opinion, can the work of the structure responsible for international cooperation in your institution be improved?

-To develop information and consultation before, during and after the implementation of the programme "Academic Mobility of Students".

- Expand the list of foreign universities where mobility can take place.

- To conduct more information events on academic mobility.

- Attract participants who have completed mobility programmes to information events

-Other (specify) _____

12. The «Academic mobility» programme gave me

13. Most 3 positive aspects of my mobility period were ...

14. Most 3 negative aspects of my mobility period were ...

15. How can the «Academic mobility» programme be improved in Kazakhstan?
(please leave a comment) _____ -

16. How satisfied are you with your «Academic mobility» experience in general?

Very satisfied

Rather satisfied

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Rather dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

17. Would you recommend the «Academic mobility» programme to your friend?

Thank you for your participation! ☺

The Interview Questions:

1. How do you understand the term "Internationalisation" in the context of higher education? Name a word or words that are associated with the word internationalisation.
2. For what purpose did you participate in the "Academic Mobility" programme? What were the main motivations for participating in this programme?
3. What did you get from the programme?
4. How do you think that the participants of the programme improve their level of knowledge of a foreign language during the mobility period?
5. How would you rate the "Academic Mobility" programme in the Toraighyrov University? Can you rate it, where 1 is low and 5 is high.
6. How might the "Academic Mobility" programme be improved at the Toraighyrov University?
7. Will the "Academic Mobility" programme contribute to the process of internationalisation?
8. How would you rate the level of internationalisation at Toraighyrov University? Can you rate it, where 1 is low and 5 is high.
9. Can you, as a student influence the process of internationalisation in Toraighyrov University? How? In what way?

Consent Form

I agree to take part in the above PhD dissertation research. I have had the project explained to me. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- be take part in the questionnaires
- be interviewed, led by the researcher
- allow the interview to be audio-taped

Data Protection

This information will be held and processed for the creation of a PhD Dissertation.

I understand that:

- Any information I provide is confidential and that no information that could lead to my identification will be disclosed in any reports on the project.
- No identifiable personal data will be published.
- Identifiable data will not be shared with any other organisation.
- Where my comments are quoted in the report my name will be changed to protect my identity from being made public.
- This information will be used only for the purpose set out in this statement and my consent is conditional on the researcher complying with their duties.

I agree to Kundyz Mukatayeva recording and processing this information about me.

Withdrawal from study

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.

Name: _____ Signature _____ Date: _____

Contact information:

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