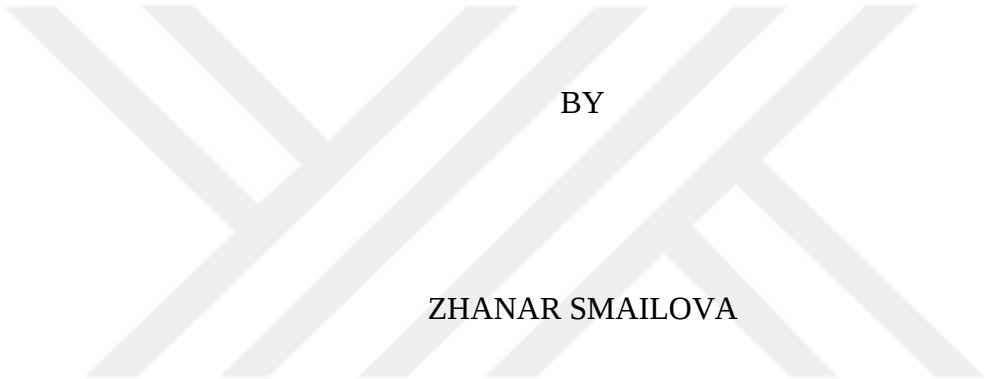


EXPLORING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF
INTERNATIONALIZATION:
SATISFACTION & LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS IN KAZAKHSTANI UNIVERSITIES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY



BY

ZHANAR SMAILOVA

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**EXPLORING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF
INTERNATIONALIZATION: SATISFACTION & LEARNING
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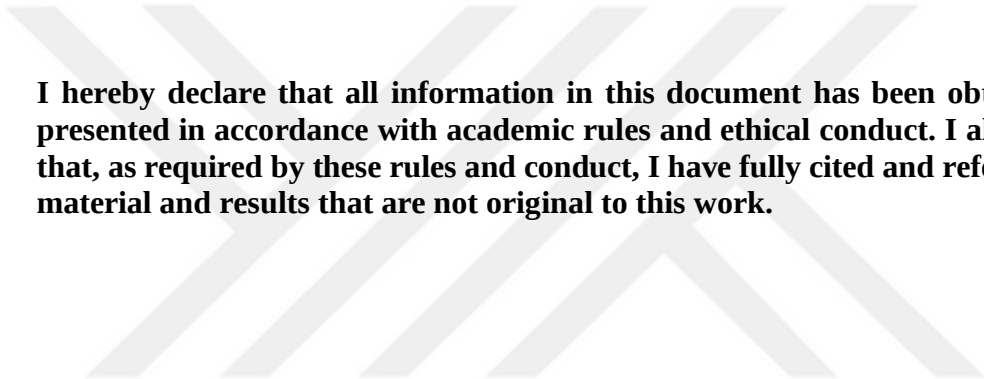
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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONALIZATION: SATISFACTION & LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN KAZAKHSTANI UNIVERSITIES

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Internationalization received great attention from researchers in the last three decades, but research on this topic and international student satisfaction particularly in Kazakhstan has received insufficient attention. Thus, the purpose of this study was to close this gap by exploring the satisfaction and learning experiences of international students in Kazakhstani universities in terms of quality of education. The HESQUAL model was applied as a theoretical framework to this study that includes administrative quality, physical environment quality, core educational quality and support facilities quality. To address the issue, 15 international students from 3 universities in the Nur-Sultan area were interviewed to identify factors of educational quality within the HESQUAL model that satisfy and dissatisfy participants as well as to reveal what factors need to be improved to enhance the educational quality of universities. The findings suggested that among all factors of educational quality academic dimension has the greatest impact on international student satisfaction while other factors also influence satisfaction to some extent. The results demonstrated that the language proficiency of academic and administrative staff needs to attract special attention from

university administration since language deficiency negatively affects international student satisfaction with the educational quality of universities. One more important issue was revealed in terms of course content and curriculum: despite the introduction of the system of elective courses at two universities, it does not work. So, the university administrators need to address the issues revealed in this study and also promote a high level of collaboration among different divisions to improve educational quality in Kazakhstani universities in terms of enhancing their competitiveness.

Keywords: Internationalization, Higher Education, Educational Quality, International Students Satisfaction, Learning Experiences

ÖZ

ULUSLARARASILEŞME BAĞLAMINDA EĞİTİM KALİTESİNİN İNCELENMESİ: KAZAKİSTAN ÜNİVERSİTELERİNDEKİ ULUSLARARASI ÖĞRENCİLERİN MEMNUNİYETİ VE ÖĞRENME DENEYİMLERİ

SMAILOVA, Zhanar

Yüksek Lisans, Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü

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Uluslararasılaşma son otuz yılda araştırmacılar tarafından büyük ilgi görmüş, ancak bu konudaki araştırmalar ve özellikle Kazakistan'da uluslararası öğrenci memnuniyeti yeterince ilgi görmemiştir. Bu nedenle, çalışmanın amacı, Kazakistan üniversitelerindeki uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim kalitesi açısından memnuniyetlerini ve öğrenme deneyimlerini anlamaktır. Yükseköğretimde eğitimin idari destek, fiziksel çevre, temel eğitim ve destek tesisleri kalitesi boyutları açısından incelenmesini içeren HESQUAL modeli teorik çerçeve olarak kullanılmıştır. Araştırma, Nur-Sultan bölgesindeki 3 üniversiteden 15 uluslararası öğrenciyle, HESQUAL modeline göre katılımcıları memnun eden ve tatmin etmeyen eğitim kalitesi faktörlerini belirlemek ve aynı zamanda eğitim kalitesini artırmak için hangi faktörlerin iyileştirilmesi gerektiğini ortaya çıkarmak için görüşülmüştür. Bulgular, eğitim kalitesinin tüm faktörleri arasında akademik boyutun uluslararası öğrenci memnuniyeti üzerinde en büyük etkiye sahip olduğu, diğer faktörlerin de memnuniyeti bir dereceye kadar etkilediğini göstermiştir. Sonuçlar, dil eksikliğinin üniversitelerin

eđitim kalitesi ile uluslararası öđrenci memnuniyetini olumsuz etkilediđi iin akademik ve idari personelin dil yeterliliđinin üniversite yönetiminden özel ilgi görmesi gerektiđini göstermiştir. Ders ieriđi ve müfredat aısından önemli bir problem daha ortaya ıktı: iki üniversitede seçmeli ders sistemi getirilmesine rađmen alışmıyor. Bu nedenle, üniversite yöneticilerinin bu alışmada ortaya konan sorunları ele almaları ve ayrıca Kazakistan üniversitelerinde rekabet edebilirliklerini artırma aısından eđitim kalitesini artırmak iin farklı bölümler arasında yüksek düzeyde bir iş birliđini teşvik etmeleri gerekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uluslararasılaşma, Yükseköđretim, Eđitim Kalitesi, Uluslararası Öđrenci Memnuniyeti, Öđrenme Deneyimleri



To My Kids

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ÖZ.....	vi
DEDICATION.....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	x
LIST OF TABLES.....	xiii
ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiv
CHAPTERS	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Background of the Study.....	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem.....	7
1.3. Purpose of the Study.....	9
1.4. Significance of the Study.....	9
1.5. Operational Definitions.....	10
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
2.1. The Conceptualization of Quality in HEIs.....	12
2.1.1. Educational Quality in HEIs.....	14
2.1.2. Educational Services Quality in Higher Education and Students' Satisfaction.....	15
2.2. Theoretical Framework.....	17
2.2.1. Models of Educational Quality.....	18
2.2.2. HESQUAL Model.....	20
2.3. Student Satisfaction.....	22
2.3.1. International Student Satisfaction.....	23
2.3.2. Factors Influencing International Students' Satisfaction.....	24
2.3.3. International Students in Kazakhstan.....	28

2.4. Summary.....	29
3. METHODOLOGY.....	31
3.1. Overall Research Design of the Study.....	31
3.2. Research Question.....	32
3.3. Research Participants.....	32
3.4. Data Collection Instrument.....	34
3.5. Data Collection Procedures.....	36
3.6. Data Analysis.....	37
3.7. Trustworthiness.....	38
3.8. Limitations of the Study.....	40
3.9. Researcher's Role.....	40
4. FINDINGS.....	44
4.1. General Satisfaction and Learning Experiences.....	45
4.1.1. Territorial and Historical Proximity.....	45
4.1.2. University Characteristics and Future Perspectives.....	46
4.2. Quality of Administrative Support at the University.....	47
4.2.1. Residence Permit and Visa Support.....	48
4.2.2. Communication Issues.....	49
4.2.3. Clearness of Administrative Processes.....	51
4.3. Academic Dimension Quality.....	52
4.3.1. Language Issues.....	53
4.3.2. Course Content, Structure and Challenging Study Program....	54
4.3.3. Distance Learning Period.....	57
4.4. Satisfaction with Support Facilities and Physical Environment Quality.....	59
4.5. Recommendations of the Students.....	61
4.6. Summary.....	62
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	64
5.1. General Satisfaction and Learning Experiences.....	64
5.2. Quality of Administrative Support at the University.....	66
5.3. Academic Dimension Quality.....	68

5.4. Satisfaction with Support Facilities and Physical Environment	
Quality.....	72
5.5. Implications, Suggestions and Conclusion.....	72
REFERENCES.....	77
APPENDICES	
A. INFORMED CONSENT FORM (ENGLISH).....	99
B. INFORMED CONSENT FORM (RUSSIAN).....	101
C. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (ENGLISH).....	103
D. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (RUSSIAN).....	107
E. ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL.....	112
F. CODING SAMPLE.....	113
G. TÜRKÇE ÖZET / TURKISH SUMMARY.....	117
H. TEZ İZİN FORMU / THESIS PERMISSION FORM.....	132

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Students' Characteristics.....	33
Table 2. Number of International Students.....	34
Table 3. Main Themes and Sub-themes Based on the Findings.....	44



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIS	The Commonwealth of Independent States
HedPERF	Higher Education Performance
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HESQUAL	Higher Education Service Quality
HiEdQUAL	Higher Education Service Quality
MOES	Ministry of Education and Science
NU	Nazarbayev University
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SERVPERF	Service Performance
SERVQUAL	Service Quality
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
TQM	Total Quality Management

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background and rationale of the study and gives information about the problem statement. It considers the importance of exploring international student satisfaction with educational quality as a way of internationalization process in Kazakhstani universities. After that, the purpose of the study is given with the research question. The significance of the study is explained through its contribution to the research field. Finally, definitions of the terms used in this study are explained.

1.1. Background of the Study

In recent decades, internationalization is becoming a significant phenomenon in higher education all over the world due to increasing integration of national economies that in turn entailed the increased demand for alumni with global perspectives and international skills and qualifications (OECD, 2012). It also brought rapid changes and developments in the educational field and determined its new trends (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Kondakci et al., 2016; OECD, 2012; de Wit & Altbach, 2020). Moreover, it influences the formation of strategies and policies at both national and institutional levels (OECD, 2012). These changes include increased cross-border education, massification, increase in student mobility, a diversified body of students, multiculturalism, marketization, increased expectancy for quality, and higher competition for a better pool of students and researchers (Gül et al, 2010; Polat, 2015). It needs to be emphasized that the process of internationalization is becoming an instrument that creates specific quality standards for the whole field of the higher education and also give a basis for operation of world ranking organizations (AUR, QS Star, WUR, Webometrics and other) (Komotar, 2018). Moreover, the national economies of the host countries make tangible profits from internationalization that

contributes to the development of their economies, education, and innovation systems (Anwar, 2012; OECD, 2016).

According to Knight (2004), the phenomenon of internationalization in higher education needs a common understanding of its definition to be discussed and analyzed in a common and appropriate way and to advocate for increased concern of its influence on the policy-making process in this field and academic leaders vision on it. Speaking about the phenomenon of internationalization there are two approaches in the way to define it. One of them considers it in terms of its function (DeLaquil, 2019) and was proposed by Knight (2003). According to Knight (2003) internationalization was defined as *"the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, function or delivery of post-secondary education"* (p. 2). The definition proposed by Knight in 2003 is broader than proposed earlier because it includes the national sector that could not be ignored in the current state of the higher education field. Moreover, in the definition the author instead of terms of teaching, research and service applied generic terms of purpose, function and delivery to create a relevant definition for the sector and institutional level and also for the wide range of providers in the higher education field.

The second view on the concept of internationalization defined it in terms of its purpose and mission reshaping it in accordance with the primary purpose and mission of higher education (DeLaquil, 2019). Thus, de Wit et al. (2015) proposed a wider definition of this concept as a means to an end that is more relevant to the modern setting:

The intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary 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. 29).

Internationalization has a positive impact on the host country. One of the positive sides of internationalization is a diversity that international students bring into HEIs because they come with new perspectives, promote the cultivation of intercultural awareness and interconnection within the campus and among community members (Lee & Rice,

2007). According to Luo and Jamieson-Drake (2013), international students contribute to the increase of engagement into intercultural interaction of all students, which in turn can positively impact global competencies, leadership skills and enhance intellectual development. Moreover, internationalization of higher education that embraces contacts with international students and internationalization of curriculum, has a positive effect on preparing domestic students for future career across the cultures (Parsons, 2010) and is considered as an institution's devotion to diversity and global reach (Cantwell, 2015).

International students are also an integral part of the national reputation and contribute to the institutional reputation, cultural enrichment and campus internationalization. A recent study showed that the economic gain of international students to the United Kingdom is 10 times greater than the costs (Ammigan & Jones, 2018). Thus, international students bring economic advantage to the host country. Considering the role of international students within the context of internationalization of higher education, it is unwise to ignore wider societal benefits from international student mobility that embraces preparation for skilled migration, addresses capacity building or skills imbalance between the home and host country. Another implicit benefit is soft support policies of countries to closer ties (Ammigan & Jones, 2018). Moreover, highly literate international students might compete within local labor market with host job seekers and supply knowledge creation, innovation and economic performance (OECD, 2018). They also can deliver new perspectives and strengthen cultural competence of the local student (OECD, 2017). Considering the advantages, the internationalization of higher education becomes the main agenda in a growing number of countries. Globally, the mobility of international students increased more than three times, from 1.3 million in 1990 (OECD, 2015) with a forecast to hit eight million by 2025 (OECD, 2018).

Internationalization is one of the factors that led to the emergence of a very competitive environment in the field of higher education (Harvey & Williams, 2010). It is also a major challenge that universities face as a result of the increasing mobility of overseas students around the world. These challenges are both threats and

opportunities for universities worldwide (Arambewela & Hall, 2009). As Chong and Ahmed underlined (2015), the field of higher education has undergone unprecedented changes in recent years. Most universities have to compete for the students securing their share of the student pool nowadays because the students have a wide variety of choices (Latif et al., 2017).

Due to these changes, universities aimed at student-oriented profiles and adopted market-oriented principles (DeShields et al, 2005). To recruit the best talents from around the world, the universities need to express the following special value propositions: a strong research base, internationalization of universities, proper academic programs and talented academic staff (Rasli et al., 2016). As a result, higher education institutions (HEIs) are often viewed as providers of services while students as their customers (Masserini et al, 2019; Martono et al., 2020; Pham et al, 2019). Moreover, as a competition among higher education institutions becomes intense, student satisfaction, loyalty, the image of the institution and other components that prior were not in the focus of universities' strategic plans become a key component of their prosperity in the last decade (Dennis et al., 2016; Psomas et al., 2017). As a consequence, HEIs are interested in evaluating the students' experiences and the level of students satisfaction with services provided (Darawong & Sandmaung, 2019; Merola et al, 2019) because positive experience and high level of satisfaction have a positive outcome for universities in form of "word of mouth" referrals and lead to student retention and loyalty (Schneider, 2009; Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Thomas, 2011; Polat, 2015) and attracting more international students (Li & Kaye, 1998). Thus, student satisfaction of international experience and loyalty became a long-term goal that universities strive to sustain in the long run (Kashif & Cheewakrakokbit, 2018). Moreover, according to Vergara et al. (2010), the satisfaction of both local and international students has become essential for the sake of attracting and retaining international students to move up in the university ranking system. So, since the field of higher education is highly competitive, creating and delivering higher quality educational services gained significant value in keeping a continued advantage (Polat, 2015). For the universities, it is essential to consistently monitor changes in students'

perceptions, expectations and satisfaction towards the perceived quality of universities to guarantee long-lasting competitiveness (Bozbay et al., 2020).

The researchers also stated that in order to both recruit and retain international students, the administration of host universities should deeply work on the understanding these students' experiences. The empirical literature confirms that host universities that reflected on their practices and policies as a result of increased understanding of international student experiences significantly improved the quality of educational programs and state of students' wellbeing (Leask & Carroll, 2011).

The analysis of students' perceptions of education quality can be considered as an instrument that can help to attract and retain students (Sultan & Wong, 2013). As Ali et al. (2014) stated, international students have different cultural backgrounds and differ from domestic students. They have to decide which university to choose, being uncertain and having concerns about the correctness of the choice so overseas students search for evidence of better education quality that universities provide. Thus, the nature and importance of the quality of educational and non-educational services in HEIs could not be ignored and needs to be investigated (Angell et al., 2008). Student satisfaction is a crucial aspect of a successful university and can be applied as an essential instrument in enhancing the perceived quality of educational and non-educational services (Abdullah, 2006).

The world lives in the era of globalization and is subject to integration forces (Van Damme, 2001), so the higher education system of any country including Kazakhstan cannot exist in isolation. The internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan is a relatively new trend due to Soviet heritage when the system of higher education was closed to influence from outside, but currently, this trend supported by the government strengthens its scope and covers more and more new components. The main feature of this process in Kazakhstan is that at this stage it is mostly carried out on the governmental and ministerial levels (Kuraev, 2014).

As a post-Soviet state, Kazakhstan has a centralized system of higher education. The government plays a central role in defining the educational policy through educational

programs and the specification of curriculum standards (Heyneman, 2011). These features of higher education in Kazakhstan did not correlate with the principles of internationalization and particularly with the Bologna process (Tomusk, 2011). In 1997, Kazakhstan set a goal to reach the top 50 countries with the most competitive economies; in 2012, a new goal was recognized to reach the top 30 (Strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2050, 2012). Both strategies identified the need to develop the nation's higher education. Since the adoption of Strategies, the government of Kazakhstan started actively to establish a new academic system that strives to be fully synchronized with the global academic network (Kuraev, 2014). Moreover, the most important feature of reforms was focused on internationalization and fostering international partnerships (Hartley et al., 2015).

Kazakhstan recognized the benefits of attracting international students to its universities and has taken several measures to internationalize its higher education. So, the three-cycle level of higher education (Bachelor, Master's and Ph.D.) was adapted. The next step was aligning the national grading system with the European Credit Transfer Scheme and joining the European higher education area. There were established universities with English as a medium of instruction (Nazarbayev University, KIMEP, Kazakh-British Technical University). Moreover, educational scholarships were granted to international students from Afghanistan, China, Mongolia, Pakistan and other countries (Bekbauova et al., 2017). But despite these steps taken, Kazakhstani HEIs are not appealing to international students (OECD, 2017). The main problem that is perceived as an obstacle to choosing Kazakhstan as the country of destination by students from other countries is the insufficient level of institutional autonomy (OECD, 2017). This fact was identified as the serious barrier for Kazakhstani HEIs to fully introduce internationalization into their curriculum and to raise their capacity to provide courses in English to meet the needs of international students (Mukhamejanova, 2018).

The internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan is an important agenda of the government. It is developed through different policy documents, for example, the Strategy for Academic Mobility in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2012-2020 and the

State Program on Educational Development 2011-2020 (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2010), State Program on Educational and Scientific Development 2020-2025 (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2019) and each has internationalizing components. Also, several programs and structural reforms were implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) that had an impact on the internationalization of higher education in the country. Some of those initiatives are sponsoring study at the world's best universities through the Bolashak Presidential Scholarship program (1993), a university-based student mobility program, a faculty exchange program and the State Program on Industrial Innovative Development 2015-2019.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Kazakhstani higher education aims to be competitive on the global level of higher education and attract more international students. Askhat Aitmagambetov, the Vice-Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (the Minister from 2019 – until now), mentioned an ambitious goal to make Kazakhstan an educational hub in Central Asia and attract students from India, China, Turkey, Pakistan, Egypt, the Russian Federation and other countries (Baigarin, 2018). In other words, the Ministry has set a goal to increase the share of international students in Kazakhstani universities from two to five percent in the short-term perspective.

So, since 2000, the trend of the stable growth of international students' numbers has been observed in Kazakhstan. The number of international students in Kazakhstan was 39.558 or 6.5 % of the total number of students in 2019 showing a rapid growth in the period 2012-2019 (Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022). The international students mainly come from one of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, China, India, and Mongolia (European Commission, 2017) and the goal set was reached.

Then, Yerlan Sagadiyev, the former Minister of Education and Science (2016 - 2019), during his term set a similar goal and aimed to recruit 50 thousand international students by 2020 (Urankayeva, 2017). As a long-term goal, the Ministry follows the

strategy to create conditions for the growing percentage of international students in Kazakhstan. So, the State Program on Educational and Scientific Development 2020 - 2025 set a goal to increase the share of international students from 6.5 % in 2019 to 10 % by 2025 (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2019).

But according to the data of Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in 2019-2020 academic year, there were 39.558 international students in Kazakhstani universities that comprised 6.5 % of the total number of all students in Kazakhstan. In 2020-2021 academic year, the number of international students decreased to 29.069 (5 % of the total number) and continued its trend in 2021-2022 academic year reaching 4,8 % (28194) (Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022). The decrease in numbers of international students in Kazakhstan happened due to the Decree of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education of Uzbekistan, according to which citizens of this country studying in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan were allowed to transfer to domestic universities without additional exams. As a result, the number of Uzbekistani students decreased from 25,9 thousand in 2019-2020 to 15,6 thousand in 2020-2021. As for the dynamics of the number of non-resident students from other countries during the year of the pandemic, it changed insignificantly and did not affect the overall picture (Osipova, 2021). As data of the Bureau of National Statistics showed the goal of the State Program on Educational and Scientific Development 2020 - 2025 to reach 10 % is not reached yet and demands thoughtful measures and steps to achieve it.

However, researchers exploring the topic of internationalization of higher education claim that the enforcement of internationalization policies at the organizational level while ignoring the need to deeply investigate international students' experiences in host countries is successful only at the stage of attracting international students (Liu & Winder, 2014). So, the perceptions of educational service quality satisfaction and the experiences of the students coming from overseas will help to evaluate the overall state of the quality of educational services in Kazakhstani HEIs and can be used to

improve its attractiveness for international students in addition to, for example, the world ranking (Zhumagulov, 2013).

1.3. Purpose of the Study

Since the number of international students in Kazakhstan has greatly increased in the last decade and to keep it rising, the satisfaction with their learning experiences in Kazakhstani universities needs to be explored to ensure better quality of education in Kazakhstan at the competitive level with the global higher education landscape.

The purpose of this study is to explore the satisfaction level and the learning experiences of international students coming from other countries with the quality of educational services of Kazakhstani HEIs. The findings are expected to identify the factors of HEIs educational services that international students are satisfied with the most and the least with. Based on the results, there will be developed suggestions for the improvement of specific dimensions of quality of university educational services because data gathered directly from the students can be used as a tool to change or create the policies and practices and carry out interventions that will impact their experiences (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). One of the possible applications of such an approach is the internationalization of the curriculum (Knight, 2004). Moreover, according to Perez-Encinas and Ammigan (2016), the HEIs that regularly surveyed their overseas students by applying either internal surveys or third-party instruments recognized the advantage of the feedback in improving customer service, student advising, curricula, outreach and educational training.

To reach the purpose, the following research question was formulated:

“What are the lived experiences of international students in Kazakhstani HEIs in terms of the quality of educational services and their satisfaction?”

1.4. Significance of the Study

The process of internationalization of the higher education field embraces different components and brings international student satisfaction along with other concepts to

the forefront as a key ingredient of student loyalty and retention. There is plenty of research that considers the satisfaction of international students and many factors that explore as its possible predictors, how the satisfaction of international students is interrelated with different concepts such as image, loyalty, turnover intention, and others. However, the number of studies that focus on international students' experiences in Kazakhstani HEIs is limited. Thus, this study will complement the existing research literature and will also close the gap on this critical issue. This study also will help to identify areas in educational service quality that highly satisfy international students and drawbacks that need to be paid attention to. This study gains particular significance in terms of forced transition to remote teaching in 2020-2021 over Kazakhstan because it is also expected to reflect this learning experience of international students and evaluate their perceptions of efforts of Kazakhstani universities to address this challenge.

As a result, the findings of this study also will provide possible suggestions to universities administrators, practitioners, or policymakers on how to improve practices of educational quality distribution with the aim to attract more international students. The research may bring benefit to participating international students as well to prospective international students in the way that the formers have a chance to reflect on their learning experiences at the universities and share their needs, concerns, and perceptions with the HEIs administrators, while the latter may draw important insights from the experiences of the current students for their future benefits. Based on the results of this study, university administrators in Kazakhstan may get a deeper understanding of the international students' needs and make possible adjustments to educational services to enhance their satisfaction.

1.5. Operational Definitions

The definition of ***internationalization of higher education*** was suggested by de Wit et al. (2015) who defines internationalization as “*the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary 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. 29).

In this study, **student satisfaction** is considered within the higher education context as a short-term attitude that is possible to measure and is a result of experience received from educational services. Weerasinghe et al. (2017) defined student satisfaction as *"a short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of students' educational experiences, services, and facilities"* (p. 534).

Service quality within higher education in this study is defined as *"the difference between what a student expects to receive and his/her perceptions of actual delivery"* (O'Neill & Palmer, 2004, p. 42).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the issues of international student satisfaction and educational quality that are explored in the literature by various researchers are discussed. The chapter starts with the conceptualization of quality in HEIs. The next, the chapter continues with the issues of quality of education and considers different approaches to measure it. And last, student satisfaction is considered as a phenomenon in the higher education, following by the various attempts to identify the major factors of international student satisfaction.

2.1. The Conceptualization of Quality in HEIs

Nowadays students have a wide range of choices for studying abroad. Thus, HEIs are expected to include internationalization in their strategic plans and take into consideration the development and improvement of the knowledge and well-being of everyone by its implementation. Since the demand for the need to take a competitive advantage in the rapidly changing environment of HEIs, the researchers have put the quality aspects of higher education in the focus (Moogan et al., 2001; Masserini et al., 2019).

As researchers claim HEIs take into consideration quality aspects, process perspectives and continual improvement during defining the management techniques and approaches (Lapina et al., 2016). Since the HEIs operate in a highly competitive environment, they have to adjust various managerial instruments to improve the study program quality and services provided (Sultan & Wong, 2010). Macaulay and Clark (1998) predicted that universities need to be open to the new fields of activity, encourage initiatives and flexibility in thinking, reduce barriers between operational units, simplify organizational processes to weaken bureaucracy, promote non-

formality and flexibility of human capital. The HEIs need to be aware of not only educational services quality but also of the influence of contextual factors and possible impact on potential students (Lapina et al., 2016).

There are different factors that attract students to choose a certain HEI and educational program. According to Cohen et al. (2001), environment, teaching method, time availability, on and off-campus requirements and the way how to access learning materials. Some students found academic quality, degree recognition and the reputation of university important factors in choosing the HEI (Gruber et al., 2010). Satisfaction with service quality, admission process and admission staff also were found as important factors (Munteanu et al., 2010). Other researchers found that course relevance and teaching quality are the main factors of HEI preference for high school students in Australia (Soutar & Turner, 2002). De Jager and Gbadamosi (2013) explored student satisfaction related to university service quality and found that internationalization, international students and staff, academic reputation, academic quality, focus on students, location, accommodation, scholarships, sports reputation and facilities, safety, and security play an important role by measuring the level of satisfaction. So, taking into consideration empirical literature on factors defining the choice of university and level of student satisfaction, Brookes and Becket (2007) propose to adjust current approaches to quality management, so the quality of academic processes (teaching and learning) remain on agenda.

There are a variety of factors that influence the quality of higher education at both national and international levels. The HEIs are becoming aware of the internationalization processes and of the need for acquired education abroad. All stakeholders (students, faculty members, parents, employers, and others) expect some level of performance from the HEIs. Moreover, as Lapina et al. (2016) claim, the quality of higher education includes many aspects such as the study course content, professors' performance, student support services and many other constituents that need to be taken into consideration in the evaluation process of HEIs.

The internationalization forces influence the development of HEIs nowadays and this vector is becoming one of the main priorities for educational institutions worldwide.

The settings where HEIs function are changing and becoming more open to the influence of international forces and creating a highly competitive environment. Educational institutions promote international studies and adapt the strategies of internationalization by developing educational programs in English, attracting international academic staff and recruiting overseas students (Lapina et al., 2016). Due to internationalization, the metamorphoses of HEI's organization are observed. Often the process of internationalization entails in addition to the above-mentioned outcomes also diversification of the educational programs and involvement of students and academic staff in different international collaboration projects (Iljins et al., 2014).

2.1.1. Educational Quality in HEIs

Within the higher education services offered have heterogeneous qualities in comparison to other fields so evaluation of service quality in this area is more complicated. Considering higher education as a highly beneficial sector for society, it is problematic to assess many aspects of higher education directly with the criteria usually applied to the market. Due to being intangible, such services as, for example, teaching is very challenging activity to define and measure (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Moreover, higher education plays an essential role both in specifying the long-term quality of student's life and in influencing the social structure. Thus, the service quality of HEIs could not be promoted by only student satisfaction but also by well-structured sustainable systems (Yilmaz, 2019).

It is necessary to keep in mind that within the higher education field the quality of educational services is evaluated by both universities and all stakeholders of this field: students, academic and administrative staff, governments. The quality of educational services provided by universities is a result of a collaboration of administration, academic and administrative staff and students. The efficiency and quality of the educational process rely not only upon universities themselves but also upon the attitudes and expectations of the students. The quality of educational services provided by universities is influenced by students' behavior, their involvement in courses and other aspects. Thus, the assessment of quality provided in this field is complicated (Eagle & Brennan, 2007).

Service quality within the higher education context is a vital and important aspect of the successful operation of HEI because its positive perception by students has a remarkable influence on student satisfaction (Alves & Raposo, 2010). There is difficulty in defining service quality in marketing literature and there is no generally accepted framework to precisely assess service quality (Seth et al., 2005). Thus, there is also ambiguity in defining this concept within the higher education field. Moreover, Cheng and Tam (1997) considered education quality “as a rather vague and controversial concept” (p. 23). So, the definition of higher education quality embraces the perceptions of all stakeholders who try out the various services offered by HEIs. Since students are the primary stakeholder of HEI, service quality is comprised of their experiences of various services offered by universities (Jancey & Burns, 2013).

The HEIs quality from international students’ view has been extensively examined by different researchers. Researchers have investigated the quality difference between the perception of educational quality and satisfaction (De Jager & Gbadamosi, 2013; Rasli et al., 2016). Others explored the relationship between overall student satisfaction and student service quality (Danjuma & Rasli, 2013). Some researchers were interested in the educational quality of distance education (Munthiu et al., 2014). In turn, Lupo (2013) explored the influence of service quality on the overall service performance while Sultan and Wong (2013) examined the predictors’ outcomes of service quality in universities.

2.1.2. Educational Services Quality in Higher Education and Students’ Satisfaction

Service quality can be defined as the perceived difference between expectations and performance. This essential part of university operational characteristics is hard to sustain because of being a multi-faceted service within which various processes are performed simultaneously (Brown & Mazzarol, 2009). For the creation of a remarkable service-learning experience all stakeholders namely the academic staff, administrative staff and students are supposed to play their well-defined roles. Furthermore, for the sake of maintaining a high level of perceived service quality, the service performance must be on the same level as the expectations – a result of proper

identification and evaluation of a service experience (Sultan & Wong, 2013). To measure a service quality objectively, researchers have elaborated on different instruments. Some researchers have suggested applying contexts-specific scales to better facilitate the tenants of service quality to be specified and then to measure it for specific purposes (Frimpong & Wilson, 2013).

The empirical literature that considers the quality of higher education as a significant aspect of the students' satisfaction elaborates on this issue by applying different approaches. Martono et al. (2020) consider within the conceptual framework the relationship between learning facilities, teaching quality of lectures, and good university governance, and the students' satisfaction in Semarang State University, Indonesia. The results of the study showed that the teaching quality of lectures and learning facilities have a positive relationship with students' satisfaction if the quality satisfies the students. Conversely, the relationship between these concepts showed a negative result if students experienced "poor quality" of teaching and learning facilities.

In turn, Abdullah (2006) proposed a scale HEdPERF (Higher Education Performance) to evaluate perceived service quality within five constructs namely academic aspects, non-academic aspects, reputation, program issues, and access. According to the researcher, the main predictors of student satisfaction within the field of higher education in Malaysia were determined academic and non-academic facets, program-related topics, and reputation.

Other researchers explored the influence of Malaysian public HEIs' service quality on international student satisfaction, institutional image, and loyalty by applying the same scale HEdPERF (Ali et al., 2014). The study considered such constructs as higher education service quality HEdPERF (academic aspects, non-academic aspects, access (to academic staff), program issues, reputation), student satisfaction, image, and loyalty. The results of the study demonstrated that all five constituents of university service quality affect student satisfaction. Furthermore, student satisfaction impacts institutional image and then they altogether influence student loyalty. The researchers admitted that one of the limitations of this study is the applied model HEdPERF to

define the content of service quality which might not embrace all factors that influence international student satisfaction.

The empirical literature on service quality in higher education has shown that improving its components is always an integral goal of the educational institutions, however, it is impossible to define the student perception until the predictors and results of service quality enhancement are not observed (Sultan & Wong, 2013). Thus, to evaluate the perception and level of satisfaction with educational experiences of international students it is necessary to identify components of service quality within a higher education context.

Kashif and Cheewakrakokbit (2018) examined the international student perceived service quality of Thailand Business School and its interconnection with student loyalty. The researchers applied the PAKSERV scale that includes six dimensions in total: Tangibility, Reliability, Assurance, Sincerity, Personalization, and Formality. The findings showed that all dimensions except Personalization positively influence student satisfaction which is, in turn, strongly associated with loyalty to the university.

In turn, Masserini et al. (2019) explored the influence of the quality of educational services and the universities' institutional image on students' overall satisfaction with their university experience. The study also considered possible effects on loyalty. It was revealed that among different academic and non-academic aspects teaching and lectures and teaching and course organization are the main predictors of students' satisfaction among various academic aspects of educational services at the University of Pisa, Italy. Some researchers applied the SERQUAL (Service Quality) model of Parasuraman et al. (1988) and determined that responsiveness, empathy, and facilities are the main dimensions of service quality that mostly affect student satisfaction (Darawong & Sandmaung, 2019).

2.2. Theoretical Framework

In the literature, quality of education is considered from two major standpoint that conditionally can be identified as approach of quality infusion and student perspective.

The former approach includes total quality management (TQM), quality assurance, benchmarking and accountability (Prakash, 2017). According to Ferrin et al. (2001) TQM represents the relationship between university and industry in form of supplier-customer connection. It stimulates a disciplined adaptation and demonstrates an increased level of customer services, administrative and academic staff morale, administrative processes, and quality of course content. Nevertheless, according to Houston (2007), this concept and its tools does not fit the field of higher education properly.

In turn, quality assurance includes audits, accreditation, assessments, and constant quality enhancement. The main point of this concept its management by leadership (Sahney et al., 2008). Despite the number of positive outcomes for HEIs, for instance system and processes improvement to name some of them, quality assurance might restrain creativity and responsiveness (Harvey & Newton, 2004). It is also criticized for being a type of power control and bureaucratic with minimal influence on academic component (Cheng, 2010).

Benchmarking and accountability also have a positive impact on quality of education. Benchmarking has such positive outcomes as improvement of teaching pedagogy (Tam, 2002), curriculum content (Tasopoulou & Tsiotras, 2017), collaboration between industry and research (Henderson et al., 2006) while accountability fosters transparency, fair evaluation, compliance with regulations and promotes internal quality enhancement actions (Anderson, 2005). Despite several positive outcomes of quality infusion perspective, the student-centered perspective is becoming a prominent standpoint in the literature and thus HEIs compete to meet students' expectations by improving various aspects of quality (Prakash, 2017).

2.2.1. Models of Educational Quality

Considering the refocusing of the education process to a more student-oriented approach in recent decades, universities are more interested in the measurement of educational quality and development of facilities based on this evaluation. Yet, the practice of quality development is negatively affected by the inadequacy of proper and

reliable measurement instruments (Yilmaz, 2019). Moreover, Clewes (2003) and Marzo-Navarro et al. (2005) claim that having various models and scales, there is no agreement on the best model to measure educational service quality. As Chong and Ahmed (2012) stated the development of a reliable model for measuring service quality for the higher education field is still a critical issue.

After the literature review, two common approaches can be distinguished in service quality measurement. The first one evaluates the service quality straight by reference to performance level. The second measurement is based on the difference between the expectations of the customers (in the context of higher education - students) about the service quality provided by the university and the level to which the students perceive this quality (Yilmaz, 2019).

Within both approaches, there are two most frequently applied scales to evaluate service quality. The first scale is SERVQUAL developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry in 1988. It was elaborated to measure the differences between service expectations and perceived service quality from the views of the customers (Parasuraman et al., 1988). According to this model, there are five aspects to measure service: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Another frequently used tool to measure service quality is the SERVPERF (Service Performance) scale. It was elaborated by Cronin and Taylor (1992) and aims to measure the service quality by the performance level of the various attributes instead of the expectation-perception relationship. According to Abdullah (2006), the performance-only approach suits the context of higher education more adequately.

Both scales are applied to evaluate the service quality within higher education. However, there are some issues of their applicability in the context of HEIs. They were elaborated specifically for the service sector and they do not embrace specific aspects of the higher education context. There is no need to emphasize that higher education possesses specific characteristics for this field and differs from other service sectors. The failure to adequately measure the educational service quality, the scales that aim to measure specifically the educational quality of HEIs have been initiated to develop (Yilmaz, 2019).

In 2005 the HEDPERF scale was developed by Abdullah. The tool measures the factors in terms of performance that are context-specific for HEIs. It contains 41 questions that are evaluated based on a 7-point Likert scale. The students are expected to assess the higher education institution in terms of its *academic quality, administrative features, accessibility, image, and the program offered* (Abdullah, 2006).

Another scale - Higher Education Service Quality (HiEdQUAL) - also aims to measure the quality of service in higher education. It represents the scale with 27 items that evaluates five characteristics: *teaching and course content, administrative services, academic activities, campus infrastructure, and student support services* (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2012).

The main criticism of the similar scales presented is that while some models were elaborated on the service sector and cannot embrace higher education specific aspects, the other do not include the positive transformative role of universities. The latter aspect is essential in evaluation of quality of education because education is not presenting a service to students but rather needs to be considered as a continuous process of transformation of the students (Harvey & Green, 1993). Moreover, quality assessment in higher education strives to develop structural models with focus on service quality as functional aspect by omitting the technical dimension considering the former as unidimensional construct. However, according to Ladhari et al. (2011) this aspect is multidimensional. Thus, for exploring the higher education quality in this research the HESQUAL model was chosen as a theoretical framework because of being more powerful in terms of measurement of higher education context specific features (Yilmaz, 2019) supported by the

2.2.2. HESQUAL Model

International students' satisfaction is a wide topic that comprises different aspects of students' perceptions and attitudes during their study abroad and some of them to name are support services, integration with the local community, academic self-efficacy, cultural proximity, and many others. This study is focused on HEIs quality components applying the higher education service quality (HESQUAL) model of

Teeroovengadum et al. (2016) that is a hierarchical and holistic model specifically developed to evaluate higher education service quality (Teeroovengadum et al., 2019). This model is related to a more recent approach on evaluating a service quality in higher education. According to the HESQUAL, service quality in higher education includes functional and technical, or transformative aspects. The researcher included the notion of Harvey and Green (1993) who considered quality in education as transformative quality underlining the capacity of HEIs to enhance and empower the students. The researcher shared the idea that education is not about presenting a service, it is more an ongoing process of student's transformation. So, the technical or transformative quality in higher education is the outcome of a service. The functional service quality aspects comprise administrative quality, physical environment quality, core educational quality, and support facilities quality (Teeroovengadum et al., 2016) which will be evaluated during this study. The technical aspect of HESQUAL will be omitted because the aim of this study is focused on the delivery process in education (Brady & Cronin, 2001).

In this study, four main factors drawn from the existing literature are considered: administrative quality, physical environment quality, core educational quality and support facilities quality (Teeroovengadum et.al., 2016). All four influential factors form the multidimensional nature of **service quality** in higher education within a performance-only approach.

Service quality within higher education in this study is defined as *“the difference between what a student expects to receive and his/her perceptions of actual delivery”* (O'Neill & Palmer, 2004, p. 42).

Administrative quality includes the attitude and behavior of administrative staff and administrative processes. This aspect considers such points as willingness of administrative staff to help students, its politeness, clearness and well-structured administrative procedures, transparency of official procedures and regulations and others.

Physical environment quality implies support infrastructure, learning setting, and general infrastructure. Among aspects of this dimension availability of adequate cafeteria, library, sports infrastructure, having adequate lecture rooms, quiet places to study, safety on campus, appearance of building and grounds and others are considered.

Core educational quality includes attitude and behavior of academic staff, curriculum, pedagogy, and competence of academic staff. In this category such components as lectures understanding students' needs, availability of lectures to guide and advise students, clearly course content and objectives, challenging academic standards, relevance of course content to the future career, active participation of students in their learning process, communication skills of lectures are evaluated.

Support facilities' quality considers the availability and adequacy of support facilities. This category includes availability of adequate IT, photocopy and printing, sport facilities, availability of extra-curriculum activities and other.

As mentioned earlier, this study focuses on the experiences of students regarding the quality of education through the satisfaction and learning experiences of international students within Kazakhstani HEIs, so the HESQUAL model is chosen as a guiding framework for this study because of being elaborated recently specifically for measurement of quality in higher education.

2.3. Student Satisfaction

HEIs around the world have the students' voices in focus (Blair & Noel, 2014) to deliver educational services effectively and to enhance student satisfaction (Teeroovengadum et al., 2016). Student satisfaction is considered as a result of the complex inter-relationship of factors such as learning curriculum, supervision, feedback, support facilities, physical infrastructure, leisure activities and social climate (Wiers-Jenssen et al., 2002). Students' satisfaction is affected not only by age, background, gender but also by sustained development and commitment (Van Kemenade et al., 2008).

Moreover, the voices and opinions of international students bring benefits for the internationalization process of HEIs which can be more effective when they are also heard (Heng, 2017). For example, in the Russian context, employment perspectives, the ranking of the university and the prestige of the branch have been identified as more important satisfaction factors among students (Galeeva, 2016). In the field of higher education, student satisfaction happens when student expectations are met or exceeded (Elliott & Shin, 2002). This phenomenon means the level to which the student subjectively perceives higher education experience.

The main research topics addressed in the literature are identifying aspects influencing students' learning experiences (Ellis et al., 2004), determining the aspects that define the influence of student satisfaction (Chahal & Devi, 2013) and shaping student satisfaction (Douglas et al., 2006). The view of Douglas et al. (2006) shares some researchers who consider student satisfaction based on the understanding of the nature of this phenomenon. For example, Knapp-Appleton and Krentler (2006) explored student satisfaction through the lens of student expectations. They stated that the understanding of the influence of student expectations on their satisfaction might be used by universities to exert some level of control by correctly managing expectations about academic courses. Voss et al. (2007) considered constituents that students expect to see in effective lectures. They found that such teaching qualities as teaching skills, teaching methods, communication skills, approachability, enthusiasm, expertise, humor and friendliness are the most important attributes that lectures should have and by demonstrating these qualities lectures increase the satisfaction of the students.

2.3.1. International Student Satisfaction

The lack of understanding of international students is a challenge for the HEIs in the way they strive to provide better services. Zhou and Cole (2017), for example, consider the importance of the overall satisfaction of international students from three standpoints. From an academic perspective, the overall satisfaction of overseas students influences significant outcomes such as persistence and graduation. From an external relations perspective, student satisfaction results in loyalty, volunteering to

support the university more often and donating more likely. And last, the understanding of constituents of overall satisfaction allows the universities to provide better services, retain and recruit students more effectively.

The satisfaction of international students is an essential and wide topic nowadays. However, the literature on the predictors of international students' well-being in a cross-cultural environment has focused mostly on acculturative stress and psychological adjustment difficulties often ignoring their satisfaction with personal and academic life (Mak et al, 2015). So, in the paragraphs below the possible predictors of international student satisfaction are considered.

2.3.2. Factors Influencing International Students' Satisfaction

The empirical literature examining the satisfaction of international students has focused on different aspects of students' experiences associated with it. Ding (2016) explored different factors affecting the satisfaction level of international students. In his research, it was revealed that study programs, support services, and integration with local students significantly affect international students' satisfaction. Finn and Darmody (2017), in turn, claim that among different factors that shaped international students' satisfaction the most important is their satisfaction with their educational institution and subjective rating of their health.

Student satisfaction literature defined academic involvement as one of the important constituents of international student satisfaction. Academic involvement includes not only interactions with faculty, with other students during classes and co-curricular activities, but also the effort and time that students spend on studying. Interactions with faculty have been defined as one of the most significant aspects associated with overall satisfaction (Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Webber et al., 2013). So, Webber et al. (2013) claim that students who invested more time and effort in preparation for the classes or otherwise participated in academic tasks demonstrate a higher level of overall satisfaction with their academic experience.

Furthermore, according to Arambewela and Hall (2009), satisfaction with academic quality that includes feedback from the faculty, access to faculty, and quality of teaching significantly influences the overall satisfaction level of Australian overseas students coming from Asia. They also explored the differences in student satisfaction perceptions depending on the country of origin. The study showed that students from different countries perceive the level of satisfaction with academic and non-academic service quality differently, so universities should elaborate on a diversified strategic marketing plan that embraces the differential needs of overseas students.

The literature on international student satisfaction also considers differences in the satisfaction level due to the country of origin. Examining the topic of international students' satisfaction, cultural integration also plays a significant role because international students who are culturally closer to the host population of the destination country demonstrate a higher level of satisfaction (Alemu & Cordier, 2017; Merola et al, 2019). Merola et al. (2019) examined the relationship between integration, nationality, and self-reported satisfaction among students coming from China, India and South Korea that pursue their degrees in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. The findings showed that the satisfaction level of international students varied significantly among the nationalities, demonstrating that Indian students are more satisfied in comparison with Chinese and South Korean students. Moreover, integration is identified as a predictor of student satisfaction and academic integration has a greater influence on satisfaction than social integration. The findings showed that academic and social integration depends on the differences in satisfaction levels among nationalities.

In the study conducted by Korobova and Starobin (2015) five aspects of effective educational practice are found that are defined as the most important predictors of international student satisfaction with educational experiences. They are the level of academic challenge, student interaction with faculty, enriching educational experiences, and two aspects of a supportive campus environment - the quality of relationships and institutional emphasis. Besides academic aspect of university, student support services are also considered an important predictor of international

student satisfaction in many HEIs as a means to ensure a positive experience of students during their study abroad (Perez-Encinas & Ammigan, 2016).

Some scholars examined the possible increased international student satisfaction with personal and university experiences that was related to higher levels of coping or stress-resistance abilities (internal and external) of students. So, Mak et al. (2015) considered host language fluency, self-esteem, intercultural social self-efficacy, and academic self-efficacy as the internal coping resources while perceiving social support from hosts and non-hosts as external resources. The findings identified social support from hosts and academic self-efficacy as significant predictors of both personal and university life satisfaction.

There are also research studies examined the relationship between factors such as English proficiency, social connectedness, number of friends and international student satisfaction (Yeh & Inose, 2003; Sam, 2001) while others explored the influence of identity gap, perceived discrimination, homesickness and job prospects on international student satisfaction (Wadsworth et al., 2008).

Arkoudis et al. (2019) explored the satisfaction level of Australian international students with the educational experiences in Australia. Even though the Australian government regularly investigates the students' satisfaction and reports its high level, there are signs that the data collected do not reflect reality and there is some level of students' dissatisfaction with their social and educational experiences. The study investigated in-depth teaching and learning, social fragmentation, finances and accommodation. The findings demonstrated that even though the overall satisfaction is estimated high by international students there is a lack of social integration and belongingness that students perceive.

Some scholars examined the relationships between student satisfaction and student loyalty revealing that student satisfaction plays an important role as a direct antecedent of international student loyalty (Pham & Lai, 2016; Pham et al, 2019). However, the student satisfaction model considers image, expectations, perceived value, perceived

quality as main determinants of student satisfaction while loyalty and complaint as consequences (Duque & Weeks, 2010; Gibson, 2010).

In turn, Chelliah et al. (2019) stated that even though the factors responsible for international student satisfaction are not sufficiently investigated the existing studies mostly focused on physical aspects and ignored the social and emotional factors which are an integral part of student life. Chelliah et al. (2019) conducted a study that included not only physical factors but also emotional support, ethical conduct and student-lecturer attachment as social aspects and explored their impact on the satisfaction of the overseas students. The results showed that a university's high-quality physical environment that includes buildings, hostels, library, canteen, sports facilities, and others leads to high levels of satisfaction. The researchers also found that higher student-lecturer attachment results in a high level of international student satisfaction. In turn, the results of the study demonstrated that ethical conduct and emotional support do not influence the satisfaction level of the students.

Ammigan and Jones (2018), in turn, explored four dimensions of university life as possible predictors of international student satisfaction: their arrival, living, learning and support service experiences. They used the data from the International Student Barometer (ISB) and evaluated the experiences of over 45.000 international students in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The results demonstrated that international students are satisfied in general with their overall experience of university life in these countries. The analysis of the results showed that arrival experience was evaluated as the most satisfying experience followed by living and learning experiences. The lowest degree of satisfaction showed the student experience with support services. Among the learning experience aspects, the most important were quality of lectures, the expertise of lecturers, teaching ability of academic staff, academic content, course organization, explanation of marking and improving English skills learning. All these aspects had greatly impacted the overall learning experience of international students while among support services the services of the International Office had the most important aspect of overall student satisfaction.

According to Lin et al. (2020), student satisfaction often is explored through the lens of customer satisfaction theory which evaluates the perceived value and quality as the main predictors of student satisfaction. Since the researchers emphasized that the importance of value co-creation is disregarded, they investigated the relationship between perceived value, perceived quality, value co-creation, student satisfaction, complaint and loyalty. The study was conducted in a Chinese university by surveying international students. Results from the research showed that perceived value, perceived quality and value co-creation determinate student satisfaction. In turn, student satisfaction is positively associated with loyalty and negatively associated with complaints. The researchers also suggested using more resources for international students' involvement in on-campus management and service to improve their academic experience.

Student satisfaction is closely interrelated with the student experience. Studies that focus on international student experience claim that several factors can directly influence their experience during their study. According to Jones (2017), there are four interrelated components that have an impact on the student experience in the academic, living, and social aspects. They are personal history, family context, national context, and institutional nature and location with institutional values and student support services. Researchers Archer et al. (2010) suggest improving the international student experience at every phase of their program study, embracing the application and arrival steps, then cultural and social integration phase, accommodation and living, work experience, and employability. The researchers also emphasize the importance of communication and service coordination enhancement, relevant use of technology, flexibility, and proper management of student expectations.

2.3.3. International Students in Kazakhstan

Considering that the internationalization of higher education has been in close focus during the last few decades, it is expected to observe this topic as an important stream in educational research. However, a lack of research on the topic of internationalization as a general phenomenon and on international students'

experiences and their perceived satisfaction with the quality of educational services has been conducted within the Kazakhstani context. The few studies can be named having a focus on general aspects of internationalization of Kazakhstani higher education (Maudarbekova & Kashkinbayeva, 2014; Jumakulov & Ashirbekov, 2016), the internationalization of research (Jumakulov et al., 2019), academic motivation of international students (Ospanova, 2018), their experiences (Mukhamejanova, 2018) and Kazakhstani student satisfaction with foreign universities (Sabatayeva et al., 2018).

Some researchers strived to get a better understanding of the students' experience coming to Kazakhstan to pursue a degree through exploring the adaptation to the academic and socio-cultural life in the country and how they apply their human capital during this process (Mukhamejanova, 2018). The findings showed that international students intensively apply their human agency to adjust themselves to the local life in Kazakhstan and deal with their studies. They not only adapted to the environment but also learned from it and strived to modify it in line with their goals and context.

Sabatayeva et al. (2018) in turn explored the satisfaction level of international students from Kazakhstan studying in foreign universities. The main purpose of the researchers was to analyze students' satisfaction with university services and to identify the perceived quality of which aspect and service provided by educational organizations influence their overall satisfaction. In this study, the SERQUAL instrument was applied that embraced physical facilities, academic and non-academic services as its components. The findings demonstrated that the overall satisfaction level with overseas universities was very high. Among services and facilities evaluated computer and library facilities and relevance of academic courses to future job prospects revealed the highest level of perceived quality.

2.4. Summary

The examined literature showed that education quality needs an attention in order to satisfy and attract international students and should be considered as an essential aspect in HEIs internationalization process. While there are various factors that should

be in focus within the issue of quality in education, the HEIs need to be aware of factors that satisfy and dissatisfy their students and to make necessary adjustments to these dimensions.

This chapter presents the studies on international student satisfaction and measurement of educational quality of HEIs. More specifically, it demonstrates the different factors that have positive or negative impact on international student satisfaction and aspects of education quality that play important role in education quality evaluation. The cases provided in this chapter give a basis for the exploration of the research topic within the context of Kazakhstani HEIs.



CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents information about the methodology applied in this study. It starts with the overall research design, population, and sample and explains the rationale of their choice. It also gives details on instrumentation, data, analysis of data, and data collection procedures. And last, the chapter considers the limitations issues that are observed during the research.

3.1. Overall Research Design of the Study

Applying a thorough research design is essential in the research process. The research design choice depends on its ability to address the purpose, questions, and objectives of the research (Cohen et al, 2018).

This research followed qualitative research tradition and was designed as an exploratory phenomenological study to elaborate on the international students' experiences of the quality of educational services during their study in Kazakhstani HEIs. The qualitative approach was selected due to the nature of the research purpose and question. This method allows the researcher to explore a problem and to get a better understanding of the main phenomenon (Creswell, 2012), and also to incorporate the voice of participants into the results (Jean-Fraincois, 2019). A qualitative approach perfectly fits the research where there is a need to explore the way people understand, experience, perceive and create the social world (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). This method also depicts lived experiences of participants, thoughts about the situation, and feelings for it (Cohen et al., 2018).

As a first step, the literature review was conducted to create a critical framework of the research and collect substantial knowledge regarding the issue. As a result, after

the literature review, the thesis proposal and research question were identified. Then the data collection instrument was created by the researcher and after being reviewed by two experts, necessary alterations to the instrument were made. Prior to conducting the interviews, the pilot study was administered and the Ethical Commission Approval was received. The next step was conducting interviews with international students who matched the research criteria. Finally, the data were analyzed and results reported.

3.2. Research Question

The main purpose of this study is to explore the satisfaction level and the learning experiences of international students with the quality of educational services in Kazakhstani HEIs. More particularly, this study intends to answer following question:

“What are the lived experiences of international students in Kazakhstani HEIs in terms of the quality of educational services and their satisfaction?”

3.3. Research Participants

Since this study explored the specific features such as satisfaction and learning experiences of international students in Kazakhstan, the participants and universities' random selection of students and universities cannot be applied as they need to satisfy specific requirements (Brymen, 2012). Moreover, this study followed the qualitative research tradition, and purposive sampling was identified. This type of sampling does not have a purpose of generalizability of results, it rather aims to receive detailed information from participants to explore the phenomenon in greater depth (Cohen et al., 2018). As a target population, 15 full-time international students studying in HEIs in Kazakhstan were chosen. The sample is composed of 11 undergraduate and 4 Ph.D. international students studying in the universities in Nur-Sultan. The international students who spent less than two years in HEIs in Kazakhstan were excluded due to the lack of their experiences studying abroad and possible failure to evaluate their perceptions about the quality of educational services of their universities because of pandemic quarantine and online studying.

Table 1*Students' Characteristics*

No.	Pseudonym	Gender	Home country	University	Year of study	Major
1	Participant 1	F	China	1	3	Political Sciences
2	Participant 2	M	Turkmenistan	1	4	IT
3	Participant 3	F	Uzbekistan	1	4	Economics
4	Participant 4	M	Russian Federation	2	4	Physics
5	Participant 5	F	Russian Federation	1	3	International Relations
6	Participant 6	F	China	1	3	Economics
7	Participant 7	F	Russian Federation	2	3	Economics
8	Participant 8	M	Republic of Korea	2	4	Mathematics
9	Participant 9	F	China	2	3	Mathematics
10	Participant 10	M	Netherlands	2	3	Political Sciences
11	Participant 11	M	Nigeria	2	3	Engineering
12	Participant 12	M	Uzbekistan	1	4	Sociology
13	Participant 13	F	Uzbekistan	3	3	Nursing
14	Participant 14	F	Kyrgyzstan	3	4	Nursing
15	Participant 15	M	Turkmenistan	3	4	Nursing

Three universities from Nur-Sultan area were chosen to participate in the study: Nazarbayev University, L. Gumilev Eurasian National University, and Astana Medical University.

Nazarbayev University (NU) is among the few in Kazakhstan that apply English as a medium of instruction. This university is popular among international students who chose Kazakhstan as a country of destination because an overwhelming number of international students prefer to be taught in English (OECD, 2018). NU offers a wide range of academic programs: foundation, undergraduate, graduate, and Ph.D. programs proposed by 7 Schools. NU is the first university in Kazakhstan that received academic freedom by special law since being established.

The next university participating in this study, L. Gumilev Eurasian National University, is one of 7 National Universities of Kazakhstan that was granted academic freedom from 2019. The three levels of programs (Bachelor, Master's, and Ph.D.) are taught in Russian and Kazakh languages. There are 12 faculties at this university.

Astana Medical University is one of the oldest medical schools in Kazakhstan. It was established in 1964. There are 5 faculties that prepare for Bachelor, Master's, Ph.D., and residency programs taught in Russian and Kazakh languages.

These universities were selected for several reasons. First of all, these universities host the highest number of international students in comparison to other universities residing in Nur-Sultan. Moreover, all three universities in the declaration of their current strategic plans determined internationalization as the number one priority. For example, NU strives to admit 10% of the international student population by 2025 and 12% by 2030 (in comparison to 2018 - 1%) (Nazarbayev University Strategy 2018-2030, 2018). In turn, L. Gumilev Eurasian National University plans to move from 6% in 2021 to 10% by 2025 (Development Strategy of L. Gumilev Eurasian National University for 2021-2025, 2021).

Table 2

Number of International Students

Name	Number of students	International Students
L. Gumilev National Eurasian University	15794	665
Nazarbayev University	6466	568
Astana Medical University	5053	265

And last, they offer fields of study that international students around the world mainly enroll in (STEM, medicine, business, and law) (OECD, 2018).

3.4. Data Collection Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the data for this research. There were several reasons for the application of this tool. Unlike structured interviews, it offers a particular degree of flexibility and empowers the researcher to readapt the attention if the important issue of specific interest to the researcher occurs (Creswell, 2012). In addition, semi-structured interviews provide an opportunity to ask clarifying

questions for vague responses and also deepen the knowledge about the participant's point of view (Gray, 2004) and get rich data on the topic.

To form the instrumentation applied there were three steps taken: instrument development phase, piloting, and final version of the interview protocol. In the first phase, the interview questions were identified through analyzing the relevant literature to reflect the research question. Since the researcher focuses on the educational quality in higher education within the HESQUAL model, the interview questions were formed to embrace all dimensions of this model: administrative quality, physical environment quality, core educational quality, and support facilities quality. The transformative quality of this model was excluded because this aspect is out of the focus of this study. Since within the HESQUAL model four dimensions explored by this research have sub-dimensions the researcher divided questions by sub-themes and created the interview protocol (See Appendix B). The interview questions were created in such a way to allow students to express their opinions freely.

At the next phase, the instrument was revised by two experts who specialize in the field of internationalization of higher education. They gave their suggestions to improve it and all alterations needed were made. The first expert suggested changing the wording of the questions so that the participants would not only share their learning experiences but evaluate them, while the second removed the questions that were duplicated in meaning. After revising, the researcher piloted the instrument by interviewing two international students to ensure that the questions of the interview protocol were understandable and addressed the research question. As a result of piloting, the protocol was edited and insignificant changes were made.

At the last phase - finalizing the instrument - the interview protocol included four dimensions of the quality of educational services based on service quality (HESQUAL) model was created to explore perceptions of international students. It consists of demographic part and Part II with open-ended questions focusing on the satisfaction level and experiences that international students have regarding the educational quality of Kazakhstani universities.

The demographic part collected information about age, gender, country of origin, university attended, year of study, the degree to be earned, and department while Part II contained 7 sub-themes which gathers the information about background information, general experience, administrative support in the university, academic experience, experiences of support services, experience about the physical environment and overall evaluation of the educational services at current university.

After finalizing the instrument, it was translated into Russian since some of the participants speak only Russian. Then the protocol was administered to the international students participating in this study.

3.5. Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedure included interview questions that were presented in the interview protocol. After interview questions were validated, a consent form (See Appendix A) was prepared. Prior to conducting the interview, ethical permission (Protocol Number 439-ODTU-2021) was received from the METU Human Research Ethics Committee (UEAM) (See Appendix D).

The data were gained from the international students studying in Nur-Sultan. First, three universities were identified and were requested to provide information on international students enrolled. The participants were chosen from the list of international students provided by the universities. The selection criteria for participants were nationality different from Kazakhstan and spending no less than three years as a student in Kazakhstan so the student had experienced face-to-face study. Then participants were identified and contacted to explain the purpose of this study with the request to participate. Participation in the study was voluntary. After creating a list of participants, the interviews were scheduled with them. Since the period of conducting the interviews coincided with the new wave of Omicron strain of COVID-19, it was decided to conduct them through ZOOM meetings to avoid in-person communication. One of the interviews was conducted through VooV meeting application because the participant was from China and ZOOM has restrictions in this country. It is worth noting that an online interview is inferior in terms of

informativeness to a face-to-face interview since gestures, facial expressions, and emotions of the interviewee are not captured. To fill a possible gap in data collection, the researcher asked many clarifying questions to get a complete picture of each participant's learning experience. The participants were provided all information relevant to the study, including the purpose of the study, its significance, and possible benefits. Place was not an issue in this research due to conducting online interviews. Most of the participants were in their countries due to online format of study at their universities. Time was identified to be convenient and comfortable to participants.

The interviews conducted one-on-one were chosen for the comfortability of participants so they can give unrestricted and unconstrained responses. All questions of interviews were open-ended, so they provide more detailed information about the student experiences (Abu Rabia, 2016). Prior to the interview, the researcher asked general questions to make the participants feel comfortable and open to the questions. The participants also signed the informed consent form before the interviews. They were informed that they have a right to refuse to answer any question or exclude themselves from the research at any time if they feel uncomfortable. The duration of the interviews was between 40 minutes and 1 hour 15 minutes. The interviews were recorded, and necessary notes were taken by the researcher during the interviews. The researcher also asked for the possibility of contacting the participants later if additional interviewing will be necessary. All information received during the interviews was kept confidential. The data were collected within one month in the middle of the academic year 2021-2022.

3.6. Data Analysis

The process of data analysis in qualitative research implies analysis of the text to generate new meaningful data combinations, summaries, and syntheses (Cohen et al., 2018). It is needed to emphasize that there is no universal approach to analyze all qualitative data, so the researcher is expected to choose one that is applicable according to the purpose (Cohen et al., 2018).

First, the interviews conducted in Russian were translated into English. Second, the descriptive statistics of the sample were identified to elaborate on the students' demographic characteristics. Third, the study applied interviews as an instrument, so the data were analyzed through content analysis. First, the collected data were transcribed verbatim. After that, the transcribed interviews were read several times to make sure that the researcher became familiar with the data. The next step was coding every interview, i.e. segmenting and labeling pieces of text (Cohen et al., 2018) to form a preliminary group of information about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012) and exploring them for commonalities between coding. Then, the themes and sub-themes based on coding commonalities were defined and the primary code list was arranged. The last stage was searching relevant to the research question codes and themes. Quotations from the interviews were used as proof of the results of the study.

3.7. Trustworthiness

To produce reliable results, the qualitative research needs to address critical concerns regarding the data obtained. To begin with, to ensure the reliability and validity of the data, the researcher followed some procedures. First, the researcher performed the extensive literature review by searching different approaches to the topic. Among various approaches evaluating educational quality in HEIs, the HESQUAL model was chosen as one that was explicitly elaborated for the field of higher education and was tested for reliability in different settings.

The next phase was building the interview protocol that would correspond to the validity requirements. Since the study was built as qualitative research, the instrument's validity was achieved by the revision by two experts specialized in the field of internationalization of higher education. The researcher followed their recommendations and adjusted the instrument. The next step was the piloting phase. To perform it, the instrument was proposed to two international students to check whether the students understood the questions correctly and if there was no misinterpretation of the questions. After minor adjustments, the instrument was proposed to the participants.

Rose and Johnson (2020) identified ten strategies to address reliability and validity in qualitative research: member checking (a), triangulation (b), critical reflexivity and subjective positionality (c), rich, thick description (d), catalytic validity (e), crystallization (f), searching for disconfirmation (negative case analysis) (g), peer debriefing (h), prolonged engagement (i), and external auditor and audit trail (j). To address the issue of trustworthiness in this study, three out of ten strategies listed by Rose and Johnson (2020) were followed in the current study.

According to Rose and Johnson (2020), the triangulation strategy includes the application of different methods (a), different data sources (b), multiple analysts (c), multiple paradigms or theories (d), and multiple types of analyses (e). In this study, the different data sources were utilized, meaning that more than one source of data was applied to ensure the data validity. During the interviews, the researcher took notes where necessary to get a fuller picture of the participants' experiences. The notes were incorporated into journals and were utilized during the data analysis to ensure rich a database.

Moreover, to enhance the reliability of this research, all interviews were digitally recorded, and detailed field notes were taken. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. In addition, to obtain a diversity of perceptions that might be opposing or contradictory to the meaning, international students from different backgrounds, countries, departments, and levels were chosen to participate in the research.

Furthermore, since many participants were expected to speak Russian, the interview protocol questions were translated into Russian. After conducting the interviews, the researcher transcribed them verbatim in Russian and translated them into English. To impede the distortion of translation or loss meaning, the verbatim translation method was applied to translate the protocol accurately and transcribed interviews. Then the translation and original text were checked repeatedly. To ensure the correctness of the translation, the official translator Russian-English checked the documents.

In addition, the researcher identified the biases she brought to the research by utilizing the critical reflexivity and subjective positionality strategy (see Researcher's Role).

Finally, the researcher requested an expert review from her advisor on each stage of the research as a peer debriefing strategy to ensure the validity and reliability of the study.

3.8. Limitations of the Study

The current study has limitations in terms of its sampling, instrumentation, and results. One of the factors is the COVID-19 quarantine regime that all universities in Kazakhstan followed prior to the period of the research. The representativeness of the sample is impacted by the fact that one and a half year prior to the interviewing of the participants the universities in Kazakhstan followed an online format of the study due to the pandemic situation. Thus, the researcher excluded the international students studying in their 1 and 2 years at the undergraduate level and Master's students expecting their lack of the experience of study offline. The researcher expected that they would not be able to answer some of the questions and share their experiences during the interview.

Another limitation is the non-response rate of participants due to the refusal of some chosen participants to be interviewed. The researcher contacted 54 potential international students. Only 18 agreed to participate. Three could not conduct online interviews due to the time zone difference or busy schedules. The possible limitation is also the researcher's bias since the researcher herself has a positive attitude to the quality of services at one of the evaluated universities where she currently works.

Last, the study covers international students from three universities located in Nur-Sultan that restricts access to the experiences of other international students out of Nur-Sultan even though the quality of educational services of other universities may differ from those in Nur-Sultan.

3.9. Researcher's Role

This section presents the role of the researcher in the whole process of the research, starting from identifying the topic of the research, the reasons behind that starting point, continuing with the research question and all procedures following its

specification and ending with the dissemination of findings and presenting the discussion part. Since the researcher conducts the data collection procedures and their analysis, she plays an essential role in each stage of the qualitative research. In this regard, the researcher feels the need to reflect on her role as the researcher in this study to depict the wider view on the research question specification and other steps and specifically how the researcher's beliefs, background and mindset formed the final state of the study. Thus, the need to consider the role of the researcher within the study critically is an essential point.

The main goal of this research was to explore the satisfaction level and learning experiences of international students in Kazakhstani universities. The researcher would like to know how her positive personal experience of being an international student in Turkey differs from those of international students in Kazakhstan and what steps are needed to be taken to enhance their satisfaction with educational quality if the international students are dissatisfied with the specific services. She also strived to build the study in a way to get a deeper understanding of the issue and propose the direction for further research in this area since the evaluation of the educational quality of Kazakhstani universities is an important aspect of creating a regional hub in Central Asia in the field of higher education.

The researcher reflected and identified the areas where her position significantly influenced the research process: motivation to conduct the study on the specific topic, her personal biases and assumptions, her current job position in one of the evaluated universities, challenges of collecting and analyzing qualitative data and input in her development as a researcher during this study.

Regarding the starting point of this fruitful research journey, there is a need to explain the background motivation of the researcher formed under her background and experience. Her interest in the topic can be traced to her study at another National University in Kazakhstan in Almaty. Her personal experience during her study there has negative perceptions of the low educational quality. This perception was extended to the whole system of higher education in Kazakhstan at the time. The deplorable state of higher education at the time could be explained by the long recovery period

after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the whole education system had to be rebuilt from scratch. Therefore, the problem of the quality of education was of great concern to the researcher since, for her, as a citizen of Kazakhstan, the topic of high-quality higher education is essential in regard to future prosperity of her country. The following event as her study at a renowned and high-rank university in Turkey allowed her to focus on the educational quality problem in Kazakhstan from international student's perspective. Her experience as an international student gave her a clue on how to evaluate the educational quality in her country since international students have their perceptions and expectations and thus, can provide a rich evaluation of the issue explored. In addition, the researcher's motivation came from the practical perspective on enhancing the educational quality considering the problems that should have been identified in the study.

Besides the personal negative experience of studying at Kazakhstani university, the researcher has a positive experience working at one of the evaluated universities. As a part of administrative support provider at the university, she, as a researcher, put aside her beliefs and perceptions of the university worker, so they did not intervene in the research process.

Throughout all steps of the study, the researcher was neutral and open to all perceptions and opinions shared by the participants. The same point of view the researcher kept during the literature review, analyzing qualitative data, and presenting the findings. Moreover, the researcher conducted all interviews by asking open-ended questions so all participants could freely share their positive and negative learning experiences. Besides, the participants were asked clarifying questions to avoid misunderstanding and additional questions to ambiguous responses to avoid misinterpretation. As a result, in the findings, were included all opinions of the international students: positive and negative, to create an objective picture and eliminate the researcher's bias regarding the educational quality. So, the researcher strived in approaching all participants objectively and positioned herself as a careful listener open to any opinion.

One more issue to mention is the absence of assumptions regarding the perceptions and experiences of the participants. It can be explained by 16 years after the researcher's graduation and short period (1 month) of employment at the evaluated university before conducting the interviews. For a long period since graduation, the government introduced many changes in higher education aimed at enhancing educational quality. Thus, the researcher did not have any assumptions regarding the educational quality at the Kazakhstani universities.

In turn, the current study benefited the researcher in overcoming the challenges encountered. The researcher faced the problem of getting the participants. It needs to mention that two out of three universities' administrations were happy to share the list of international students and asked to share the study results with them. They were open and supportive. The third university administration rejected sharing the names of international students. So, the researcher found three participants by herself. Another issue was the rejection rate to participate. The researcher contacted 54 potential participants. Only 18 were happy to participate. But due to busy schedules or time zone differences, three could not share their experiences. All interviews were conducted in the evening, so they fit the busy schedule of the participants. The researcher tried to apply a snowball sampling unsuccessfully. None of the referred international students replied to the emails and messages. One participant could not use ZOOM application, so she installed VOOV application that is allowed in China. Under such unexpected issues, the researcher gained a rich experience in gathering raw qualitative data from international students and finding alternatives. She also learned how to conduct an interview, so the participant feels free to share any opinion and perspective on the issue. As a novice researcher, she learned a lot about the educational quality from the international perspective within the Kazakhstani context and how it can be enhanced. The researcher also experienced periods of solid motivation and the impossibility in this study and learned how to conduct qualitative research as her first experience in this field.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter demonstrates findings that were obtained in the result of the analysis of the interviews conducted with 15 international students from three universities in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan. The results are grouped into five main sections. The first section explores the *general experience of international students and their overall satisfaction with educational quality* at their universities and *the reasons they choose their universities*. The next section presents the results of *the students' vision of the university's quality of administrative support*. The third section provides *the international students' reflection on their experiences with the academic dimension*. The next part suggests the findings on *students' satisfaction with support services and physical environment issues*. And the last section provides information on *their attitude to their experiences and includes possible steps proposed by the students to improve some aspects of quality*.

Table 3

Main Themes and Sub-themes Based on the Findings

Themes	Sub-themes
General Satisfaction and Learning Experiences	Territorial and Historical Proximity
	University Characteristics and Future Perspectives
Quality of Administrative Support at the University	Residence Permit and Visa Support
	Communication Issues
	Clearness of Administrative Processes
Academic Dimension Quality	Language Issues
	Course Content, Structure and Challenging Study Program
	Distance Learning Period
Satisfaction with Support Facilities and Physical Environment Quality	
Recommendations of the Students	

4.1. General Satisfaction and Learning Experiences

To obtain a more detailed depiction of the participant's satisfaction with the quality education and their learning experiences in Kazakhstani universities, the findings need to be analyzed through the lens of the theoretical framework that upholds this study. According to the HESQUAL model of Teeroovengadum et al. (2016), the service quality of HEIs includes such factors as administrative quality (attitude and behavior, administrative processes), support facilities quality, core educational quality (curriculum, attitude and behavior, competence, pedagogy), physical environment quality (support infrastructure, learning setting, general infrastructure) and transformative quality that is out of the focus of this study. A more detailed description of each factor is provided in Chapter 2 of this study.

During the initial conversation about the overall experience and satisfaction with the educational quality, the international students shared similar points on their expectations about their universities and education quality. Some aspects of the profiles of the international students also are considered in terms of their satisfaction with educational quality because some patterns influencing the satisfaction degree of students might be discovered.

4.1.1. Territorial and Historical Proximity

Regarding the sample representatives, it is needed to note that 6 students were from non-post-Soviet countries while the other 9 participants were from the former Soviet Union. This fact might affect the satisfaction level of the students that are from the former Soviet Union due to the similarity of education systems of higher education established during the period of the Union and territorial proximity.

All interviewed students got scholarships from different sources to study at their universities. All participants stated that their overall satisfaction with educational quality is met, and they have an overall positive learning experience in their universities with some recommendations and remarks on how their experience and

satisfaction could be improved. Their recommendations and proposals will be provided in the last section of this chapter.

Out of 15 students, 5 students explained the reason to choose Kazakhstan as a country of destination due to being a Kazakh and as a family reunion. Their close relatives live in Kazakhstan. Another international student also mentioned being a Kazakh, but she considered Kazakhstan as a historical homeland and planned to get experience living and studying here. She does not have relatives here.

4.1.2. University Characteristics and Future Perspectives

Other 9 students have different reasons to study in Kazakhstan. Only two of them stated that they did not know anything about Kazakhstan and had concerns related to their learning experience before coming. Their reason to come to Kazakhstan is the scholarship program that allowed them to get the desired degree in their field of interest. In turn, one of the participants was specialized in Russian and Kazakh languages and her professional interest was focused on Central Asia while other 2 participants finished the last class in Kazakhstani high schools and decided to continue their education in this country. Moreover, Participant 8 stated that he does not plan to study in Kazakhstan, but he was a winner of the International Chemistry Olympiad that was held in his current university in Nur-Sultan. He liked the facilities and laboratories and when he was invited to interview during the application period, he liked the faculty and professors, so he decided to continue his education at his current university.

Well, to be honest, I didn't plan. I got accepted from one university in Korea but then I came here to Nur-Sultan because of the International Chemistry Olympiad, so I was a participant. I liked the facility here first, so I applied and then I was an International Olympiad winner, they invited me for an interview. Well, when I came here and went through the interview, I really like the faculty and professors here because they were really friendly and they told me what is going here, so that maybe it's a nice thing. It was a nice idea to attend here.

For most of the participants, the initial satisfaction with their learning experience and the educational quality of their universities might be explained by the fact that they deliberately chose Kazakhstan as their study destination abroad. Other 5 participants

also claimed that they chose their current university due to having a status of National University, the diploma being acknowledged in their country and being in the worldwide ranking system. They believe that after graduation they have a higher chance of employment due to having an education in their current university. As one of the participants recalled:

I chose (the name of the university) because at that time it was considered one of the best...I would have more opportunities to go somewhere further in terms of job prospects (Participant 7).

A similar reason had Participants 13, 14 and 15. They reported that the diploma from Kazakhstani university will provide them more opportunities to be hired back in their country due to the higher level of educational quality in their field. Additionally, there were 3 participants who stated that they liked the student mobility opportunities that their university provides but due to the pandemic period they were unable to take advantage of it.

Interestingly, one of the participants emphasized that she was satisfied with her educational experience in Kazakhstan because of “enjoying a free learning environment”:

You can do what you want to do. You can learn what you want to learn and just ask anyone who can help you as he/she will help you... because studying in China we are always faced with plenty of pressure (Participant 6).

This statement can be connected to the fact that in China there are strict governmental restrictions on many issues which is also reflected in the field of higher education. However, the other participant from China did not mention any such issue.

4.2. Quality of Administrative Support at the University

Even though most of the students interviewed stated that they were overall satisfied with the educational quality proposed by their universities, the findings suggest that there is no common opinion among students regarding each factor covered in this research based on the theoretical framework due to their different educational experiences. So, the results were divided into the following sub-themes.

4.2.1. Residence Permit and Visa Support

Most participants stated that they were satisfied with the administrative support at their universities.

6 Participants claimed that they had some kind of issues with their residence permits or visas. Most of the participants had positive experiences of getting a residence permits or visas with university support. Thus, two participants recalled that inquiries with passports and visas were made in advance. The international students were asked to collect all necessary documents and were told the specific date when they need to pick up ready-made passports or visas. One of them called the procedure “promptly, quickly and clearly done”.

Another participant also mentioned that foreigners were treated very well in this issue because from his personal experience he had always delayed in-residence registration due to the road to Nur-Sultan which took more than two days, and the administrative staff was very helpful in resolving the residence issue. In turn, Participant 8 recalled that he had a permanent address in Almaty and the policies did not allow him to get a residence permit in Nur-Sultan where his university is located but the administrative staff responsible for this issue “tried to do their best” and was “supportive for about one week in trying to do it in Nur-Sultan”. In contrast, 2 participants had claimed that their university needed to accompany the residence permit issued for the international students, but the administrative staff was unable to help them and did not have much information on how to register them. These students had problems with their registration and solved them by themselves. Moreover, another participant mentioned that the department of international cooperation reacted to his problems “a little negligently”.

There is the Department of International Cooperation that deals with foreign students. Here I have difficulties with registration. Its staff reacted to our problems a little negligently. Because of this, there were such incomprehensive difficulties. There were many students just like me. Then the Republic of Kazakhstan issued us fines for the fact that we could overstay our registration there...The staff did not have information and was too busy with other reporting matters (Participant 4).

One of the participants had no issues with registration due to having already residence permit, but she reported the loss of medical insurance supposedly by the mistake of the university. She also regretted that she restored it by herself even though it was the responsibility of the university staff.

4.2.2. Communication Issues

All international students stated that they have a specific department at their university that deals with their specific issues. 4 participants reported that they were assigned with a specific person – a curator – who provided support to them in any issue they faced. The curators were ready to help them with any problems or issues replying to their messages through WhatsApp and providing all necessary information on resolving them. One participant shared his experience about his curator:

I was lucky to meet Sandra, even before I came down here. She was very helpful. Sandra's model is the best staff I've worked with it as an international student. Very, very helpful to us (Participant 11).

All participants except one claimed that communication with administrative staff satisfied them because they can use any way of communication: emails, WhatsApp or visiting the office. The university staff they described as “friendly and trying to do their best to solve the issue”. They respond in a timely manner without delays. Participant 6 shared her experience:

They helped me to solve my problem. Every time. One of the most important things is that even if they don't know how to exactly solve your problem, they at least will find the person to help you...

The language issue as a means of communication with local people was mentioned by three participants who were representatives of non-post-Soviet countries. They did not know basic Russian which is the most popular language of communication in Kazakhstan. They mentioned that earlier their university-provided Russian courses as optional courses but now there is only a student Russian Club that does not provide regular classes. This opportunity could diminish the communication problems in Russian stated by one of the participants who reported that administrative staff of lower rank was not proficient in English and since he did not know Russian or Kazakh

languages sometime he was not able to explain his requests. He reported that he solved the issue by taking his friends speaking Russian or Kazakh to help him. He also suggested “recruiting multilingual proficient in their language skills staff”. Other participants except Participant 6 did not claim any language issues with administrative staff. This should be associated with the fact that most participants are from former Soviet Union countries with the Russian heritage as communication means. In turn, another participant reported that the administrative staff did not communicate in English, so she communicated in Kazakh because she knew it.

In contrast, other participants did not remark on any language issue as a means of communication. This fact can be attributed to being most of them from post-Soviet countries and their proficiency in Russian. The last two participants from China also have basic knowledge of Russian so they did not have any problems with local community communication.

A total of 4 participants reported some language issues in communication with administrative staff. They reported being purely Russian speakers while 90% of the department working with international students was native Kazakh speakers. This fact created barriers to communication and resolving the problems of international students. Particularly, Participant 4 reported that the staff was not efficient in English and international students without Kazakh and Russian language knowledge were mostly ignored due to the language barrier.

...we also have English-speaking students, and the department did not work well with them because the staff simply did not know English...

In contrast, another participant reported a negative experience with administrative staff. In her opinion, the administrative staff had “a little lack of politeness”. There was a delay in replying to her emails, there was no visa support. She was also the only one who mentioned the problem of getting a dormitory. She stated that in her case she addressed the issue to the vice-rector and only after his call she received a place in the dormitory.

4.2.3. Clearness of Administrative Processes

All participants except one claimed that they were provided clear instructions on the procedures at the university. So, a participant stated that:

...they always send us instructions on how to go there, everything is straight explained. Well, it seems to me that everything is clear. And they provide everything on time, sometimes even faster than the time is generally written (Participant 7).

Most of them did not face bureaucracy issues. They all stated that they were satisfied with the procedures. In cases when they had any questions, the administrative staff explained the steps needed. Moreover, during the pandemic period, most procedures became more convenient since they were transferred to electronic format. Each university created a special system through which students were able to apply for any document issued by the university.

In contrast, another participant reported that she did not understand some procedures at her university. She emphasized the issues with accommodation in the dormitory and visa support when she needed to either find a person who would intervene to solve the issue or collect all documents for her visa by herself. She also stated that her requests to the Department for International Cooperation sometimes were not responded. Some of their replies did not help her.

Even if you need to solve problems, you still need to find the most important person, for example, the rector or vice-rector or someone else. If you take an ordinary employee, I don't know, apparently, I don't know their position. They didn't even solve my problem with the dormitory, so I immediately found the vice-rector and thanks to one call, this call solved everything...Neither they did not respond to emails... And there is no support for obtaining a visa neither. It's kind of weird, I think... (Participant 1).

She also stated the bureaucracy issue in her department. The document flow for Ph.D. students required the signature of the university rector. So, she had to get his signature for the research topic and international internship reports even though they were already approved by her department.

Firstly, when topic of the dissertation was determined, the rector must sign the order, even when we were going on an internship, the rector must sign. The doctoral student and his supervisor have chosen the scientific topic, it has been already signed at the department. This is enough for me. I don't understand why the rector's signature is always needed. And they always require his signature from me... There is still a lot of reports. For a doctoral student, in my opinion, the most important thing is research, not reports. In Kazakhstan, we prepare a report every semester. For pedagogical practice we filled out a report on 30 sheets, written by hand... (Participant 1).

One participant reported the bureaucracy that professors deal with, and it affects the interaction quality with students. He stated that:

I was told from pretty much all the professors that I have interacted with that they are dealing with a lot of bureaucracy. They are doing so many documents, so they find it hard to engage with students just fully (Participant 8).

4.3. Academic Dimension Quality

Regarding the academic dimension, the findings suggest that all participants except one were satisfied with their faculty, its expertise, knowledge, exams and other issues. All participants reported that attitude to the students depended on the teaching style of the lecturers. Some of them prefer to give just lectures without discussions even though they answer all students' questions arising during classes. The student has also an opportunity to address his questions during office hours. The other part of lecturers actively involves students in the learning process by supporting discussions among students. Some students claimed that they have two types of classes: lectures and seminars. During the lectures, they are only giving information while during seminars they have opportunities to ask their questions, clarify points they did not understand and have discussions. As an example, one participant reported that the students from his department suggested more modern analogs to some programs that were proposed by their program and the lecturers agreed to adapt the assignments to a new approach and supported such initiatives from the students.

There were cases when we used old programs, but students found more modern analogues and offered to replace the with them, then in principle lecturers agreed. That is, some lecturers were very loyal to the initiatives of students if the task was completed even if it was not completed in the format that was

originally intended, but if there was a result, then they were loyal (Participant 2).

4.3.1. Language Issues

Some students reported language issues during their studies. So, one participant faced the problem of getting feedback on her academic paper since her advisor was not proficient in English. This international student was advised to find someone who can support her. Another problem she encountered is the English deficiency of the lecturers. She applied for the English classes program, but some lecturers spoke preferable in Russian she did not know. She expressed her dissatisfaction with the university's approach to the hiring requirements for faculty staff.

We need to publish some articles. ...I needed to get some feedback on my paper, and I asked my advisor. And she because all my article argumentation was in English she asked me to find maybe our some good teachers who know English....I took one class and I was the only foreign student in that classroom. That time I felt a bit disappointed and a bit sad because I expected the teacher understands me better and you know, do care about me better like because I choose the English class, not the Russian class. She should be able to speak English and tell us everything in English. But things were different. Maybe it was easier for her to speak Russian. I was like “why is this happening and why didn't the faculty do something about that (Participant 6)?

One of the participants had a problem with the obligatory course in the Kazakh language. He reported that as an international student he was included in the beginner level group in the 1st year but in the 2nd year the situation changed, and all international students were combined with local students who mostly already knew this language. The group was on the intermediate level while international students started a previous year with an alphabet. This experience was “stressful” for him. The university representatives did not explain why it happened. A similar situation had another participant from the same university. She chose the Russian department assuming that all lectures would be conducted either in English or Russian. During the 1st year of study, the study was held in Russian and English. But in the 3rd year, her department was merged with the Kazakh department and many classes were provided in Kazakh. She also emphasized that international students were unable to do anything with this fact. In such situations, the international students were put at a disadvantage.

Upon admission, we were asked in what language we would like to study. We were 3 departments: Russian, Kazakh, and multilingual. It was assumed that each division studies in the language that it chose, but over time, the university was somehow not particularly interested in foreign students, we were simply confronted with the fact that we will be taught in Kazakh without considering the fact we do not speak it. We just had a problem that there were not so many students in Russian department, and therefore, closer to the 3rd year, we were merged with Kazakh department. We studied all together, since many lecturers do not particularly speak Russian, and for us, and unfortunately, for them, it was difficult to communicate in general (Participant 5).

4.3.2. Course Content, Structure and Challenging Study Program

Some of the students voiced the problem of course content and structure at their universities. One participant reported that even though she was satisfied with the course content itself she disagreed with the lecture/self-study/practice proportion. Out of 150 hours, she has only 60-70 hours of lecture that she found not enough and too much independent work (self-study and practice). In contrast, participants with medical backgrounds reported that their program needs more practice. One of the participants also reported that for his specialty (IT) more practice is required just because of the nature of the future work. He also recalled that some of the course content was outdated and needed to be updated since the programming field is actively developing.

I don't know about other specialties in other departments, it may be necessary, but for Information Technology specialty, I think more practice required. I think that it is in this specialty students need to practice their professional skills in programming a lot to learn something. In my opinion, let's say that some of the areas we are taught are little outdated and have lost their relevance today, so I would like to replace the teaching of some disciplines with more modern ones... (Participant 2).

The same problem was voiced by another participant (Accounting) who reported that the knowledge of some of the faculty staff was outdated but she emphasized that they "tried to keep up with the new trends and learned new things". She also claimed that professors tried to adapt their knowledge to the new methods in this specialty. The outdated state of the faculty knowledge could be explained by the nature of their fields that develops all the time: IT and Accounting and new methods and technology are introduced very often.

In turn, one participant reported that the course content the university provides does not apply to some degree. She explained that since she studies International Relations the university could not suggest the wide range of languages that is supposed to be offered. She also regretted that her program was more oriented to the cultural settings.

Most participants reported the problem with the course selection process. In their universities, it was announced that a system of mandatory and elective courses would be introduced. In reality, the university proposed some electives, but the students could not identify their vector of the study. They could choose the electives only as a whole group so at the beginning of every semester they had a debate with their classmates and by the majority of voices had to decide which course they would study. As a participant mentioned:

The system does not work... I don't really want to choose because you don't believe that they will let you study the course of interest. We are forced to choose all the same. The whole group goes through what is needed what they have chosen (Participant 7).

If the new initiatives would be in place each international student will be able to create an individual vector of the courses depending on their interests.

In contrast, another participant from the university which provides elective and mandatory courses identified the problem that her specialty is popular and there is a problem with getting some courses since some of them are in high demand. Even the registrar office could not help because the specific procedure for add-course applications mostly resulted in rejection.

All participants reported that they have a positive learning experience in their universities. However, when questioning their general experience only some of them had some problems with different aspects of academic and non-academic life. Among them, one claimed that while being satisfied overall with the education quality at her university, she stated that it is hard to study at her university defining the study as "stressful". She also shared the idea that "all students are very talented and all of them are really smart". The other participant, in contrast, openly stated that he was at some point disappointed with the difficulty of classes because some of them even though

were very attractive to him in reality were too easy, so he changed his major three times to find the appropriate level of class difficulty:

...the difficulty of courses really depends on the instructor. You cannot really predict what will happen in the course unless you got really into it... but I like courses here (Participant 8).

These two students were from one particular university and department. The findings lead to the conclusion that satisfaction with the course difficulty and content depends at some point on the knowledge background the students have before entering their university. The issue of the difficulty of overall study from a different standpoint was mentioned also by Ph.D. student who was a representative of another university. The differences in educational systems of local and home country universities also affect the learning experiences of international students. So, she stated that the requirements for the Ph.D. students at her university were difficult to meet.

To be honest, it seems to me that this is a bit difficult for me as a foreigner, because we do not have any distinction between foreigners and local doctoral students. We study together, and all requirements for us the same. It seems to me that at my university and in general in Kazakhstan it's very difficult because 3 published works are required with high percentile Scopus journal... There are also pedagogical practice, scientific practice, and also an internship abroad. In general, the learning process is very difficult, and there are a lot of processes (Participant 1).

She also provided some information on the requirements for Ph.D. students in her country. She emphasized that in Kazakhstan the Ph.D. student should determine the topic of the dissertation and find an international consultant two months after the beginning of the first semester while in her country the students decide on the topic by the third year. This student clearly stated that she was "surprised" by this fact, and it was "unexpected" to her even though she liked the overall level of her education. In turn, 2 participants remarked that they expected to have trouble meeting the high standards of education at their university. But after two months of study, one of them claimed to have "not too strict professors who were also understanding" and the whole process was not so stressful for her while the second one mentioned:

First time I was very worried about whether I would cope with all the upcoming studies, whether I would be able to move on and in general whether I would be able to graduate from the university (Participant 2).

But after 4 years of study, he said to be grateful to the university. Other 11 participants stated that they are satisfied with the overall level of education and difficulty of the study.

When reflecting on their experience as international students, some participants remarked that people are very friendly to them and overall, the university community has a positive attitude to them. Participant 11 stated that the university provided them with a staff representative who was very helpful to newcomers and helped a lot during adaptation to the new country. However, one participant claimed that there was no difference in requirements for local and international students in terms of the study while in her country it is different. She regretted it because as was mentioned earlier she found the study requirements for doctoral students too high in Kazakhstan. Other participants did not mention attitudes toward them as international students specifically.

4.3.3. Distance Learning Period

To address the issue of the educational quality in Kazakhstani universities questions about the learning experiences during the pandemic period also were introduced to the international students.

All participants reported that overall, during the period of distance learning they had a positive learning experience. The academic staff tried to do their best to encourage the students to study in a such way. They introduced more additional materials and applied more visually attractive materials. The communication with the faculty was stable. They replied to any emails without delays.

One participant mentioned that he liked this period because unlike regular study he was allowed to use additional materials during the mid-term examinations which positively affected his grades. He also shared the idea that online teaching is more applicable for humanitarian courses but for his major (Mathematics) offline format is

preferable. Additionally, another participant stated that after the online period of learning the majority of lectures switched the approach to the learning process. He emphasized the positive change in using the only electronic format of books. There was no longer a need to use hard-copy books. In turn, one of the participants reported that some of the staff were from “old school” and the first time had difficulties with new technologies but over time they adapted and continued their teaching process. In contrast, some of the participants stated that the period of distance learning negatively affected their knowledge base in their field since their specialty involves the work with patients and demands a lot of practical classes that they missed during the pandemic period. In turn, another participant reported the problem of missing a practice course on 1 C enterprise due to the pandemic period.

It was no fault of the university, everything was in distance learning mode, but we missed the most important course for our specialty (Participant 3).

For her as an international student, it was impossible to pass this practice by herself because of not have the citizenship of Kazakhstan her candidacy was rejected by local companies.

A similar problem had another participant. She mentioned that her university provides a wide range of opportunities to go abroad but due to the Covid-19 period she was not able to apply for the student mobility program.

The university provides opportunities for student mobility. It is not difficult to get into a mobility program and go abroad. I study Korean and Japanese and could go to Japan or Korea to study at the university there for a while. Unfortunately, I could not use it because all countries were closed (Participant 5).

Some of the students reported the problem of access to the good quality internet. They returned to their countries during the pandemic period and encountered the problem of a lack of high-speed internet. One of the participants reported that she is from the capital of her country and even there was a big problem with online learning.

...I had problems with internet connections in Uzbekistan. Some of my fellow citizens did not live in cities, a little further from the city and there are already big problems with internet connections. For example, I live in the capital but

as you know the capital is always much better even there sometimes there were interruptions in the connection. They (professors) thought that it was unrealistic that everyone should have Internet access, moreover, we still have a very expensive one in Uzbekistan (Participant 3).

Some of the lecturers were understandable some were not but she agreed that this problem did not connect to the university itself.

4.4. Satisfaction with Support Facilities and Physical Environment Quality

Overall, all participants claimed that they were satisfied with the conditions that their universities provide. Some of the participants reported that all services like IT help, dormitory conditions, copy and printing facilities, library and safety on the campus are at a high level so they did not have any remarks to mention. This can be explained by the fact that they are from one university that has a new campus that was built with the idea to provide all services at the highest level of quality. As one of the participants mentioned:

Living on the campus is relaxed life in terms of access to the library or Sports Center. We have an Olympic-size pool here. I don't see any difference between here and European universities in this regard (Participant 10).

But he also emphasized the problem of the university administration's decision regarding access to the campus during the pandemic period. He agreed that the restrictions on going out of the campus were understandable during that time, but his university still has restrictions on the campus access. Even though the pandemic time was over in Kazakhstan and every organization returned to the normal operational state, his university still allowed to enter only the students who had offline courses. He found this decision "strange" and described it as "limiting the freedom of the students".

Other participants mentioned that they have some remarks about this dimension of quality even though it was explained that this factor did not influence their satisfaction with the university too much. Most conditions of their university (safety, library, lecture rooms and their equipment, students' club activities and others) satisfied them.

So, some participants reported that all services provided by their universities have met their needs. Most of the international students claimed that their university made a good decision after the pandemic time on creating study corners in every block where students can perform their homework or just sit and relax. These corners provide sofas, tables and chairs so they created a comfortable atmosphere in the buildings. Now students have a choice between library settings and these corners.

I can only say positive things about the library, yes, we have it, and it is quite complete and large. Before pandemic time there were no such places where you could sit and relax, work out, or sit at a free table. There were not there, and we went to the library to sit there. Now they already exist in every building (Participant 4).

However, they stated that printing facilities also need to be present on the campus. There is no such service on the territory of their campus, so the students find it within a walk distance outside. They sounded like it is no big problem but if they can print and copy any materials inside of their blocks it would be more convenient in terms of saving their time.

But we do not have copy services, printing services. As far as I remember, they were in the 1st year, but then they were removed. In this regard, of course, the university need to elaborate this issue. Because when we need to print something or copy, we need to ask for time off to go somewhere, leave the campus, look for these services somewhere (Participant 7).

They also reported that even though recently the new sports block was built on the territory of the campus the students had access to it only during sports classes. They claimed that they cannot use it at another time.

2 participants mentioned a lighting issue in the lecture rooms. They described it as “poor and insufficient”. Regarding the conditions of the university’s blocks based on the answers of the students, it can be concluded that it depends on the age of the blocks. Only one participant mentioned that her block was very old in comparison to other blocks of her university, and it needs to be renovated. Other students from this university stated that their buildings are in good condition.

4.5. Recommendations of the Students

All participants except one reported that they would recommend their universities to the other prospective students in their countries. Most of them emphasized that faculty members are the most satisfying factor of their experience. One participant said that the academic part needs more knowledge of field-practice due to being part of a rapidly changing industry his specialty needs to be adapted more frequently. So, the academic dimension did not satisfy him, but he liked the sociological part of his experience which is out of interest in this study. Another participant also will recommend their university with a remark that her university could be recommended for only humanitarian specialties, but for technical programs, she would suggest choosing universities with technical orientation. In contrast, one participant reported that she will not recommend her university because of many issues she shared during the interview: starting from degree requirements that are difficult to fulfill during a short period, English deficiency of staff, bureaucracy issues and weak administrative support.

Other dimensions of educational quality in the scope of the theoretical framework satisfy the international students with some remarks and as they stated did not influence their satisfaction level too much. They all reported that the academic part is the most important component based on their evaluation of their learning experiences.

The findings demonstrate that students at the Ph.D. level are more confident to share their vision on how to improve educational quality in their university. Interestingly, despite all students being from the same university, they proposed different suggestions. There is no similar answer among students. Most of the participants claimed that they are satisfied with the quality of services provided by their university, and they do not have anything to suggest.

One of the participants gave suggestions related to university promotion that includes course content and exchange program. Even though he is also satisfied with the educational quality in his university, the participant discussed the issue of the necessity to include different world language courses in the university programs. He considers

this issue as a part of university promotion since university graduates should be competitive in the world labor market.

...just teaching them several languages like Russian or maybe Chinese, some European languages or maybe Arabic or Turkish language is due to increase their chance to be promoted... to be more qualified as job seekers (Participant 10).

The student also suggested an exchange program introduction to the university practice as a part of its promotion among world universities. He claimed that the implementation of such programs would “improve the university positioning” among Central Asia universities first and then promote it among world universities because the students “have to be connected well with” other universities. This student also proposed a measure to reconsider the university budget for participation in international conferences. He reported missing two conferences due to the lack of funding for such needs.

Another participant who also is a PH.D. student shared the vision that the university administration should pay more attention to the needs of the students. She emphasized the issue that the university administration is not connected to the students. She pointed out the fact that she never saw the university head (rector).

4.6. Summary

In conclusion, the overwhelming majority of the international students reported their overall satisfaction with different aspects of educational quality that were considered within the HESQUAL model of Teeroovengadum et al. (2016).

The core educational quality was reported by the most international students as a most essential element that influences their satisfaction. Out of 15 participants, only one participant was dissatisfied with her overall learning experience. Other participants stated that they were satisfied with their learning experiences. Some of them encountered such problems as communication issues with the faculty due to the language deficiency of the latter, the impossibility to choose electives to create their

unique vector of education that meets their interests and internet quality during the pandemic period and lack of practice.

The quality of the administrative dimension also mostly satisfied the international students. According to it, some students reported such problems as the inability to help them with the residence permits, loss of medical insurance and communication problems due to language deficiency. Only one participant shared her experience as negative because she did not feel any support from administrative staff in many issues she faced and addressed them.

The quality of support facilities and physical environment satisfied most of the participants. Such elements as access to the sports facilities, the necessity for renovation of some buildings and the opening of printing and copy facilities need to attract the attention of the university administration. Even though the overall quality of all aspects satisfied the international students, some drawbacks and gaps of quality need to be addressed by the university administration to enhance the quality that the university provides and improve the learning experiences of students thus increasing their satisfaction.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This section presents a discussion, conclusion and implications of the key findings of the study. First, it provides a brief summary of the results in connection with the existing literature. The implications for the practice and suggestions for further research are following next in this chapter.

The current study was conducted to explore the learning or educational experiences and the satisfaction level of international students with the quality of educational services in Kazakhstani universities. To reach the goal, four dimensions of the educational quality of the HESQUAL model of Teeroovengadum et al. (2016) such as administrative quality, support facilities quality, core educational quality and physical environment quality were examined through semi-structured interviews with international students from three Kazakhstani universities. The study was guided by the following research question:

“What are the lived experiences of international students in Kazakhstani HEIs in terms of the quality of educational services and their satisfaction?”

5.1. General Satisfaction and Learning Experiences

The findings of this study indicated that the results obtained are mostly parallel with the existing literature and give the university administrators clues on what needs their attention to enhance the educational quality dimension. As literature suggested, generally international students are satisfied with their overall experience at the universities (Ammigan & Jones, 2018; Rakhshandehroo & Ivanova, 2020). In particular, the international students who are students of prestigious, modern and well-known universities are more likely to positively evaluate their learning experiences

(Masserini et al., 2019). According to this study, while most participants reported overall satisfaction with the educational quality and learning experiences at their universities among all dimensions of quality within the theoretical framework, the core educational quality dimension has the most impact on international student overall satisfaction while satisfaction with support services has the least impact. In contrast, Bozbay et al. (2019) reported contradictory results that among international students who participated in their study, all participants were dissatisfied with all services provided by their universities.

Regarding the *territorial and historical proximity*, the existing literature claimed that the scholarship policy of the host country was one of the factors attracting international students to Turkey (Kondakci, 2011). Other reasons found in the study were “having a relative or family member in Turkey”, “academic quality” and “field of the study”. The findings of this research are consistent with these results and suggested that participants had similar reasons why they chose Kazakhstan as their country of the degree of persuasion.

As findings of this study also indicated, a pattern of similar historical background should be taken into consideration as by this fact the satisfaction of some students might be expected and explained due to the similar education system that was created during the era of the Soviet Union. Since the overwhelmed majority of the participants were from the former Soviet countries this aspect might explain some degree of their positive learning experiences and satisfaction with the educational quality of their universities because they might know what they should expect and thus, their expectations were met.

In terms of *university characteristics and future perspectives*, the findings of this research demonstrated that international students have several reasons to study in Kazakhstan. Some of these reasons are similar to the results of the previous studies. In the study by Altbach (2004), it was found that many international students chose the United States of America as their study destination because, in their opinion, graduation from American universities was prestigious and better in comparison to their local universities. In confirmation of these rationales, the findings of this study

stated that some of the participants deliberately chose Kazakhstani university as an institution of their degree persuasion destination due to specific characteristics of the institution (having a status of national university, diploma acknowledged in their country, being in the world ranking and better job perspectives back in their country due to the better quality of education). Altbach (2004) also claimed that some international students aimed to stay in the host country to work and build a career. Some of the participants of this study mentioned in their interviews that besides having relatives in Kazakhstan and aiming to return to their historical homeland while others plan to pursue a career path in Kazakhstan.

5.2. Quality of Administrative Support at the University

The previous research literature provides an understanding that administrative support of universities plays important role in international student satisfaction and their positive learning experiences (Grunwald & Peterson, 2003; Gopalan et al., 2019). Moreover, in the study of Ammigan and Jones (2018), the findings claimed that the support provided by International Office had the most positive impact on their satisfaction. Additionally, according to Smith and Khawaja (2011) and Yusoff and Othman (2011), the support provided by administrative personnel to international students is important in affecting their academic satisfaction. Thus, the point supported by the study of Korobova and Starobin (2015) defined that a supportive institutional approach positively influenced the international students' overall satisfaction.

Regarding *the residence permit and visa support*, the existing literature showed that administrative support influences international student satisfaction, thus, the issues of support in residence permit and visa obtaining play also an important role as a part of the common understanding of administrative quality. The findings demonstrated that the international students faced both an efficient support and its deficiency during their state registration. Unexpected were results, that both evaluations of administrative support in terms of state registration gave students from the same university. It means that the representatives of the Department of International Cooperation, the unit working with international students, demonstrated not consistent support quality.

In turn, in terms of *communication issues*, the findings demonstrated that the communication channels used by the administrative staff at all universities included in this research promoted the possibility of adequately addressing the inquiries of participants and made this process very comfortable. Such an approach to performing their duties by administrative staff positively influenced the satisfaction of international students with the administrative quality.

However, there is an issue within the communication aspect identified in this study. Dissatisfaction was reported by some participants regarding the inappropriate language proficiency of administrative staff. This was an important factor that influenced the satisfaction of the participants and is consistent with the existed literature (Mak et al., 2015). Hence, the administrative staff that had the English or Russian language deficiency depending on the university could not provide the necessary support to the students and their requests were not addressed adequately. A similar problem was voiced in the study of Bozbay et al. (2020) that indicated the dissatisfaction of international students in Turkey with interactions between non-academic staff and international students due to the lack of English communication skills of administrative staff.

Thus, to make the students' experience more satisfying, the university administrators should pay attention to the language proficiency of administrative staff those international students communicate with to address their inquiries. Additionally, according to the existing literature, the study conducted at the University of Derby indicated that additional customer training of the administrative staff improved the student experience by 32 % in one year (Baranova et al., 2011).

In regard to *the clearness of administrative processes*, the findings of this study showed that most participants were satisfied with the administrative processes at their universities. They reported that administrative procedures were clear and in the case of not understanding steps administrative staff provided explanations needed. The findings also demonstrated that the pandemic period positively influenced the administrative processes aspect due to the move of all document flow to the online mode. All participants emphasized that after the Covid-19 period they easily can

request all documents through the online system. Most of the participants stated that they did not face any issues of bureaucracy. So, it can be inferred that all procedures were clear, transparent, and performed on time.

One participant reported the issue of bureaucracy that professors deal with on an everyday basis. As reported this issue might negatively influence international student satisfaction and educational quality overall because of demanding a lot of time thus faculty might have not enough time to fully engage with their students.

5.3. Academic Dimension Quality

As findings of this study demonstrated, the core educational quality is the most important factor for international student satisfaction. The majority of participants agreed that academic quality plays the most important role in their satisfaction with their learning experiences and the educational quality of the universities.

The existing literature is consistent with these findings. So, according to Appleton-Knapp and Krentler (2006), the students were more satisfied with their learning experience whose expectations were met and in contrast, if their expectations were not met, they were dissatisfied. They also found that the quality of lectures had the highest positive impact on their satisfaction. In turn, Lapina et al. (2016) reported that the quality of academic staff and study programs are the most important factors for international students in Estonia. The findings of Wilkins and Balakrishnan (2011) also supported these results and defined the most influential factor in student satisfaction – the quality of lecturers. Moreover, Masserini et al. (2019) defined teaching as the main determinant of student satisfaction. Other studies also identified aspects of core educational quality according to the HESQUAL model - competence, behaviors, attitudes, and teaching style of lectures – as essential elements for providing high-quality education (Douglas et al., 2006). Teaching quality was identified as the most important aspect of student satisfaction with their learning experiences by other researchers (Alves & Raposo, 2007; Mergen et al., 2000; Voss et al., 2007; Chelliah et al., 2019). In turn, Ammigan and Jones (2018) provided different results. In their study, the arrival and living experiences greatly influence the satisfaction level of

international students, following by the learning aspects and support services satisfaction.

As for *language issues*, language proficiency is another important factor that significantly influences the satisfaction of international students with educational quality in Kazakhstani universities. In regard to this study, the language proficiency issue can be divided into two dimensions. The first one is the language deficiency of academic staff. All cases related to the lack of faculty with specific language proficiency reported by participants took place at the same university. The deficiency of English when the lecturers switched to Russian and the deficiency of faculty in the Russian language switching to Kazakh language instructors negatively influenced the learning experiences and satisfaction level of these students. It can be the result of a possible shortage of academic staff with a specific language of instruction. This finding is similar to the previous studies (Rakhshandehroo & Ivanova, 2020; Wilkinson, 2015) that stated the language efficiency limitations of academic staff and faculty as linguistic challenges. They also assumed that universities face some difficulties in securing sufficient faculty with teaching in English. As Rakhshandehroo and Ivanova (2020) suggested in their study, in the case of English (Russian) speaking academic staff lack it is possible to consider switching to the host language. But this strategy might encounter another problem in mixed classes, particularly with international students with limited knowledge of the host language. The implications of this approach faced other students from the same university when they were taught in Kazakh without sufficient knowledge of one of the host languages.

An overwhelming majority of the participants did not mention academic staff language deficiency. It can be explained by the fact that they are from post-Soviet countries where the Russian language is widespread or the university hires mostly English native-speaking international academic staff. Hence, these students reported positive experience and satisfaction with this aspect of their academic life. This result is consistent with the previous research findings (Ammigan & Jones, 2018).

The question of hiring academic staff with sufficient language skills needs to attract the attention of university administrators because the language efficiency of the

faculty plays important role in effective faculty-student interactions that in turn influences the overall satisfaction level (Mak et al., 2015; Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Webber et al., 2013).

Similar to the findings of previous studies (Eom et al., 2006; Bini & Masserini, 2016; Masserini et al., 2019) the results of this study regarding *the course content, structure and challenging study program* demonstrated that course content and structure influence international student satisfaction. In the case of this study, some participants reported their dissatisfaction with the proportion of theoretical and practical parts suggesting an increase in the practice component.

Another issue of course content, namely the challenging study program, was demonstrated in the findings of this study. Some participants reported that they were satisfied with their programs while others stated that their program was challenging. The findings of this study are consistent with the existing literature demonstrating that a challenging study program is one of the factors that have a positive influence on international student satisfaction with educational quality. Thus, Korobova and Starobin (2015) defined that level of educational challenge and student - faculty interaction are among predictors of student satisfaction.

In turn, regarding *the distance learning period* the findings of this study demonstrated that universities strived to provide the educational process at the operational level during the pandemic period. There was a period of adaptation to the new delivery process from both students and lecturers at that time. The universities moved the course delivery process to the online format that can be compared to the e-learning principles. The universities operated on the basis of online platforms and established online systems for document flow to keep physical interactions to a minimum. The participants reported some positive aspects of the distance learning period. For example, they reported using lecturers more additional sources of information and more complicated technologies to keep students' attention during classes. All documents they were able to request online saving their time. These results come in line with existing literature that claimed distance learning is a complex process of creation and improvement of integrated information systems. It demands the

advancement of information and communication technology (Harsasi & Sutawijaya, 2018).

In contrast to the findings of this study, nursing students reported low and moderate satisfaction with online learning during the pandemic period. They also reported this time as a very stressful (Oducado & Estoque, 2021). In turn, according to Ngo and Ngadiman (2021), student satisfaction during the pandemic period was influenced significantly by good internet connections and speed and website content which supports the findings of this research where some students reported difficulties to perform all assignments due to the low speed and bad quality of the internet they had in their own cities. The affordability and accessibility of the internet are essential in promoting online course delivery since such applications as Zoom video meetings, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams demand a fast internet connection to ensure distance learning (Ngo & Ngadiman, 2021).

The current research mirrors the interaction issues between students and lecturers that were explored in the previous studies (Ngo & Ngadiman, 2021; Um & Jang, 2021). The participants of the current study reported that communication flow with the lecturers was without delays and moreover academic staff tried to encourage students during the whole period of Covid-19 distance learning. In turn, some faculty members as participants claimed it was difficult the first time to adapt to a new approach and new technologies. Similar to the findings of this research, Faize and Nawaz (2020) reported that online learning requires necessary resources and technological skills hence it was challenging for academic staff with limited technical knowledge when they faced technical problems during the classes (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020).

Three students from the nursing specialty reported that while they were overall satisfied with their learning experiences, they reported their concerns with the practical aspects. The existing literature coincides with these findings to some extent. In contrast to the reported overall satisfaction in this study, the undergraduate nursing students in different countries were dissatisfied with online learning during the pandemic period because not all elements of this specialty can be online delivered due to having more practical aspects (Oducado & Estoque, 2021; Koirala et al., 2020).

5.4. Satisfaction with Support Facilities and Physical Environment Quality

As it is demonstrated by the results, the support facilities and physical environment quality mostly satisfied the majority of the participants. It also needed to emphasize that they reported that these aspects as the parts of higher education quality are inferior in importance to core educational quality element. These features can be considered additional advantages to the factor that mainly influences the learning experiences and satisfaction of the international students (Chelliah et al., 2019). These findings are consistent with the findings of Harvey (2003) that stated that support facilities for teaching and learning might be considered as additional resources by the universities to meet students' expectations and maintain service quality in higher education. Additionally, the quality and availability of support resources are important in defining student satisfaction (Wilkins & Balakrishnan, 2011). Having appropriate infrastructure, academic buildings and recreation places may also foster satisfaction (Gruber et al., 2010; Harvey, 2003). In contrast, Masserini et al. (2019) received contradictory results. According to their study, contrary to their expectations, this dimension does not directly influence student satisfaction. Another point is demonstrated by the study of Beloucif et al. (2017). They found that the quality of the facilities plays an essential role in international student satisfaction on a par with the quality of lecturers.

5.5. Implications, Suggestions & Conclusion

As the result of the research, the finding indicated that international students are mostly satisfied with their learning experiences at Kazakhstani universities. This study also demonstrated that among four aspects of the educational quality considered within the theoretical framework the academic dimension is the most important in terms of having the greatest impact on the overall student satisfaction. So, the suggestion of this study is to strive in providing a good level across all aspects of educational quality to achieve a high level of international student satisfaction since all elements of educational quality have an influence on overall satisfaction to some extent. The universities also should recognize the importance of the academic dimension in overall satisfaction as this study indicated and take into consideration

the improvement of support services that might enhance learning experiences. They also need to promote collaboration between academic and support services dimensions.

As Ammigan and Hall (2018) suggested to meet the high demand in collaboration among other divisions between students' affairs and service staff, residence and housing units, multicultural centers, academic staff and professional managers at the faculties to elaborate on the issues the international students face across the university to improve their learning experiences. The researcher also stated that the necessary resources should be attracted to reach this goal.

Another point to consider by top management of the universities in Kazakhstan is the language proficiency of academic and non-academic staff. Kazakhstan is a bilingual country so there is a need to hire staff with at least two languages (English and Russian) in terms of communication efficiency with international students depending on their country of origin. The language issue should be considered also in terms of teaching international students to local languages. There is a need to consider the operation of language groups that are aimed at the language knowledge appropriate to their level.

One more issue should be voiced based on the findings of this study. The additional advantage of this research includes the sharing of learning experiences of the international students from three different universities. The rationale for choosing these universities is based on the expected differences of systems in Nazarbayev University and two other universities. According to the experiences shared by the students, the universities whose students participated have different approaches to curriculum structure. Taking into consideration the status and practice of Nazarbayev University which operates on the basis of American universities and promotes the system of elective courses, the students at other universities do not have the opportunity to form their unique curriculum by applying the system of electives. This system operates formally as is seen from the findings. Hence, the administration of the universities in Kazakhstan should pay attention and take steps to operationalizing the

system of elective courses when each student can create a unique path in his/her education.

Among all participants, there was one Ph.D. student who was mostly dissatisfied with her learning experiences and educational quality at her university. Since she was the only Ph.D. student from that university it might be demanded to conduct another research to identify whether it is systematic problems of international Ph.D. students at the university or is a personal perception of the specific student.

Additionally, it is needed to emphasize that evaluating the personal learning experiences through their impressions, beliefs or feelings towards their universities is important in assessing the quality of all aspects that is independent of actual delivery and sheds the light on perceptions of that quality. This type of quality assessing is reasonable can provide a different construct of quality compared to the results that can be obtained through questionnaires. It can provide a much broader concept of educational quality by incorporating such intangible aspects as sensations, impressions and individual feelings towards the university (Masserini et al., 2019).

In terms of the internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan, the universities need to attract competent professors from diverse fields of science including local and international professors to provide the highest quality learning process by ensuring the study process in English. The universities should be able to ensure equal opportunities for both local and international students. In this regard, there is a need to adapt the national legislation so the state universities will be capable to deliver education in English. Moreover, the university administration should promote actively student mobility and their international presence by setting collaboration with other universities. To attract international students and foster international partnerships diversification of available study programs is required (Lapina et al., 2016).

From a practical standpoint, the findings of this study might be used by university administrators to identify the quality gaps that need to be addressed to attract the goal number of international students and for some universities to create a regional education hub in Central Asia. While the idea to promote quality service in all

dimensions may look justified to the educational managers, failure to prioritize them may lead to inefficient allocation of resources.

From a theoretical standpoint, the results obtained through applying the HESQUAL model contribute to the institutionalization of educational quality development in Kazakhstani HEIs. Adapting different scales oriented on the assessment of higher education service quality can ensure standardization of evaluation or comparison of service quality provided by the universities in Kazakhstan.

This study provides good insight into international student's learning experiences as it explored the issue from their standpoint, considering their positive and negative perceptions of the educational quality aspects. It also shed light on factors that play the most important role in their satisfaction within the Kazakhstani context. As the findings showed, some features of being an international student within the Kazakhstani context can be identified. The most important is the language issue. Kazakhstan is a bilingual country (Russian/Kazakh) and strives to introduce English in higher education as a step towards internationalization. So, international students might have difficulties facing different host languages in communication. Another issue they encounter is the system of standardized courses program that limits the possibility of building the student's path of study. This system is the heritage of Soviet higher education that the Kazakhstani government strives to rebuild following the model of developed countries' universities. In contrast to the possible difficulties, international students face a positive attitude from academic and administrative staff that treat them the same way as the local students, so they do not feel different. It can be explained by the fact that Kazakhstan is a multicultural country where around 150 nationalities live in peace.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the literature on international student experiences and satisfaction in Kazakhstani universities. As literature review demonstrated, there is a lack of empirical research on international students within the Kazakhstani context, so further research is needed for a deeper understanding of their experiences in terms of educational quality perceptions and other variables of their life experiences in Kazakhstan, for example, acculturation and adaptation to the new

setting. The enhancement of understanding of their experiences and satisfaction can foster institutional recruitment and retention strategies and international student academic prosperity. Moreover, since Turkey strives to be a regional hub and attract a high number of international students and the researcher has a positive learning experience studying at a Turkish university, there is a justified reason to conduct a comparative study with a focus on the satisfaction level of international students studying in Kazakhstan and Turkey. Such a study can identify gaps in different dimensions of service quality and clues how to enhance the satisfaction level of international students within the Kazakhstani context.

Since this study has an explorative goal, further research needs to involve a bigger number of international students from different universities by applying the quantitative research method so the findings can be generalized to an entire population of international students' experiences in Kazakhstani universities.

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APPENDICES

A. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Exploring the Quality of Education in the Context of Internationalization: Satisfaction & Learning Experiences of International Students in Kazakhstani Universities

Dear Participant,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Sciences, Middle East Technical University. To fulfill the requirements of the program, I am exploring the quality of education in the context of internationalization through the satisfaction and learning experiences of international students in Kazakhstan. The research may be of benefit to several stakeholders. As participants of this study, you will have a chance to share your experiences as international students on the educational quality in Kazakhstani universities. In turn, the university administrators will get a deeper understanding of the international students' needs and make possible adjustments of educational services to enhance your and other international students' satisfaction. Current and prospective international students may draw important insights from your experiences for their future benefits. And last, by your participation, you will make an important contribution to the knowledge area on satisfaction and learning experiences of international students in Kazakhstan.

Please, note that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. The potential risk associated with participation in this research is minimal. Data received during the interview will not be disclosed to the university administration/faculty/staff or any third party. Please be informed that you may refuse to answer any question and are free to withdraw at any time if you are uncomfortable continuing. The confidentiality of your responses is guaranteed. The data will be accessible only to the researcher and will be used only for scientific purposes.

It is important that you answer questions as fully as possible. The interview will take approximately 45 – 60 minutes.

I would like to thank you for your participation in this research. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please send an e-mail to: [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Sincerely yours,
Zhanar Smailova

M.S. Candidate
Department of Educational Sciences
Educational Administration and Planning
E-mail: [REDACTED]

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

Name Surname: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

В. ФОРМА ИНФОРМИРОВАННОГО СОГЛАСИЯ

Изучение качества образования в контексте интернационализации: удовлетворенность и опыт обучения иностранных студентов в университетах Казахстана

Уважаемый Участник,

Я магистрант кафедры педагогических наук Ближневосточного технического университета. Чтобы выполнить требования программы, я изучаю качество образования в контексте интернационализации через удовлетворенность и опыт обучения иностранных студентов в Казахстане. Исследование может быть полезным для нескольких заинтересованных сторон. Как участники этого исследования, у Вас будет возможность поделиться своим опытом иностранного студента в отношении качества образования в казахстанских университетах. В свою очередь, администрация университета получит более глубокое представление о потребностях иностранных студентов и внесет возможные коррективы в образовательные услуги, чтобы повысить Вашу удовлетворенность и других иностранных студентов. Нынешние и будущие иностранные студенты могут извлечь важные выводы из Вашего опыта для своих будущих преимуществ. И, наконец, своим участием Вы внесете важный вклад в область знаний об удовлетворенности и опыте обучения иностранных студентов в Казахстане.

Обратите внимание, что ваше участие в этом исследовании является полностью добровольным. Потенциальный риск, связанный с участием в этом исследовании, минимален. Данные, полученные в ходе собеседования, не будут разглашаться администрации/факультету/сотрудникам вуза или какой-либо третьей стороне. Обратите внимание, что Вы можете отказаться отвечать на любой вопрос и можете отказаться в любое время, если Вам неудобно продолжать. Конфиденциальность Ваших ответов гарантируется. Данные будут

доступны только исследователю и будут использоваться только в научных целях. Важно, чтобы вы отвечали на вопросы как можно полнее. Интервью займет примерно 45-60 минут.

Я хотела бы поблагодарить Вас за Ваше участие в этом исследовании. Если у Вас есть какие-либо вопросы или опасения по поводу этого исследования, отправьте электронное письмо по адресу: [REDACTED] или [REDACTED]

Искренне Ваша,
Жанар Смаилова

Кандидат на степень магистра
Кафедра педагогических наук
Управление и планирование в области образования
Электронная почта: [REDACTED]

Пожалуйста, подпишите эту форму согласия, если Вы согласны участвовать в этом исследовании.

ФИО: _____ Дата: _____

Подпись:

C. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

For students

**Exploring the Quality of Education in the Context of
Internationalization:**

**Satisfaction & Learning Experiences of International Students in
Kazakhstani Universities**

Date:

Time:

Place:

Interviewee:

Demographic Information

Age:

Gender:

Country of Origin:

The university you attend right now:

Year of study:

The degree to be earned:

Your department:

Hello. My name is Zhanar Smailova. I am a graduate student working with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Serap Emil from Educational Administration and Planning Program at Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey. The purpose of this study is to explore the satisfaction level and the learning experiences of international students coming from other countries with the quality of educational services at Kazakhstani higher education institutions. The interview will last approximately one hour. You will be asked questions related to your learning experiences at your

university. Sometimes you will be asked to give more explanations on them. Please, give detailed answers as much as possible. Your answers will be audio-recorded with your permission and later will be analyzed. Thank you for your participation in this study. Before the interview, could you please sign the informed consent form.

Questions:

1. Could you please briefly tell about yourself? Where are you from? What is your major? How long have you been in Kazakhstan? Which year are you in? 2. What are some of the reasons that you have chosen to study in Kazakhstan?	Background information
3. Could you please tell me about your overall experience so far at the current university? 4. What are some of the reasons you chose this university? 5. What was your first impression of the university? How did it change over time?	Questions on the General experience
6. How do you evaluate the administrative support in your institution? a. the attitude of the administrative staff to the students in your institution (willingness to help, politeness, ability to solve students' problems)? b. the communication with administrative staff? c. administrative procedures and practices in your institution (clearness and well-structured procedures, service delivery time, transparency of official procedures and regulations, bureaucracy)?	Administrative support at the university
7. How do you evaluate the academic support in your institution? a. What can be done to get better academic support in your institution in terms of affecting your learning or educational experience?	Academic Experience at the current university

b. attitude of academic staff to the students (giving personal attention to students, lectures appearing to have students' best interest)? c. competence of the lecturers (theoretical knowledge, qualifications and practical knowledge of the lectures, their communication skills, whether their expertise up-to-date)? d. the teaching style of the lecturers (active participation of students in their learning process)? e. curriculum of your program (clearly defined course content and course objectives, usefulness of module content and design to cater for the personal needs of students, challenging academic standards of programs to ensure students' overall development, relevance of course content to the future/current job of students)? f. pedagogy in your institution (use of multimedia in teaching, provision of regular feedback to students with respect to their academic performance, well designed examinations, and continuous assignment to promote the enhancement of knowledge skills)?	
8. How do you evaluate support facilities quality in your institution? (IT facilities, transport facilities, photocopy and printing facilities, sport facilities, extra-curricular activities, food and refreshments facilities on campus)?	Experience of Support Services at the current university
9. How do you evaluate the physical infrastructure? a. Physical infrastructure (availability of adequate cafeteria infrastructure, availability of adequate of library infrastructure, availability of adequate recreational infrastructure, availability of adequate sports	Experience of physical environment at the university

infrastructure) in terms of affecting your learning or educational experience? b. Learning environment in your institution? (Adequate lecture rooms, availability of teaching tools and equipment, having quiet places to study within campus)? c. General infrastructure in your institution (safety, physical conditions of the buildings and grounds, favorable ambient conditions (ventilation, noise, odor etc.) prevailing within the campus)?	
10. Have your expectations about the study in your institution are met? What can be done to improve the services provided? 11. How do you evaluate your satisfaction level (out of 10) with all services provided by the institution? 12. Could you please tell me which services from mentioned above that affecting your satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the institution the most? 13. Would you recommend your institution to other prospective students in your country? Why? 14. Thank you for all that valuable information, is there anything else you'd like to add before we end?	Your overall evaluation of the educational services

Thank you for your participation in the interview!

D. ПРОТОКОЛ ИНТЕРВЬЮ

Для студентов

Изучение качества образования в контексте интернационализации:

**Удовлетворенность и опыт обучения иностранных студентов в
университетах Казахстана**

Дата:

Время:

Место:

Интервьюируемый:

Демографическая информация

Возраст:

Пол:

Гражданство:

Университет:

Год обучения:

Степень:

Факультет:

Средний балл:

Меня зовут Жанар Смаилова. Я магистрант, обучаюсь по Программе Управления и планирования в области образования Ближневосточного технического университета, Анкара, Турция. Целью данного исследования является изучение уровня удовлетворенности и опыта обучения иностранных студентов качеством образовательных услуг в казахстанских высших учебных заведениях. Интервью продлится примерно один час. Вам будут задавать вопросы, связанные с Вашим опытом обучения в Вашем университете. Иногда Вас попросят дать дополнительные пояснения по ним.

Пожалуйста, давайте как можно более развернутые ответы. Ваши ответы будут записаны на аудио с вашего разрешения, а затем проанализированы. Спасибо за ваше участие в этом исследовании. Перед интервью не могли бы вы подписать форму информированного согласия?

Вопросы:

1. Не могли бы Вы кратко рассказать о себе? Откуда Вы? Какая у Вас специальность? Как давно Вы в Казахстане? На каком Вы годе обучения? 2. Каковы некоторые из причин, по которым Вы решили учиться в Казахстане?	Общая информация
3. Не могли бы Вы рассказать мне о Вашем общем опыте в нынешнем университете? 4. Каковы некоторые из причин, по которым Вы выбрали этот университет? 5. Каким было Ваше первое впечатление об университете? Как оно менялось со временем?	Вопросы об общем опыте обучения
6. Как Вы оцениваете административную поддержку в Вашем учреждении? а. отношение административного персонала к студентам в Вашем вузе (готовность помочь, вежливость, умение решать проблемы студентов)? б. общение с административным персоналом? в. административные процедуры и практика в Вашем учреждении (четкость и ясность процедур, сроки предоставления услуг, прозрачность официальных процедур и правил, бюрократия)?	Административная поддержка в университете
7. Как Вы оцениваете академическую поддержку в Вашем учреждении? а. Что можно сделать, чтобы получить лучшую академическую поддержку в Вашем учреждении с	Академический опыт в университете

точки зрения влияния на Ваше обучение или образовательный опыт? б. отношение профессорско-преподавательского состава к студентам (уделение личного внимания студентам, лекции, которые соответствуют интересам студентов)? в. компетентность лекторов (теоретические знания, квалификация и практические знания лекторов, их коммуникативные навыки, актуальность их знаний)? г. стиль преподавания (активное участие студентов в процессе обучения)? д. учебная программа Вашей специальности (четко определенное содержание курса и его цели, полезность содержания и дизайна модуля для удовлетворения личных потребностей студентов, сложные академические стандарты программ для обеспечения общего развития студентов, актуальность содержания курса для будущей/текущей работы студентов)? е. педагогики в вашем учебном заведении (использование мультимедиа в обучении, предоставление учащимся регулярной обратной связи относительно их академической успеваемости, хорошо разработанные экзамены и постоянное задание для улучшения знаний)?	
8. Как Вы оцениваете качество вспомогательных средств в Вашем учреждении? (ИТ-средства, транспортные средства, копировальные и типографские средства, спортивные сооружения,	Оценка вспомогательных сервисов в университете

внеклассные мероприятия, питание и прохладительные напитки на территории кампуса)?	
9. Как Вы оцениваете физическую инфраструктуру? а. Физическая инфраструктура (наличие надлежащей инфраструктуры кафетерия, наличие надлежащей инфраструктуры библиотеки, наличие надлежащей инфраструктуры для отдыха, наличие надлежащей спортивной инфраструктуры) с точки зрения влияния на ваше обучение или образование? б. Учебная среда в Вашем учебном заведении? (Подходящие лекционные залы, наличие учебных инструментов и оборудования, наличие тихих мест для занятий в кампусе)? в. Общая инфраструктура в вашем учреждении (безопасность, физическое состояние зданий и территории, благоприятные условия окружающей среды (вентиляция, шум, запах и т. д.) на территории кампуса)?	Оценка физического состояния университета
10. Оправдались ли Ваши ожидания относительно обучения в Вашем учебном заведении? Что можно сделать для улучшения предоставляемых услуг? 11. Как Вы оцениваете степень своей удовлетворенности (по 10-балльной шкале) всеми услугами, предоставляемыми учреждением? 12. Скажите, пожалуйста, какие услуги из вышеперечисленных больше всего влияют на Вашу удовлетворенность/неудовлетворенность учреждением? 13. Посоветовали бы Вы свое учебное заведение другим абитуриентам в Вашей стране? Почему?	Ваша общая оценка образовательных услуг

14. Спасибо за всю ценную информацию, есть ли что-нибудь еще, что Вы хотели бы добавить, прежде чем мы закончим?	
--	--

Благодарю за участие в интервью!



E. ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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Sayı: [REDACTED]

27 EKİM 2021

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Serap EMİL

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Zhanar Smailova'nın "Exploring the Quality of Education in the Context of Internationalization: Satisfaction & Learning Experiences of University International Students in Kazakhstan" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve **439-ODTU-2021** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.



Prof. Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
İAEK Başkanı

F. CODING SAMPLE

Interview Transcript	Codes	Themes
So I got accepted from one university in Korea but then I came here to Nur Sultan because of the International Chemistry. 1 International Chemistry Olympiad was held in Nur-Sultan, so I was a participant. So yeah, the laboratory stage was helpful in NU. So I like the facility here first, so I applied to yeah, this university and then because I was an international olympiad winner, they invited me for an interview. And. Well, yeah, when I came here and went through the interview, I really liked the faculty or professors here because they were really friendly and they told me what is going on here so that maybe it's a nice thing. It's a nice idea to attend here at (the name of the university).	Reason to study in Kazakhstan	University Characteristics
Well, it's really I think overall it's quite positive. Just the difficulty of course really depends on the instructor. There is no. Yeah, you cannot for example expect. Uh, yeah, really predict what will happen in the course unless you got really into it. Maybe it's kind of the thing that is everywhere, but I think that in NU it is exceptionally chaotic but I really like the courses here. For example, I really like for example pure Math, but unfortunately most mathematics faculty here at NU or applied math. Besides there usually, for example, some professors that specialize in pure Math give really nice lectures I like it.	Course content	Academic dimension quality

Then when I changed to physics there are courses called calculus and General Physics. Well, they were quite easy. So I initially got a little bit disappointed because how they, yeah, they were too easy then when it started to when I advanced to the 2 years well, the courses got interesting again. So yeah, that was quite nice.	Challenging study programs	Academic dimension quality
For example, I have a residence permit here. When its expiration date was coming back when there was a COVID instance. And yeah, Even so, according to the Constitution of Kazakhstan, I believe I have. I have to renew my residence permit in a place where I have a permanent address. So I had a little bit problematic because there was quiet It was not easy to get into Almaty from here, but so the administrative staff tried their best to help me in renewing my residence permit. But unfortunately, due to Constitution, I was not able to renew it here, but they were supporting me for about a whole week in trying to do it here. So I yeah. So just one example I guess so many kinds of stuff, but there are many, all, many, many more small, small supportive things, small, small things that were really useful for me. And I cannot recall it for now. Yeah. But I like the way there addressed me.	Residence permit issue	Administrative support at the university
To be honest I just usually text them on WhatsApp, so it's really easy. You just say Hi! So I have this problem. What should I do? And they usually answer it within a couple of hours.	Communication with administrative staff	Administrative support at the University

Yeah, that's quite convenient. So I just go to the university website, click a couple of things, and in three days I get the document that I wanted. Clear, convenient fast. Yeah.	Administrative processes	Administrative support at the university
Well. I think the lecturer's theoretical knowledge in our department really nice. They could answer pretty much any questions that arise during the lecture, for example, that may not be obvious and may not be that a textbook the relevant textbook would not contain. That can be that lecturers immediately answer so. In my view that the lecturers really know what they are doing, the subject itself. Yeah. If the question about whether in a particular practical case, can we apply it so if so, why, and if not then why we cannot. They usually give a really full answer. So in my understanding, both theoretical and practical knowledge of the lecturers is really great.	Academic staff expertise, knowledge and attitude	Academic dimension quality
Definitely, study places are nice. Teaching tools and equipment that's also OK.	Lecture rooms	Physical environment quality
Maybe. I think that our professors are being pressed a lot by the administration because, well. I was told from pretty much all the professors that I have interacted with till this time that they are dealing with a lot of bureaucracy that yeah, for example, they're doing so many documents that they find it hard to engage with students just fully. So they are usually dealing with tons of documents. They are required to fill. Then yeah, there's usually a really big problem that matters that affects the quality of courses.	Bureaucracy issue	Administrative procedures

Oh well, I would recommend definitely it. Because I like to experience and yet in general in both academic and administrative and infrastructure services. So I think I would definitely recommend because the condition is quite great.	Overall quality	Overall satisfaction
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G. TRKE ZET / TURKISH SUMMARY

ULUSLARARASILEŐME BAĖLAMINDA EĖİTİM KALİTESİNİN İNCELENMESİ:

KAZAKİSTAN NİVERSİTELERİNDEKİ ULUSLARARASI ĖRENCİLERİN MEMNUNİYETİ VE ĖRENME DENEYİMLERİ

Giriő

Tm dnyada yksekĖretimde nemli bir fenomen haline geliyor ve bu da kresel bakıő aıları ve uluslararası alanda beceri ve niteliklere sahip mezunlara olan talebin artmasına neden oluyor (OECD, 2012). EĖitim alanında da hızlı deĖiőim ve geliőmeleri beraberinde getirmiő ve yeni eĖilimleri belirlemiőtir (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Kondakci et al., 2016; OECD, 2012; de Wit & Altbach, 2020). Uluslararasılaőma srecinin, yksekĖretimin tm alanı iin belirli kalite standartları oluőturdūĖu ve aynı zamanda dnya sıralama kuruluőlarının (AUR, QS Star, WUR, Webometrics ve diĖerleri) iőleyiői iin bir temel oluőturan bir ara haline geldiĖi vurgulanmalıdır. (Komotar, 2018).

Uluslararasılaőmanın ev sahibi lke zerinde olumlu bir etkisi vardır. Uluslararasılaőmanın olumlu ynleri arasında vurgulanması gereken bazıları, uluslararası Ėrencilerin yksekĖretim kurumlarına getirdiĖi eőtlilik (Lee & Rice, 2007), kltrel zenginleőtirme ve kampslerin uluslararasılaőması, uluslararası Ėrenci hareketliliĖinden toplumsal fayda sayılabilir.

Uluslararasılaőma, yksekĖretim alanında olduka rekabeti bir ortamın ortaya ıkmasına neden olmuőtur (Harvey & Williams, 2010). Bu nedenle, Ėrencilerin ok eőtli seenekleri olduĖu grlmektedir ve oĖu niversite Ėrenci havuzundan paylarını alabilmek iin rekabet etmek zorunda kalmaktadır (Latif et al., 2017). Sonu olarak, yksekĖretim kurumları Ėrencilerin deneyimlerini ve sunulan hizmetlerden memnuniyet dzeylerini deĖerlendirmekle ilgilenirler (Darawong & Sandmaung, 2019; Merola et al., 2019); nk olumlu deneyim ve yksek dzeyde memnuniyet,

üniversiteler için olumlu sonuçlar doğurur. “Kulaktan kulağa” yönlendirmeler öğrencilerin elde tutulmasına ve kuruma bağlılığa sebep olur (Schneider, 2009; Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Thomas, 2011; Polat, 2015) ve daha fazla uluslararası öğrenciyi cezbeder (Li & Kaye, 1998). Alan yazın, uluslararası öğrenci deneyimlerinin uygulamalara ve politikalara yansımalarıyla ev sahibi üniversitelerin eğitim programlarının kalitesini ve öğrencilerin refah durumunu önemli ölçüde iyileştirdiğini doğrulamaktadır (Leask & Carroll, 2011).

Dünya küreselleşme çağında yaşamakta ve entegrasyon güçlerine tabidir (Van Damme, 2001); bu nedenle Kazakistan dahil hiçbir ülkenin yükseköğretim sistemi tek başına var olamaz. Kazakistan, son yıllarda uluslararası öğrencileri üniversitelerine çekmenin faydalarını fark etti ve yükseköğretimini uluslararası hale getirmek için çeşitli önlemler almaktadır. Ancak atılan bu adımlara rağmen, Kazakistan üniversiteleri uluslararası öğrencilere yeterince çekici gelmemektedir. (OECD, 2017).

Kazakistan'da yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşması hükümetin önemli bir gündem maddesidir. Farklı politika belgeleri geliştirilmiştir. Örneğin, 2012-2020 yılı için Kazakistan Cumhuriyeti'nde Akademik Hareketlilik Stratejisi ve 2011-2020 Eğitim Geliştirme Devlet Programı (Kazakistan Cumhuriyeti Eğitim ve Bilim Bakanlığı, 2010), Eğitim ve Bilimsel Gelişim Devlet Programı 2020-2025 (Kazakistan Cumhuriyeti Eğitim ve Bilim Bakanlığı, 2019) gibi politikaların her birinde uluslararasılaştırma bileşenleri vardır.

Kazakistan yükseköğretimi, küresel düzeyde rekabetçi olmayı ve daha fazla uluslararası öğrenci çekmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Kazakistan Cumhuriyeti Eğitim ve Bilim Bakan Yardımcısı (2019'dan bugüne kadar bakan) Askhat Aitmagambetov, Kazakistan'ı Orta Asya'da bir eğitim merkezi haline getirmek ve Hindistan, Çin, Türkiye ve Pakistan'ın yanı sıra Mısır, Rusya Federasyonu ve diğer ülkelerden öğrenci çekmek için iddialı bir hedeften bahsetti (Baigarin, 2018). Ancak Ulusal İstatistik Bürosu verilerinin gösterdiği üzere 2020 - 2025 Eğitim ve Bilimsel Gelişim Devlet Programının %10 hedefine henüz ulaşamamıştır ve bunu başarmak için önlemler ve adımlar alınmalıdır.

Ancak, yükseköğretimin uluslararasılaşması konusunu araştıran araştırmacılar, uluslararası öğrencilerin ev sahibi ülkelerdeki deneyimlerini derinlemesine araştırma ihtiyacını göz ardı ederek uluslararasılaştırma politikalarının kurumsal düzeyde uygulanmasının yalnızca uluslararası öğrencileri çekme aşamasında başarılı olduğunu iddia etmektedirler (Liu & Winder, 2014). Bu nedenle, eğitim hizmeti kalitesi memnuniyeti algıları ve yurtdışından gelen öğrencilerin deneyimleri, Kazakistan yükseköğretimin eğitim hizmetlerinin kalitesinin genel durumunu değerlendirmeye yardımcı olacak ve uluslararası öğrenciler için çekiciliğini artırmak için kullanılabilir. Örneğin dünya sıralaması (Zhumagulov, 2013). Bu nedenle, bu çalışmanın amacı, Kazakistan yükseköğretim kurumlarının eğitim hizmetlerinin kalitesi ile diğer ülkelerden gelen uluslararası öğrencilerin memnuniyet düzeylerini ve öğrenme deneyimlerini keşfetmektir.

Amaca ulaşmak için aşağıdaki araştırma sorusu formüle edilmiştir:

“Eğitim hizmetlerinin kalitesi ve memnuniyetleri açısından Kazakistan HEI'lerinde uluslararası öğrencilerin yaşadıkları deneyimler nelerdir?”

Uluslararası öğrencilerin Kazakistan'daki deneyimlerine odaklanan çalışmaların sayısı sınırlıdır. Böylece, bu çalışma mevcut araştırma literatürünü tamamlayacak ve bu kritik konudaki boşluğu da kapatacaktır. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda eğitim hizmet kalitesinde uluslararası öğrencileri oldukça memnun eden alanların ve dikkat edilmesi gereken eksikliklerin belirlenmesine yardımcı olacaktır. Bu çalışma, uluslararası öğrencilerin bu öğrenme deneyimlerini yansıtması ve Kazakistan üniversitelerinin bu zorluğu ele alma çabalarına ilişkin algılarını değerlendirmesi de beklendiğinden, 2020-2021 yıllarında Kazakistan üzerinden uzaktan öğretime zorunlu geçiş açısından özel bir önem kazanmaktadır.

Yükseköğretimde Kalitenin Kavramsallaştırılması

Öğrencileri belirli bir üniversiteye ve eğitim programını seçmeye çeken farklı faktörler vardır. Cohen ve arkadaşları (2001), çevre, öğretim yöntemi, zaman mevcudiyeti, kampüs içi ve dışı gereksinimler ve öğrenme materyallerine nasıl

erişileceği gibi faktörlerden bahseder. Bazı öğrenciler, yükseköğretim kurumu seçmede akademik kalite, derece tanınırlığı ve üniversitenin itibarı gibi önemli faktörleri göz önünde bulundurur (Gruber et al., 2010). Hizmet kalitesi, kabul süreci ve personelinin de memnuniyetde önemli faktörler olduğu bulunmuştur (Munteanu et al., 2010). Diğer araştırmacılar, Avustralya'daki lise öğrencilerinin üniversite tercihinin ana faktörlerinin ders ilgisi ve öğretim kalitesi olduğunu bulmuşlardır (Soutar & Turner, 2002). Brookes ve Becket (2007). Üniversite seçimini ve öğrenci memnuniyet düzeyini tanımlayan faktörlere ilişkin ampirik literatürü göz önünde bulundurulduğunda mevcut kalite yönetimi yaklaşımlarını düzenlemek ve böylece akademik süreçlerin kalitesi (öğretme ve öğrenme) artırmak önemlidir.

Uluslararasılaştırma güçleri günümüzde kurumların gelişimini etkilemektedir ve dünya çapındaki eğitim kurumları için ana önceliklerden biri haline gelmektedir. Yükseköğretim kurumlarının çalıştığı ortamlar değişmekte ve uluslararası güçlerin etkisine daha açık hale gelmekte ve oldukça rekabetçi bir ortam yaratmaktadır. Eğitim kurumları, İngilizce eğitim programları geliştirerek, uluslararası akademik personeli çekerek ve denizaşırı öğrencileri işe alarak uluslararası çalışmaları teşvik eder ve uluslararasılaşma stratejilerini uyarlar (Lapina et al., 2016). Genellikle uluslararasılaşma süreci, yukarıda belirtilen sonuçlara ek olarak, eğitim programlarının çeşitlendirilmesini ve öğrencilerin ve akademik personelin farklı uluslararası iş birliği projelerine katılımını da gerektirir (Iljins et al., 2014).

Hizmet kalitesi, beklentiler ile performans arasındaki algılanan fark olarak tanımlanabilir. Üniversite operasyonel özelliklerinin bu temel parçasının, çeşitli süreçlerin aynı anda gerçekleştirildiği çok yönlü bir hizmet olması nedeniyle sürdürülmesi zordur (Brown & Mazzarol, 2009). Dikkat çekici bir hizmet-öğrenme deneyiminin yaratılması için akademik personel, idari personel ve öğrencilerden oluşan tüm paydaşların iyi tanımlanmış rolleri olması gerekmektedir. Ayrıca, algılanan hizmet kalitesinin yüksek düzeyde tutulması adına, hizmet deneyiminin doğru tanımlanması ve değerlendirilmesinin bir sonucu olarak hizmet performansının beklentilerle aynı düzeyde olması gerekir (Sultan & Wong, 2013). Bir hizmet kalitesini objektif olarak ölçmek için araştırmacılar farklı araçlar geliştirmişlerdir.

Bazı araştırmacılar uygulamayı önerirken, hizmet kalitesinin daha iyi belirlenmesini kolaylaştırmak ve daha sonra belirli amaçlar çerçevesinde ölçmek için bağlama özel ölçekler geliştirmiştir (Frimpong & Wilson, 2013).

Literatürde eğitim kalitesi, şartlı olarak kalite aşılama yaklaşımı ve öğrenci bakış açısı olarak tanımlanabilecek iki ana açıdan ele alınmaktadır. İlk yaklaşım, toplam kalite yönetimi (TKY), kalite güvencesi, denetim ve hesap verebilirliği içerir (Prakash, 2017). Ferrin et al. (2001) TKY, üniversite ve sanayi arasındaki ilişkiyi tedarikçi-müşteri bağlantısı şeklinde temsil eder. Disiplinli bir adaptasyonu teşvik eder ve artan düzeyde müşteri hizmetleri, idari ve akademik personel morali, idari süreçler ve ders içeriğinin kalitesini gösterir. Yine de Houston'a (2007) göre bu kavram ve araçları yükseköğretim alanına tam olarak uymamaktadır.

Buna karşılık kalite güvencesi, denetimleri, akreditasyonu, değerlendirmeleri ve sürekli kalite geliştirmeyi içerir. Bu kavramın temel noktası liderlik tarafından yönetilmesidir (Sahney et al., 2008). Yükseköğretim kurumları için olumlu sonuçların sayısına rağmen, örneğin bunlardan bazılarını adlandırmak için sistem ve süreç iyileştirmesi, kalite güvencesi yaratıcılığı ve yanıt verebilirliği sınırlayabilir (Harvey & Newton, 2004). Akademik bileşen üzerinde minimum etkiye sahip bir tür güç kontrolü ve bürokratik olması nedeniyle de eleştirilmektedir (Cheng, 2010).

Denetim ve hesap verebilirlik de eğitimin kalitesi üzerinde olumlu bir etkiye sahiptir. Denetim, öğretim pedagojisinin iyileştirilmesi (Tam, 2002), müfredat içeriği (Tasopoulou & Tsiotras, 2017), endüstri ve araştırma arasındaki iş birliği (Henderson et al., 2006) gibi olumlu sonuçlara sahiptir; hesap verebilirlik ise şeffaflığı, adil değerlendirmeyi, düzenlemelere uyumu teşvik eder ve dahili kalite geliştirme eylemlerini teşvik eder (Anderson, 2005). Kaliteli infüzyon perspektifinin birçok olumlu sonucuna rağmen, öğrenci merkezli bakış açısı literatürde öne çıkan bir bakış açısı haline geliyor ve bu nedenle kurumlar kalitenin çeşitli yönlerini geliştirerek öğrencilerin beklentilerini karşılamak için rekabet ediyor (Prakash, 2017).

Literatür taramasından sonra hizmet kalitesi ölçümünde yaygın olarak kullanılan iki yaklaşım ayırt edilebilir. Birincisi, hizmet kalitesini doğrudan performans düzeyine

göre değerlendirir. İkinci ölçüm ise müşterilerin (yükseköğretim bağlamında - öğrenciler bağlamında) üniversitenin sunduğu hizmet kalitesine ilişkin beklentileri ile öğrencilerin bu kaliteyi algıladıkları seviye arasındaki farka dayanmaktadır (Yılmaz, 2019).

Her iki yaklaşımda da hizmet kalitesini değerlendirmek için en sık uygulanan iki ölçek vardır. İlk ölçek, Parasuraman, Zeithaml ve Berry tarafından 1988 yılında geliştirilen SERVQUAL'dir. Hizmet alanların görüşlerinden yola çıkarak hizmet beklentileri ile algılanan hizmet kalitesi arasındaki farklılıkları ölçmek için geliştirilmiştir (Parasuraman et al, 1988). Bu modele göre, hizmeti ölçmenin beş yönü vardır: somut değerler, güvenilirlik, yanıt verme, güvence ve empati. Hizmet kalitesini ölçmek için sıklıkla kullanılan bir diğer araç SERVPERF (Hizmet Performansı) ölçeğidir. Cronin ve Taylor (1992) tarafından detaylandırılmıştır ve hizmet kalitesini beklenti-algı ilişkisi yerine çeşitli özelliklerin performans düzeyi ile ölçmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Abdullah'a (2006) göre, sadece performans yaklaşımı yükseköğretim bağlamına daha uygundur. Her iki ölçek de hizmet sektörü için özel olarak hazırlanmıştır ve yükseköğretim bağlamının belirli yönlerini kapsamamaktadır. Yükseköğretimin bu alana özgü özelliklere sahip olduğunu ve diğer hizmet sektörlerinden farklı olduğunu vurgulamaya gerek yoktur. Eğitim hizmet kalitesinin yeterince ölçülememesi, özellikle kurumların eğitim kalitesini ölçmeyi amaçlayan ölçekler geliştirilmeye başlanmıştır (Yılmaz, 2019).

2005 yılında HEDPERF ölçeği Abdullah tarafından geliştirildi. Araç, yükseköğretim kurumları için bağlama özel olan faktörleri performans açısından ölçer. 7'li Likert ölçeğine göre değerlendirilen 41 soru içermektedir. Öğrencilerin yükseköğretim kurumunu *akademik kalitesi, idari özellikleri, erişilebilirliği, imajı ve sunduğu program açısından değerlendirmeleri beklenir* (Abdullah, 2006).

Diğer bir ölçek - Yükseköğretim Hizmet Kalitesi (HiEdQUAL) - aynı zamanda yükseköğretimde hizmet kalitesini ölçmeyi amaçlamaktadır. *Öğretim ve ders içeriği, idari hizmetler, akademik faaliyetler, kampüs altyapısı ve öğrenci destek hizmetleri* olmak üzere beş özelliği değerlendiren 27 maddelik ölçeği temsil etmektedir (Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2012).

Sunulan benzer ölçeklere yönelik temel eleştiri, bazı modellerin hizmet sektörü üzerinde ayrıntılı olarak ele alınıp, yükseköğretime özgü yönleri içermediği yönünde olurken, diğerinin üniversitelerin olumlu dönüştürücü rolünü içermemesidir. Bu nedenle, bu araştırmada yükseköğretim kalitesini araştırmak için, yükseköğretim bağlamına özgü özelliklerin ölçülmesi açısından daha güçlü olması nedeniyle teorik bir çerçeve olarak HESQUAL modeli seçilmiştir (Yılmaz, 2019).

Bu çalışma, Teeroovengadum ve diğerlerinin yüksek öğretim hizmet kalitesi (HESQUAL) modelini uygulayan kurumların kalite bileşenlerine odaklanmıştır. (2016). HESQUAL modeli, özellikle yükseköğretimde kalitenin ölçülmesi için son zamanlarda detaylandırıldığı için bu çalışma için yol gösterici bir çerçeve olarak seçilmiştir. HESQUAL'a göre, yükseköğretimde hizmet kalitesi, işlevsel ve teknik ya da dönüştürücü yönleri içerir. İşlevsel hizmet kalitesi boyutları, bu çalışma sırasında değerlendirilecek olan idari kalite, fiziksel çevre kalitesi, temel eğitim kalitesi ve destek tesisleri kalitesini içermektedir (Teeroovengadum et al., 2016). HESQUAL'in teknik yönü atlanacaktır çünkü bu çalışmanın amacı eğitimde sunum sürecine odaklanmaktadır (Brady & Cronin, 2001).

Öğrenci Memnuniyeti

Dünyanın dört bir yanındaki kurumlar eğitim hizmetlerini etkili bir şekilde sunmak ve öğrenci memnuniyetini artırmak için öğrencilerin seslerine odaklanmaktadır (Blair & Noel, 2014). Öğrenci memnuniyeti, öğrenme müfredatı, denetim, geri bildirim, destek tesisleri, fiziksel altyapı, boş zaman etkinlikleri ve sosyal iklim gibi faktörlerin karmaşık karşılıklı ilişkisinin bir sonucu olarak kabul edilir (Wiers-Jenssen et al., 2002).

Uluslararası öğrencilerin görüşlerinin eksikliği, kurumların için daha iyi hizmetler sunma çabalarında bir zorluktur. Örneğin Zhou ve Cole (2017), uluslararası öğrencilerin genel memnuniyetinin önemini üç açıdan ele almaktadır. Akademik bir bakış açısından, denizaşırı öğrencilerin genel memnuniyeti, sebat ve mezuniyet gibi önemli sonuçları etkiler. Dış ilişkiler perspektifinden bakıldığında, öğrenci memnuniyeti bağlılık, üniversiteyi daha sık desteklemek için gönüllü olmak ve daha

fazla bağış yapmakla sonuçlanır. Ve son olarak, genel memnuniyetin bileşenlerinin anlaşılması, üniversitelerin daha iyi hizmetler sunmasına, öğrencileri daha etkin bir şekilde elde tutmasına ve işe almasına olanak tanır.

Uluslararası öğrencilerin memnuniyetini inceleyen ampirik literatür, öğrencilerin bununla ilgili deneyimlerinin farklı yönlerine odaklanmıştır. Ding (2016), uluslararası öğrencilerin memnuniyet düzeylerini etkileyen farklı faktörleri araştırmıştır. Araştırmasında, çalışma programları, destek hizmetleri ve yerel öğrencilerle entegrasyonun uluslararası öğrencilerin memnuniyetini önemli ölçüde etkilediği ortaya çıktı. Finn ve Darmody (2017), uluslararası öğrencilerin memnuniyetini şekillendiren farklı faktörler arasında en önemlisinin eğitim kurumlarından duydukları memnuniyet ve sağlıklarına ilişkin öznel derecelendirme olduğunu iddia etmektedir.

Öğrenci memnuniyeti literatürü, akademik katılımı uluslararası öğrenci memnuniyetinin önemli bileşenlerinden biri olarak tanımlamıştır. Akademik katılım, yalnızca öğretim üyeleriyle, diğer öğrencilerle derslerde ve müfredat dışı etkinliklerde etkileşimi değil, aynı zamanda öğrencilerin ders çalışmak için harcadıkları çabayı ve zamanı da içerir. Öğretim üyeleriyle etkileşimler, genel memnuniyetle ilişkili en önemli yönlerden biri olarak tanımlanmıştır (Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Webber et al., 2013). Bu nedenle Webber et al. (2013) derslere hazırlanmak için daha fazla zaman ve çaba harcayan veya başka bir şekilde akademik görevlere katılan öğrencilerin akademik deneyimlerinden daha yüksek bir genel memnuniyet düzeyi sergilediklerini iddia etmektedir.

Ayrıca, Arambewela ve Hall'a (2009) göre, fakülteden gelen geri bildirimleri, fakülteye erişimi ve öğretim kalitesini içeren akademik kaliteden memnuniyet, Asya'dan gelen Avustralyalı denizaşırı öğrencilerin genel memnuniyet düzeyini önemli ölçüde etkiler. Ayrıca, menşe ülkeye bağlı olarak öğrenci memnuniyeti algılarındaki farklılıkları araştırdılar. Çalışma, farklı ülkelerden öğrencilerin akademik ve akademik olmayan hizmet kalitesinden memnuniyet düzeyini farklı algıladıklarını, bu nedenle üniversitelerin denizaşırı öğrencilerin farklı ihtiyaçlarını karşılayan çeşitlendirilmiş bir stratejik pazarlama planı üzerinde detaylandırması gerektiğini gösterdi.

Korobova ve Starobin (2015) tarafından yürütülen çalışmada, uluslararası öğrenci memnuniyetinin eğitim deneyimlerinden en önemli yordayıcıları olarak tanımlanan etkili eğitim uygulamalarının beş yönü bulunmuştur. Bunlar akademik zorluk düzeyi, öğretim üyeleriyle öğrenci etkileşimi, zenginleştirici eğitim deneyimleri ve destekleyici bir kampüs ortamının iki yönüdür - ilişkilerin kalitesi ve kurumsal vurgu. Üniversitenin akademik yönünün yanı sıra, öğrenci destek hizmetleri, öğrencilerin yurtdışındaki eğitimleri sırasında olumlu bir deneyim yaşamalarını sağlamak için birçok kurumda uluslararası öğrenci memnuniyetinin önemli bir göstergesi olarak kabul edilmektedir (Perez-Encinas & Ammigan, 2016).

Arkoudis et al. (2019), Avustralyalı uluslararası öğrencilerin Avustralya'daki eğitim deneyimlerinden memnuniyet düzeylerini araştırdı. Avustralya hükümeti öğrencilerin memnuniyetini düzenli olarak araştırıyor ve bunun yüksek seviyesini bildiriyor olsa da, toplanan verilerin gerçeği yansıtmadığına dair işaretler var ve öğrencilerin sosyal ve eğitim deneyimlerinden bir miktar memnuniyetsizliği var. Çalışma derinlemesine öğretme ve öğrenmeyi, sosyal parçalanmayı, finansı ve konaklamayı araştırdı. Bulgular, uluslararası öğrenciler tarafından genel memnuniyetin yüksek tahmin edilmesine rağmen, öğrencilerin algıladıkları sosyal bütünleşme ve aidiyet eksikliği olduğunu göstermiştir.

Öğrenci memnuniyeti, öğrenci deneyimi ile yakından ilişkilidir. Uluslararası öğrenci deneyimine odaklanan araştırmalar, çeşitli faktörlerin eğitimleri sırasındaki deneyimlerini doğrudan etkileyebileceğini iddia ediyor. Jones'a (2017) göre, akademik, yaşamsal ve sosyal yönlerden öğrenci deneyimi üzerinde etkisi olan birbiriyle ilişkili dört bileşen vardır. Bunlar kişisel tarih, aile bağlamı, ulusal bağlam ve kurumsal değerler ve öğrenci destek hizmetleri ile kurumsal nitelik ve konumdur. Archer ve arkd. (2010), program çalışmalarının her aşamasında uluslararası öğrenci deneyimini geliştirmeyi, başvuru ve varış adımlarını, ardından kültürel ve sosyal entegrasyon aşamasını, konaklama ve yaşama, iş deneyimini ve istihdam edilebilirliği benimsemeyi önermektedir. Araştırmacılar ayrıca iletişim ve hizmet koordinasyonu geliştirmenin, teknolojinin ilgili kullanımının, esnekliğin ve öğrenci beklentilerinin uygun şekilde yönetilmesinin önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Birkaç çalışma, Kazakistan yükseköğretiminin uluslararasılaşmasının genel yönlerine (Maudarbekova & Kashkinbayeva, 2014; Jumakulov & Ashirbekov, 2016), araştırmanın uluslararasılaşmasına (Jumakulov et al., 2019), uluslararası öğrencilerin akademik motivasyonuna odaklanan olarak adlandırılabilir. (Ospanova, 2018), deneyimleri (Mukhamejanova, 2018) ve Kazakistanlı öğrencilerin yabancı üniversitelerle olan memnuniyetleri (Sabatayeva et al., 2018).

Bazı araştırmacılar, ülkedeki akademik ve sosyo-kültürel hayata uyum sağlamayı ve bu süreçte beşeri sermayelerini nasıl uyguladıklarını keşfederek, Kazakistan'a yüksek lisans yapmak için gelen öğrencilerin deneyimlerini daha iyi anlamaya çalışmışlardır (Mukhamejanova, 2018). Bulgular, uluslararası öğrencilerin, Kazakistan'daki yerel yaşama uyum sağlamak ve eğitimleriyle ilgilenmek için insan ajanslarını yoğun bir şekilde uyguladıklarını gösterdi. Sadece çevreye uyum sağlamakla kalmadılar, aynı zamanda ondan da öğrendiler ve onu amaçlarına ve bağlamına göre değiştirmeye çalıştılar.

İncelenen literatür, uluslararası öğrencileri memnun etmek ve çekmek için eğitim kalitesinin dikkate alınması gerektiğini ve üniversitelerin uluslararasılaşma sürecinde temel bir unsur olarak düşünülmesi gerektiğini göstermiştir. Eğitimde kalite konusunda üzerinde durulması gereken çeşitli faktörler olmakla birlikte, yükseköğretim kurumlarının öğrencilerini memnun eden ve etmeyen faktörlerin farkında olmaları ve bu boyutlarda gerekli düzenlemeleri yapmaları gerekmektedir.

Yöntem

Bu araştırma, nitel araştırma geleneğini takip etti ve uluslararası öğrencilerin Kazakistan üniversitelerindeki öğrenimleri sırasında eğitim hizmetlerinin kalitesine ilişkin deneyimlerini detaylandırmak için fenomenolojik bir çalışma olarak tasarlandı.

İlk adım olarak, araştırmanın eleştirel çerçevesini oluşturmak ve konuyla ilgili önemli bilgiler toplamak için literatür taraması yapılmıştır. Sonuç olarak, literatür taramasının ardından tez önerisi ve araştırma sorusu belirlenmiştir. Daha sonra araştırmacı tarafından veri toplama aracı oluşturulmuş ve iki uzman tarafından incelendikten

sonra araçta gerekli değişiklikler yapılmıştır. Görüşmeler yapılmadan önce pilot çalışma uygulanmış ve İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu izni alınmıştır. Bir sonraki adım, araştırma kriterlerine uyan uluslararası öğrencilerle görüşmeler yapmaktır. Son olarak, veriler analiz edildi ve sonuçlar rapor edildi.

Örnekleme açısından amaçlı örnekleme kullanılmıştır. Hedef kitle olarak Kazakistan'daki üniversitelerde okuyan 15 tam zamanlı uluslararası öğrenci seçilmiştir. Örneklem 11 lisans ve 4 doktora öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Nur-Sultan'daki üniversitelerde okuyan uluslararası öğrenciler . Kazakistan'daki üniversitelerde iki yıldan az zaman geçiren uluslararası öğrenciler, yurtdışında eğitim deneyimlerinin olmaması ve pandemi karantinası ve çevrimiçi eğitim nedeniyle üniversitelerinin eğitim hizmetlerinin kalitesi hakkındaki algılarını değerlendirememeleri nedeniyle dışlandı.

Nur-Sultan bölgesinden üç üniversite çalışmaya katılmak üzere seçilmiştir: Nur-Sultan'da ikamet eden diğer üniversitelere kıyasla en fazla uluslararası öğrenciye ev sahipliği yapması nedeniyle seçilen Nazarbayev Üniversitesi, L. Gumilev Avrasya Ulusal Üniversitesi ve Astana Tıp Üniversitesi. Sultan. Ayrıca her üç üniversite de mevcut stratejik planlarının açıklanmasında uluslararasılaşmayı bir numaralı öncelik olarak belirlemiştir. Ve son olarak, dünyanın dört bir yanındaki uluslararası öğrencilerin ağırlıklı olarak kaydolduğu (STEM, tıp, işletme ve hukuk) çalışma alanları sunarlar (OECD, 2018).

Veri toplama aracını (yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler) oluşturmak için atılan üç aşamadan geçilmiştir: araç geliştirme aşaması, pilot uygulama ve görüşme protokolünün son haline getirilmesi. Araştırmacı, HESQUAL modelinde yükseköğretimde eğitim kalitesine odaklandığından, görüşme soruları bu modelin tüm boyutlarını kapsayacak şekilde oluşturulmuştur: idari kalite, fiziksel çevre kalitesi, temel eğitim kalitesi ve destek tesisleri kalitesi. Bu modelin dönüştürücü kalitesi, bu yönün çalışmanın odak noktası dışında kalması nedeniyle hariç tutulmuştur.

Birebir yapılan görüşmeler, katılımcıların rahat ve kısıtlamasız cevaplar verebilmeleri için seçilmiştir. Görüşmelerin tüm soruları açık uçlu olduğundan öğrenci deneyimleri

hakkında daha detaylı bilgi vermektedir (Abu Rabia, 2016). Katılımcılar ayrıca görüşmelerden önce bilgilendirilmiş onam formunu imzalamışlardır. Rahatsızlık duyduklarında herhangi bir soruyu yanıtlamayı reddetme veya araştırmadan ayrılma hakları olduğu konusunda bilgilendirildiler. Görüşmelerin süresi 40 dakika ile 1 saat 15 dakika arasında olmuştur. Görüşmeler kayıt altına alınmış ve görüşmeler sırasında araştırmacı tarafından gerekli notlar alınmıştır.

İlk olarak Rusça yapılan görüşmeler İngilizce'ye çevrilmiştir. İkinci olarak, öğrencilerin demografik özelliklerini detaylandırmak için örneklemin tanımlayıcı istatistikleri belirlendi. Üçüncüsü, çalışma görüşmeleri bir araç olarak kullanmış, bu nedenle veriler içerik analizi yoluyla analiz edilmiştir.

Bulgular

Uluslararası öğrencilerin ezici çoğunluğu, Teeroovengadum ve diğerlerinin (2016) HESQUAL modelinde ele alınan eğitim kalitesinin farklı yönleriyle ilgili genel memnuniyetlerini belirtmiştir.

Temel eğitim kalitesi, çoğu uluslararası öğrenci tarafından memnuniyetlerini etkileyen en temel unsur olarak rapor edilmiştir. 15 katılımcıdan sadece bir katılımcı genel öğrenme deneyiminden memnun değildi. Diğer katılımcılar ise öğrenme deneyimlerinden memnun olduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bazıları, fakültenin dil eksikliği nedeniyle fakülte ile iletişim sorunları, pandemi döneminde ilgi alanlarına ve internet kalitesine uygun benzersiz eğitim vektörlerini oluşturmak için seçmeli ders seçememeleri ve uygulama eksikliği gibi sorunlarla karşılaştı.

İdari boyutun kalitesi de çoğunlukla uluslararası öğrencileri memnun etti. Buna göre, bazı öğrenciler ikamet izinlerinde kendilerine yardımcı olamama, sağlık sigortalarının kaybolması ve dil eksikliğinden dolayı iletişim sorunları gibi sorunlar yaşadıklarını bildirdiler. Sadece bir katılımcı karşılaştığı birçok konuda idari personelden destek hissetmediği için olumsuz olarak tecrübesini paylaşmış ve onlara hitap etmiştir.

Destek tesislerinin kalitesi ve fiziksel çevre, katılımcıların çoğunu memnun etti. Spor tesislerine erişim, bazı binaların yenilenmesi gerekliliği, matbaa ve fotokopi

tesislerinin açılması gibi unsurların üniversite yönetiminin dikkatini çekmesi gerekmektedir. Tüm yönlerin genel kalitesi uluslararası öğrencileri tatmin etse de üniversitenin sağladığı kaliteyi artırmak ve öğrencilerin öğrenme deneyimlerini iyileştirmek ve böylece memnuniyetlerini artırmak için üniversite yönetimi tarafından bazı eksiklikler ve kalite boşluklarının ele alınması gerekmektedir.

Tartışma ve Sonuç

Ammigan ve Hall'un (2018) önerdiği gibi, yüksek talebin öğrenci işleri ve hizmet personeli, yurt ve barınma birimleri, çok-kültürlü merkezler, akademik personel ve fakültelerdeki profesyonel yöneticiler ve diğer bölümler arasında işbirliği içinde olmaları, uluslararası öğrencilerin sorunlarını ayrıntılı olarak ele almayı önerdikleri arasındadır. Araştırmacı, bu amaca ulaşmak için gerekli kaynakların sağlanması gerektiğini de belirtmiştir.

Mevcut araştırmanın bulgusu, uluslararası öğrencilerin çoğunlukla Kazakistan üniversitelerindeki öğrenme deneyimlerinden memnun olduklarını göstermiştir. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda teorik çerçevede ele alınan eğitim kalitesinin dört boyutu arasında, genel öğrenci memnuniyeti üzerinde en büyük etkiye sahip olması açısından akademik boyutun en önemli olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmanın önerisi, eğitim kalitesinin tüm unsurlarının genel memnuniyet üzerinde bir dereceye kadar etkisi olduğundan, yüksek düzeyde uluslararası öğrenci memnuniyeti elde etmek için ise eğitim kalitesinin tüm yönlerinde iyi bir seviye sağlamaya çalışmaktır. Üniversiteler ayrıca bu çalışmanın belirttiği gibi genel memnuniyette akademik boyutun önemini kabul etmeli ve öğrenme deneyimlerini artırabilecek destek hizmetlerinin gelişimini dikkate almalıdır. Ayrıca akademik ve destek hizmetleri boyutları arasında iş birliğini teşvik etmeleri gerekir.

Kazakistan'daki üniversitelerin üst yönetiminin dikkate alması gereken bir diğer nokta ise akademik ve akademik olmayan personelin dil yeterliliğidir. Kazakistan iki dilli bir ülke olduğundan, uluslararası öğrencilerle iletişim verimliliği açısından geldikleri ülkeye göre en az iki dil bilen (İngilizce ve Rusça) personel istihdamına ihtiyaç vardır. Dil konusu, uluslararası öğrencilere yerel dillerin öğretilmesi açısından da

düşünülmelidir. Düzeylerine uygun dil bilgisine yönelik dil gruplarının işleyişini dikkate almaya ihtiyaç vardır.

Bu çalışmanın bulgularına dayalı olarak bir konu daha dile getirilmelidir. Bu araştırmanın ek avantajı, üç farklı üniversiteden uluslararası öğrencilerin öğrenme deneyimlerinin paylaşılmasıdır. Bu üniversitelerin seçilmesinin gerekçesi, Nazarbayev Üniversitesi ve diğer iki üniversitede beklenen sistem farklılıklarına dayanmaktadır. Öğrencilerin paylaştığı deneyimlere göre, öğrencilerinin katıldığı üniversitelerin müfredat yapısına yönelik farklı yaklaşımları bulunmaktadır. Amerikan üniversiteleri bazında faaliyet gösteren ve seçmeli ders sistemini teşvik eden Nazarbayev Üniversitesi'nin durumu ve uygulaması dikkate alındığında, diğer üniversitelerdeki öğrenciler seçmeli ders sistemini uygulayarak özgün müfredatlarını oluşturma fırsatı bulamamaktadırlar. Bu sistem bulgulardan da görüldüğü gibi resmi olarak çalışmaktadır. Bu nedenle, Kazakistan'daki üniversitelerin yönetimi, her öğrencinin eğitiminde benzersiz bir yol oluşturabileceği seçmeli dersler sistemini işler hale getirmeye özen göstermeli ve adımlar atmalıdır.

Tüm katılımcılar arasında bir doktora öğrencisi bulunurken, bu kişi en çok üniversitedeki öğrenme deneyimlerinden ve eğitim kalitesinden memnun olmayan öğrenci olmuştur. Uluslararası doktora çalışmalarının sistematik sorunları olup olmadığını belirlemek için başka bir araştırma yapılması istenebilir, üniversitedeki öğrenciler veya belirli bir öğrencinin kişisel algısıdır.

Ayrıca, bireysel öğrenme deneyimlerinin üniversitelere yönelik izlenimleri, inançları veya duyguları üzerinden değerlendirilmesinin, gerçek sunumdan bağımsız tüm yönleriyle kaliteyi değerlendirmede önemli olduğunu ve bu kaliteye ilişkin algılara ışık tuttuğunu vurgulamak gerekir. Bu tür bir kalite değerlendirmesi makul olup, anketler yoluyla elde edilebilecek sonuçlara kıyasla farklı bir kalite yapısı sağlayabilir. Üniversiteye yönelik duyular, izlenimler ve bireysel duygular gibi soyut yönleri dahil ederek çok daha geniş bir eğitim kalitesi kavramı sağlayabilir (Masserini ve ark., 2019).

Kazakistan'da yüksek ğretimin uluslararasılaşması açısından, üniversitelerin, eğitim sürecini İngilizce olarak sağlayarak en yüksek kalitede öğrenme sürecini sağlamak için yerel ve uluslararası profesörler de dahil olmak üzere çeşitli bilim alanlarından yetkin profesörleri çekmesi gerekmektedir. Üniversiteler hem yerel hem de uluslararası öğrenciler için fırsat eşitliği sağlayabilmelidir. Bu bağlamda, devlet üniversitelerinin İngilizce eğitim verebilmeleri için ulusal mevzuatın uyarlanması gerekmektedir. Ayrıca, üniversite yönetimi, diğer üniversitelerle iş birliği kurarak aktif olarak öğrenci hareketliliğini ve uluslararası varlığını teşvik etmelidir. Uluslararası öğrencileri çekmek ve uluslararası ortaklıkları teşvik etmek için mevcut çalışma programlarının çeşitlendirilmesi gerekmektedir (Lapina ve arkd., 2016).

Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma Kazakistan üniversitelerinde uluslararası öğrenci deneyimlerinin ve memnuniyetinin sınırlı teorik araştırma tabanına katkıda bulunmaktadır. Pratik bir bakış açısından, bu çalışmanın bulguları, hedeflenen uluslararası öğrenci sayısını çekmek ve bazı üniversitelerin Orta Asya'da bölgesel bir eğitim merkezi oluşturmak için ele alınması gereken kalite boşluklarını belirlemek için üniversite yöneticileri tarafından kullanılabilir. Kaliteli hizmeti her boyutta teşvik etme fikri eğitim yöneticilerine haklı görünse de bunlara öncelik vermemek kaynakların verimsiz dağılımına yol açabilir.

Bu çalışmanın keşif amaçlı bir amacı olduğundan, daha fazla araştırma, nicel araştırma yöntemini uygulayarak farklı üniversitelerden daha fazla sayıda uluslararası öğrenciyi içermelidir, böylece bulgular Kazakistan üniversitelerindeki tüm uluslararası öğrenci deneyimlerine genellenebilir.

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