



The collapse of neoliberal concept of education in the COVID-19 era and the prospects for post-COVID education

Madina S. Ashilova¹, Alibek S. Begalinov², Kalimash K. Begalinova³

¹Abylai Khan Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages,
Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

²International University of Information Technologies, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

³Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

Abstract

Introduction. The authors investigate the problem of value changes occurring in the higher education system. The COVID-19 pandemic, which spread around the world in early 2020, has had a serious impact on higher education. It has led to the need to revise the axiological foundations of modern education. The purpose of this article is to analyze the neoliberal concept of higher education in the modern world and identify trends for the future post-COVID education.

Materials and Methods. The materials included international research articles published between 2020 and 2021 and devoted to the subject under study, as well as a sociological study conducted in the Republic of Kazakhstan and investigating well-being and value orientations of students during the COVID-19 pandemic. A sample of 1,000 university students from all 14 regions in Kazakhstan was interviewed. The main proportion of students was retained in the sample (by gender, language of instruction, nationality, years of study and degree programmes). The study was conducted using the Google Forms application. The main research methods were content analysis of scholarly literature (more than 40 international sources), as well as analysis based on the results of the sociological survey of students in Kazakhstan.

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✉ Corresponding Author: Madina S. Ashilova, madina.almaty@mail.ru

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Results. *The authors revealed that if at the very beginning researchers paid attention to such negative aspects of the pandemic as poor technical equipment, Internet failures, unpreparedness of academic staff and students for online learning, the growth of student debts due to job loss, etc., then it soon became clear that the pandemic affected not only the external (economic, technical) side of education, but also its very essence. Today, researchers all over the world are critically analyzing the foundations of modern higher education - neoliberal concepts that have dominated in different countries since the late twentieth century and the development of globalization. It is shown that the current global educational crisis has not been caused by the pandemic, but by the unaccounted negative consequences of the deep penetration of neoliberalism ideas into society (market relations, uncontrolled competition, weakening of the role of the state, weak support for social sectors of the economy, etc.). The authors argue that societies with a developed system of neoliberal higher education experience more stress than developing, traditional ones like Kazakhstan, since the basis of education of the former is mainly the market and monetary-market relations, the basis of the latter is moral, intangible values of education.*

Conclusions. *Exploring the prospects of post-secondary education based on international research investigations, the authors have put forward the ideas about the need to abandon neoliberalism in favor of greater humanization, fundamentalization and ecologization of education, strengthening state control and financing. The authors consider this as the only possible form for progressive development of higher education after the pandemic.*

Keywords

Neoliberalism; COVID-19 pandemic; Higher education; Philosophy of education; Post-secondary education; Well-being of youth.

Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic, which has spread widely around the world in 2020, has not pass by any area of human activity. It pushed some industries towards rapid growth, while other areas significantly slowed down. As for the education sector, the pandemic has not only changed the format of education, but also seriously raised the question of the essence of education. At first, it was believed that the main negative factors of the pandemic were disruptions in the work of educational institutions, poor technical equipment, interruptions in the Internet work, limited access to educational products, weak digital training of teachers and students, growing unemployment in the educational sphere, growth of student debts, etc.¹. But it soon became clear: all this is just the top of the iceberg. The

COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the essential foundations of education: its ability to exist.

The relevance of this study is due to the fact that the coronavirus pandemic is a fairly new phenomenon. And, contrary to all expectations, it has penetrated quite deeply into the educational process, slowly transforms it, changes both the external (formal) side of education and the internal (content).

Education was suddenly devalued. Students began to realize clearly that a loan taken for educational reasons, most likely, will not return a debit in the form of a prestigious job or salary. The investments are unlikely to be ever paid off at all. The situation before the pandemic had been already extremely tense, in this area there were such problems as a reduction in student

¹ UN Concept Note. Education in the COVID-19 era and beyond. UN, 2020. URL:

https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/policy_brief_-_education_during_covid-19_and_beyond_russian.pdf

enrollment², a student debt crisis³, low wages of graduates, growing unemployment, etc. The pandemic significantly exacerbated these problems.

“Is it worth studying further?”⁴ – this question is asked by millions of students in the United States. Most young people in Australia claimed that they were unlikely to retire before the age of 65, find their dream house or work related not only to paying bills⁵. The average life satisfaction score among English students is 5.8 (out of 10); however, it is still significantly lower in comparison to the adult population in the UK (7.0)⁶.

All these factors state about a serious disappointment of student youth with the sphere of higher education, calls into question the need for further education and the employment prospects after graduation.

At the same time it becomes obvious that after such total criticism there can be no question of a return to “normality”. The current concept of higher education, thanks to the pandemic, has reached its bottom. We may observe a shift in educational paradigms soon. The neoliberal concept in education is running out of itself.

The purpose of this paper is to study the well-being and values of student youth in the world (based on research of foreign scientists) and in Kazakhstan, the largest country in Central Asia

(based on a survey conducted among 1000 students).

Among the tasks: researching foreign literature on neoliberalism and the impact of the pandemic on higher education, analyzing foreign surveys, conducting our own sociological survey in Kazakhstan, conducting a comparative analysis.

More serious scientific works are required to understand what education should be after pandemic and what new educational paradigms should be founded. In this study we will only try to figure out which factors have influenced most significantly on the effectiveness of higher education and what prospects for post-COVID education we may have in future.

Literature review

The neoliberal educational concept, as well as the impact of pandemic on the higher educational system are now being carefully studied by various researchers around the world.

The origins of neoliberalism have been well discussed in numerous papers (see, e.g., Centeno and Cohen [1], Hursh and Henderson [2], and Peters [3]).

It should be noted that many authors tend to view neoliberalism as the dominant ideology of globalization⁷, a global agenda [4]. Having emerged in the economic theory in the middle of

² Where Did All the Students Go? The Chronicle of Higher Education. 2019. URL: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/where-did-all-the-students-go>

³ Student Loans Owned and Securitized, Outstanding. FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. 2021. URL: <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/SLOAS>

⁴ Hiler T. How COVID-19 Made Higher Education Value a Top Priority. Third way, 2020. URL: <https://www.thirdway.org/memo/how-covid-19-made-higher-education-value-a-top-priority>

⁵ Zhou N. Young Australians delaying life goals due to pandemic and feel pessimistic about future. *The Guard-*

ian. 2020. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/nov/05/young-australians-delaying-life-goals-due-to-pandemic-and-feel-pessimistic-about-future>

⁶ Office for national statistics. Coronavirus and higher education students: England, 4 to 12 May 2021. URL: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandhighereducationstudents/england4to12may2021>

⁷ Antipov D., Bakirov E. Neoliberalism in Education: An Analysis of the Global Economy of Education. *Economy philosophy*, 2017, no. 1, pp. 74–91. URL: <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=29257209>

XXth century, neoliberalism soon penetrated into all other areas of human life. In the field of education the neoliberal concept has dominated for the last 20 years (since the end of the 90s) [5].

Academic capitalism is broadly defined as “the involvement of colleges and faculty in market-like behaviors,” and these behaviors have seemingly been increasing over the past twenty years⁸ [6]. So, the essence of neoliberalism in the educational system is the inclusion of education in the market economic model. In this respect, economic globalization, “West’s triumph”, which led to the expansion of capitalism into the higher educational system, is considered to be the trigger of growth⁹.

The neoliberal paradigm of higher education is characterized by a market approach to the admission of students (mostly foreign)¹⁰, global capitalization and commercialization of higher education, as well as the integration of financial markets [7].

It happened well ahead of the pandemic when scientists admitted that neoliberalism in educational policy had a tendency to generate a technical rationalistic approach to knowledge and its values [8, p. 509].

The goal of education shifts from the intention to educate autonomous and hard-hitting participants of democracy to the desire to produce a positive and able-bodied workforce [9].

Peters [10] believes that we have entered the phase of knowledge capitalism. This shift has also been characterized as cognitive (bio) capitalism [11], since the knowledge economy is based on the constructions of intangible (intellectual and affective) labor, rather than physical labor as the production basis [12]. This resulted in the upbringing of an economically responsible and

“economically selfish” person [13, p. 314]. Phillips and Ilkan argue that now the responsibility falls on people who must “become self-regulating ... and market-aware” [14, p. 397].

The value of knowledge within the frameworks of neoliberal educational paradigm lies in its usefulness for the development of human capital [15, p. 222]. Thus, the role of schools and universities in personal education has changed markedly over the past thirty years: graduation can be viewed as the creation of an intellectual worker [4].

The given interpretation of education and its goals, as well as the entire neoliberal approach to education in the era of pandemic, show their total inconsistency.

The current coronavirus pandemic, according to Giroux, is more than a medical crisis, it is also a political and ideological crisis. It is a crisis rooted in years of neglect by neoliberal governments that denied the importance of public healthcare and public welfare while refusing to fund the institutions which made their existence possible. At the same time, this crisis cannot be separated from a crisis of huge inequalities in wealth, income and power. It cannot be separated from the crisis of democratic values, education and environmental destruction [16].

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the contemporary global university into further crisis [17].

The major “clients” and “consumers” of modern society are students who grow aware of the failure of the neoliberal educational paradigm. Studies around the world demonstrate students' dissatisfaction with higher education and, as a result, with the prospects for their lives in the pandemic era.

⁸ Ashilova M., Begalinov A., Begalinova K. *Kazakhstani Higher Education*. Overview. Almaty, 2021. 240 p.

⁹ Klak T. *Globalization and Neoliberalism: The Caribbean Context*. Rowman & Littlefield. Lanham, 1998.

¹⁰ Went R. *Globalization: Neoliberal Challenge. Radical Responses*. Pluto Press, London, 2000.

Thus, as follows from the survey conducted by Goodwin Simon Strategic Research in the USA, American respondents showed less clarity about their goals and ideas for their future work or career, many students in the USA are not sure whether they should continue to study at university¹¹.

In Australia, the majority of students is unsure of their financial future (64 %) and postpone the process of achieving their basic life goals due to the Covid-19 pandemic (69 %). This was shown by a survey that revealed widespread pessimism. 84 % of 1,000 young Australians said that it had become harder to get a job after Covid-19¹².

In Russia, 57.2 % of respondents among students said that they were losing control over the situation and their lives, felt the loss of their goals, absence of plans and total uncertainty¹³.

According to a large-scale study conducted by Deloitte, which covered 27.5 thousand people around the world, the most important concerns of young respondents are related to family well-being (41 %), long-term financial future (41 %) and career prospects (40 %)¹⁴.

The crisis in higher education also affected the mental well-being of young people.

According to a UNICEF survey on the impact of COVID on the mental health of adolescents and young people, conducted in 9 countries around the world and organized among over 8,000 respondents, one in three responded that felt anxious (27 %) and another 15 % felt depressed. 43 % of girls and 31 % of boys were pessimistic about the future¹⁵.

According to the International Labor Organization's report Youth and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Impact on Jobs, Education, Rights and Mental Health, 50 % of young people have the potential to experience feelings of anxiety or depression, and another 17 % are likely to have already experienced these problems¹⁶.

In Canada, one out of four student respondents noted that the stress level was above critical thresholds [18].

In the USA analysis based on student interviews showed increased stress and anxiety due to the outbreak of COVID-19 (71 %)¹⁷.

Thus, COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the moral vacuum and economic gaps at the heart of the neoliberal "development" model that has dominated global economic relations since the 1980s¹⁸. It is an ideology which respects market and discards everything that makes us humans¹⁹.

¹¹ How COVID-19 and Other Events are Shaping Young People's Perceptions of the Future. URL: Equitable Futures National Youth Poll 2020–2021. <https://www.equitablefutures.org/covid19/>

¹² Zhou N. Young Australians delaying life goals due to pandemic and feel pessimistic about future. *The Guardian*. 2020. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/nov/05/young-australians-delaying-life-goals-due-to-pandemic-and-feel-pessimistic-about-future>

¹³ Young people developed pandemic fears. 2020. URL: <https://urfu.ru/ru/news/35209/>

¹⁴ Deloitte investigated the mood of millennials during the pandemic. 2020. URL: <https://frankrg.com/20855>

¹⁵ The impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of adolescents and youth. 2020. URL: <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/impact-covid-19-mental-health-adolescents-and-youth>

¹⁶ Youth and COVID-19: impacts on jobs, education, rights and mental well-being. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 70 percent of young people are unable to study properly. *Report of the International Labor Organization*. 2020. URL: https://www.ilo.org/moscow/news/WCMS_753125/lang--ru/index.htm

¹⁷ How COVID-19 and Other Events are Shaping Young People's Perceptions of the Future. Equitable Futures National Youth Poll 2020–2021. URL: <https://www.equitablefutures.org/covid19/>

¹⁸ Monbiot G. Neoliberalism – the ideology at the root of all our problems. *The Guardian*. 15 April. 2016. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15-neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot>

¹⁹ Metcalf S. Neoliberalism: the idea that swallowed the world. *The Guardian*. 18 August. 2017. URL:

Instead of using the economy at the service of citizens, neoliberalism forced workers to serve the needs of market²⁰.

The educational system does not prepare students for life. It prepares them only for a profession or work. They must learn to cope with life on their own²¹.

As a result, today there is a situation of total crisis generated by the dominance of neoliberal attitude to the world: the medical crisis quickly spread to other spheres of life and affected the higher education system very sensitively.

Methods

This study is designed to examine the well-being and values of student youth in Kazakhstan in order to reveal how significantly the pandemic has hit the views of young people and their prospects for future. The study will also show how deeply the neoliberal ideas in education have penetrated into Kazakhstan's universities and how this has affected the views of young people about their future.

The study involved students of higher educational institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In total 1000 people were surveyed. The study covered all 14 regions of Kazakhstan, students of different courses (from 1 to 4), different departments (studying in Russian, Kazakh and English), different specialties (technical, humanitarian, medical, etc.).

However, the selection series retained the bulk of students (male / female population, the share of large metropolitan areas and small towns, popular and unpopular specialties, etc.).

The study was limited to the online format, since a quarantine situation is still in effect in Kazakhstan. Students study in the remote mode, social contacts in many regions are significantly limited. The research was conducted with the use of Google Forms application. Based on the analysis of sociological survey, the life priorities of Kazakhstani students, their expectations from studying at universities, as well as the level of satisfaction with education during pandemic are shown.

Out of 1000 students of Kazakhstan universities who took part in the survey, 78.5 % were women and 21.5 % were men.

The positions of students from all 14 regions of Kazakhstan are presented. The largest number of survey forms came from Almaty and Almaty region (31.8 %), Shymkent and Turkestan region (11 %) and Karaganda (10.4 %). 5.9 % each – from Kostanay and Pavlodar, 5.7 % – from East Kazakhstan region, 5.4 % – from Kyzylorda, 5.1 % – from Aktobe, 4.6 % – from Atyrau, 4.4 % – from North Kazakhstan region, 2.9 % – from WKO, 2.6 % – from Nur-Sultan and Akmola region, 2.5 % – from Mangistau region, 1.8 % – from Taraz and Zhambyl region.

The survey involved students from various departments and specialties, including: students of humanities (45.8 %), education (17.2 %), social sciences, economics and business (13.7 %), natural sciences (5,2 %), technical sciences and technologies (5 %), services (4.5 %), arts (3.3 %), law (2.6 %), agriculture (2.3 %), medicine (2 %).

According to the courses of study, the respondents were distributed as follows: 1st

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/aug/18/neoliberalism-the-idea-that-changed-the-world>

²⁰ McCloskey S. COVID-19 has Exposed Neoliberal-Driven 'Development': How can Development Education Respond? *Policy and practice. A development education review*. 2020. pp. 174–185. URL: <https://www.developededucationreview.com/issue/issue-30/covid-19-has-exposed-neoliberal-driven-‘development’-how-can-development-education>

education review. 2020. pp. 174–185. URL: <https://www.developededucationreview.com/issue/issue-30/covid-19-has-exposed-neoliberal-driven-‘development’-how-can-development-education>

²¹ Gupta A. Value education in higher education. 2020. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.16787.84005>

course – 47.3 %, 2nd course – 21.1 %, 3rd course – 20 %, 4th course – 11.6 %.

By ethnical identity, the survey was mainly passed by students of Kazakh nationality (85.1 %), as well as Russian (5.3 %), Korean (2.7 %), Uzbek (1.3 %), Uyghur (1.2 %) and the rest (less than 1 %: Tajik, Tatar, German, etc.).

By age, the respondents presented the opinions of students of higher educational institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan under 18 years old (46.2 %), 19–21 years old (48.3 %), 22–24 years old (4.8 %) and over 24 years old (0.7 %).

Thus, the representative composition of the participants in the online sociological survey reflected the diversity of participants' judgments

on topical issues of modern higher education and can be considered as a reliable source of conclusions.

Results

Higher education in Kazakhstan “as seen by respondents”

The study revealed the following trends in the views, value orientations and well-being of student youth in Kazakhstan:

To the question “Do you have a definite goal in your life?” the overwhelming majority of respondents answered positively (86.6 %) (see Figure 1)²². Only 2.9 % of students noted that they had no goal in life, 10.5 % – found it difficult to answer.

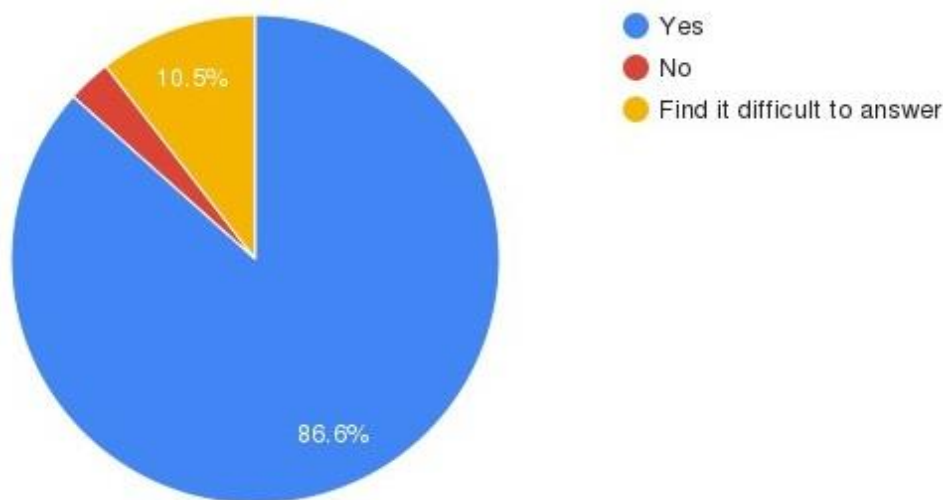


Figure 1. Having a goal in the lives of the respondents

Among the goals the respondents most often noted: to become a qualified specialist, to fulfil one's potential, career growth, creating a family, achieving financial independence, success in business, traveling.

In the answers to the question “What is the most valuable thing to you in your life?” (see

Figure 2)²³ the overwhelming number of respondents indicated family (60.9 %), health (14.1 %), career (9.5 %), money (4.8 %) and education (2.8 %). Everything else (friends, love, etc.) took 7.9 %.

²² Ashilova M., Begalinov A., Begalinova K. *Kazakhstani Higher Education. Overview*. Almaty, 2021. 240 p.

²³ Ashilova M., Begalinov A., Begalinova K. *Kazakhstani Higher Education. Overview*. Almaty, 2021. 240 p.

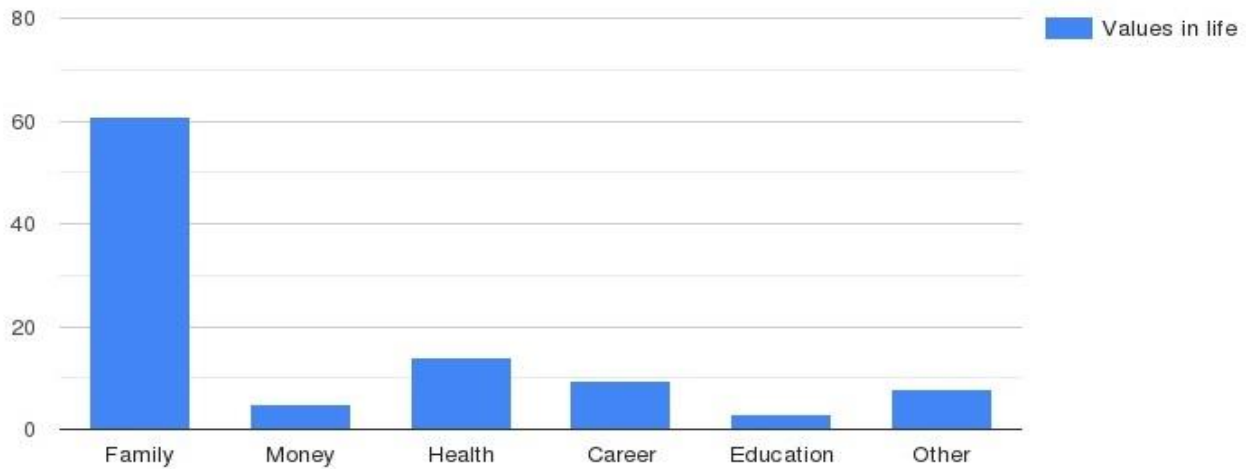


Figure 2. Values in the lives of respondents

Despite all pandemic challenges and difficulties of education in recent years, respondents generally highly appreciate the importance of university education. In particular, the acquisition of professional skills is significant for them. So, in their opinion, studying at university is important because it allows you to acquire a profession (44.7 %), become educated (33.4 %), prepare for an independent life (15.1 %), establish yourself among close people (1, nine %). Also, studying at university,

according to respondents (4 %), helps to become rich, broaden horizons, get a diploma, establish communication with people and peers, avoid military service, etc.

Most of the respondents believe that higher education of good quality will help ensure a successful career and self-realization. 820 respondents (82 %) supported this position, 82 respondents (8.2 %) did not, another 98 found it difficult to answer (9.8 %) (see Figure 3)²⁴.

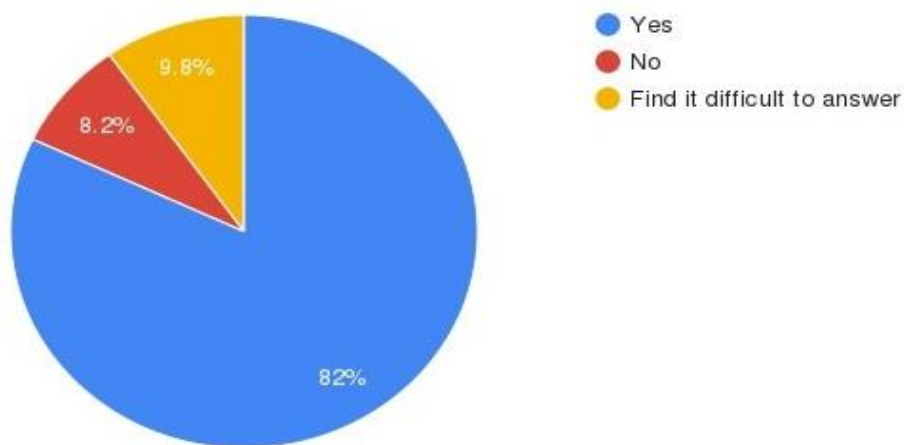


Figure 3. The role of higher education in career and self-realization

²⁴ Ashilova M., Begalinov A., Begalinova K. *Kazakhstani Higher Education. Overview*. Almaty, 2021. 240 p.

In the next question the respondents were asked to think about the results of their future profession. Most of the students agreed with the statement that work should bring pleasure (49.8 %), another 22.3 % believe that work

should be useful to people. No less part of the respondents expressed the opinion that work should bring a high income (21.7 %) and be prestigious (6.2 %) (see Figure 4)²⁵.

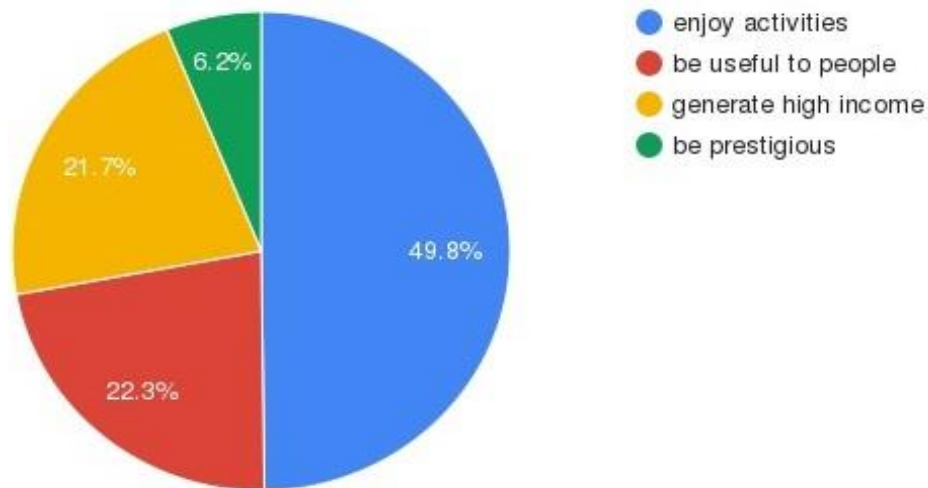


Figure 4. Characteristics of future work

To the question about the importance of material values, the respondents' answers formed as follows: for most of the students, spiritual values were more important than material ones

(57.2 %). For 19.1% - material values are the most important things in life. Another 23.7 % of students found it difficult to answer (see Figure 5)²⁶.

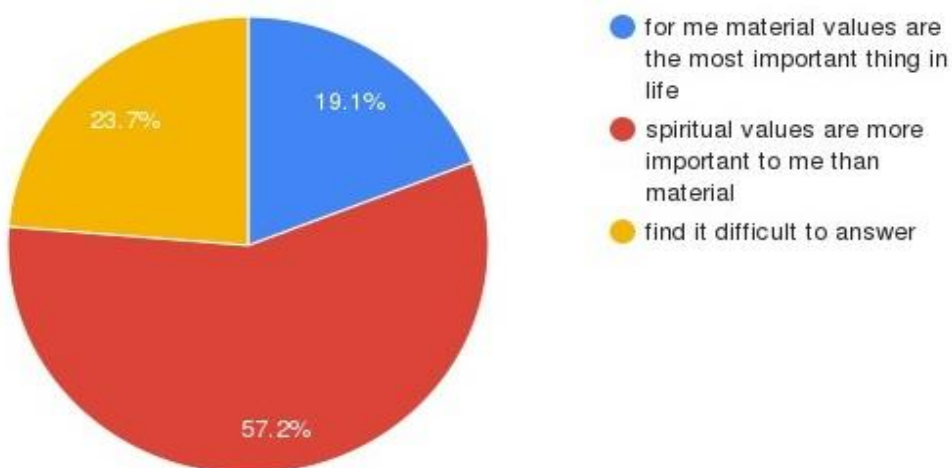


Figure 5. The importance of material and spiritual values

²⁵ Ashilova M., Begalinov A., Begalinova K. *Kazakhstani Higher Education. Overview*. Almaty, 2021. 240 p.

²⁶ Ashilova M., Begalinov A., Begalinova K. *Kazakhstani Higher Education. Overview*. Almaty, 2021. 240 p.

When asked what feelings the respondents most often felt, the answers were as follows: normal vitality, feel of calm (48.5 %), emotional uplift, cheerfulness (30.9 %). It should be noted that some respondents (9 %) felt a state of imbalance, a feeling of anxiety, another part (4.8 %) were depressed, and 4.2 % had a feeling

of indifference to everything (see Figure 6)²⁷. Among other answers, students indicated more often negative feelings, such as emotional carousels, fear, fatigue, loneliness, aggression, depression, sadness, shame, apathy, anxiety, guilt, disgust, etc. Out of the total number of answers, every fifth student noted a negative feeling.

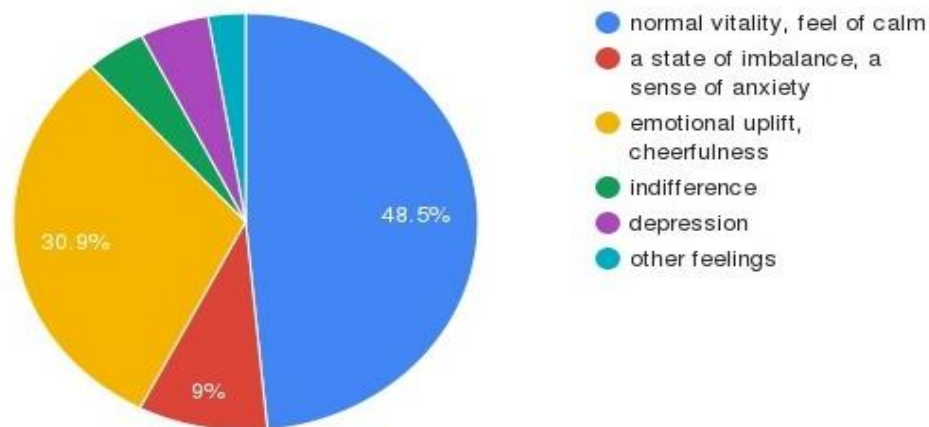


Figure 6. Feelings experienced by respondents

To the next question in the survey “What causes fear and uncertainty in your future life?”, students noted fear of not fulfilling themselves (54 %), problems with employment (11.4 %), fear of being left without a livelihood (11.2 %), problems with health (10.3 %), problems with

marital status (8.5 %) (see Figure 7)²⁸. In their responses, the students also shared that they were worried about the fear of not finding themselves, fear of unknown, political situation in the world, fear of prolonged depression, addiction, fear of future obstacles, etc.

²⁷ Ashilova M., Begalinov A., Begalinova K. *Kazakhstani Higher Education. Overview*. Almaty, 2021. 240 p.

²⁸ Ashilova M., Begalinov A., Begalinova K. *Kazakhstani Higher Education. Overview*. Almaty, 2021. 240 p.

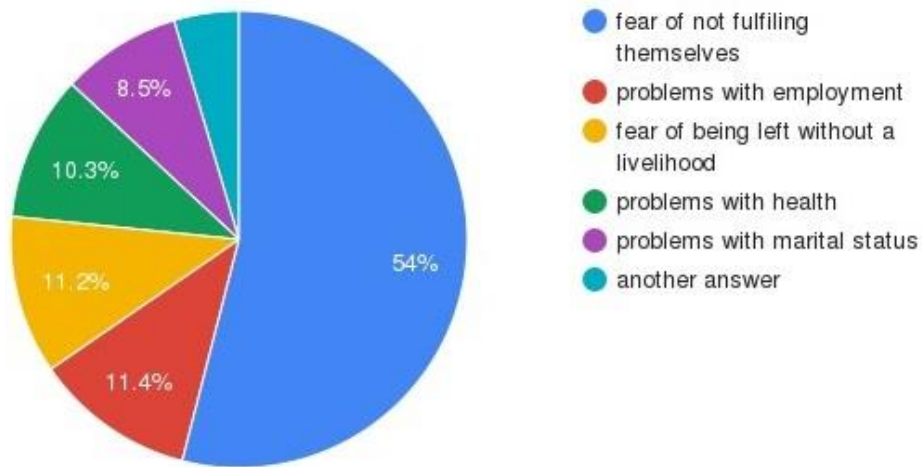


Figure 7. Fears of respondents

The coronavirus pandemic forced all universities in Kazakhstan to switch urgently to a distant format. But have universities managed to save the quality of education? Students answered this question differently: most of the respondents (40.8 %) rated the quality of distant education as

high, 30.2 % – above average, 24.5 % – average. A small part of students believe that the quality of education has decreased: 3.2 % believe that it has become below average, and 1.3 % – as low (see Figure 8)²⁹.

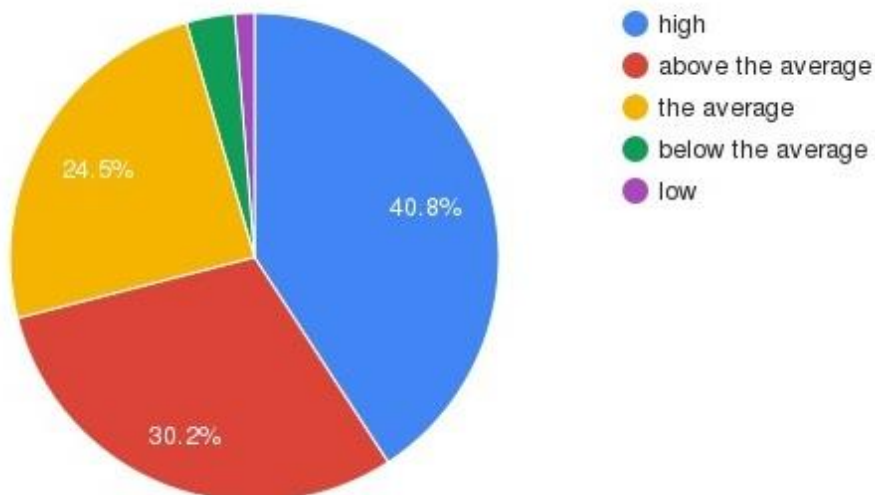


Figure 8. Distant education quality

²⁹ Ashilova M., Begalinov A., Begalinova K. *Kazakhstani Higher Education*. Overview. Almaty, 2021. 240 p.

The level of satisfaction with the education received at university varies from 1–5: most of the respondents gave a grade of 4 (36.8 %), another

34.3 % – 5, 21.9 % – 3. A small part of the students gave a grade of 2 (5.5 %) and 1 (1.5 %) (see Figure 9)³⁰.

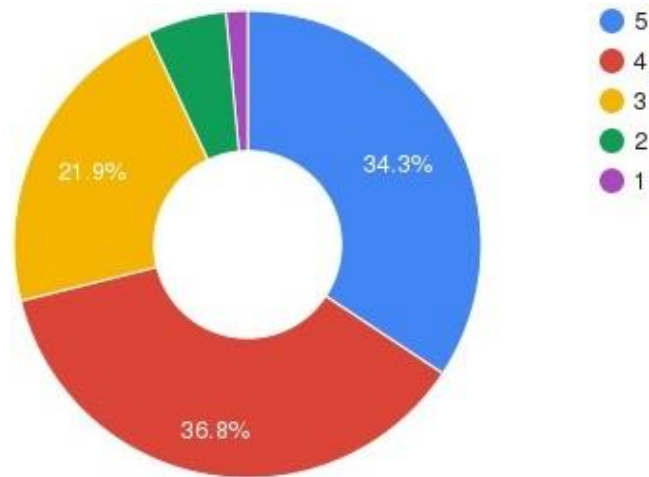


Figure 9. The rate of satisfaction with received education

When asked if your life goals coincide with your future profession, almost half of the respondents noted that partially coincided (47.6 %), another 43.3 % – fully coincided. Only

6.3 % of respondents answered negatively and 2.8 % found it difficult to answer (see Figure 10)³¹.

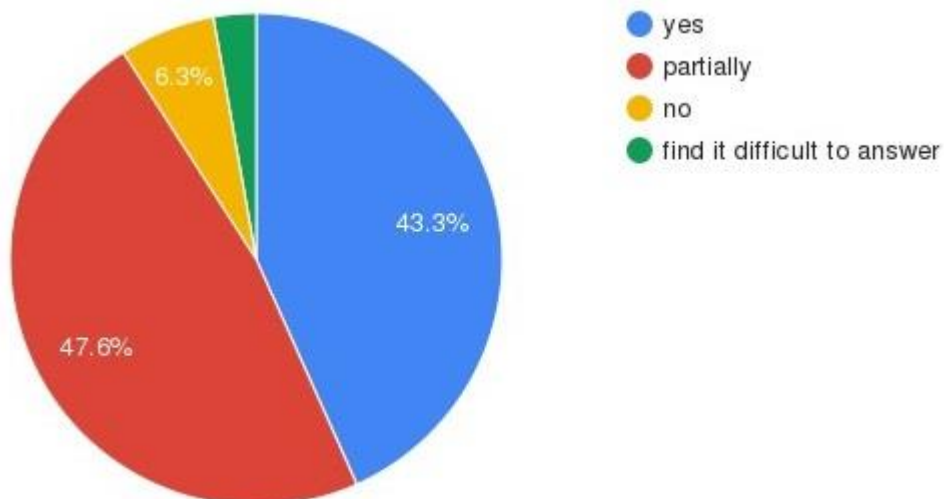


Figure 10. Coincidence of life goals with the future profession of the respondents

³⁰ Ashilova M., Begalinov A., Begalinova K. *Kazakhstani Higher Education. Overview*. Almaty, 2021. 240 p.

³¹ Ashilova M., Begalinov A., Begalinova K. *Kazakhstani Higher Education. Overview*. Almaty, 2021. 240 p.

To the next question about their plans to work in their specialty in future, the overwhelming majority of respondents answered

positively – 67.4 %. 24 % found it difficult to answer and 8.3 % of respondents did not plan to work in their specialty in future (see Figure 11)³².

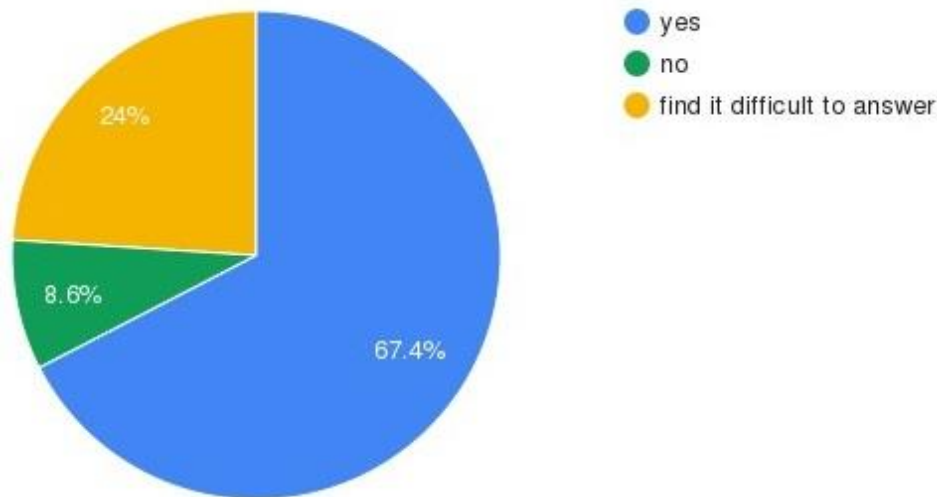


Figure 11. The respondents' plans to work in their specialty in future

Finally, in conclusion, the respondents were given the opportunity to make their proposals for improving the quality of higher education in Kazakhstan. Among the answers the following suggestions were made: for teachers – to be more objective and to treat students with greater understanding, to provide more practical lessons, to listen to young people and be able to consult with students, to make education accessible, to add financial literacy as a compulsory subject, to give more topical information at lectures, to present lecture materials in a creative way, to recommend more books for reading, to share more available information resources on the Internet, to increase salaries of teachers so that they have more motivation, to open special clubs for specialties, etc.

Discussion

Based on the research carried out in Kazakhstan, the largest country in Central Asia, we come to the following conclusions:

1) the pandemic did not significantly affect the existence of life goals and attitudes of Kazakhstani youth.

As the survey shows, the majority of Kazakhstani students, despite the pandemic and all its negative consequences, have not lost their clear and definite life goals. They stick to their goals up to current day. For most, this goal is in professional and career growth, self-realization, and family creation. For the absolute majority of the surveyed students (over 90 %), their life goals still partially or completely coincide with their chosen professions.

In this context, Kazakhstani students are more resistant to the negative consequences of the

³² Ashilova M., Begalinov A., Begalinova K. *Kazakhstani Higher Education*. Overview. Almaty, 2021. 240 p.

pandemic than young people are from other countries. It seems that the reason for this is family support. Kazakhstan is the largest Central Asian country with a prominent oriental mentality, where kinship ties are still important in the lives of young people. Thanks to this, students have the opportunity to worry less about their financial well-being, relying on family support. And, as a result, the pandemic has less impact on their life values and goals.

2) In the value picture of the world of Kazakhstani students, the predominant place is occupied by the family. Career and money amount to small 9.5 % and 4.8 %, respectively.

Globalization and neoliberal attitudes with their call for unlimited competition, free market and individualism, as we see, have not penetrated deeply into Kazakhstani society yet. By inertness the attitudes of traditional society with the cult of family and traditions are strong. Therefore, the majority of Kazakhstani students, unlike Western students, do not really think about the prospects for career growth and material returns in the form of employment, prestigious work or high wages, preferring to establish family relationships.

From this it can be concluded that young people in Kazakhstan do not draw a direct parallel: tuition fees at university (credit) = high salary (debit). On the contrary, only every fifth student noted the necessity of the future profession profitability. While almost half of the surveyed respondents claimed for the need to enjoy work and another quarter – for the usefulness of it to people. This suggests that neoliberal attitudes and objections to education as an instrument of future financial well-being among students in Kazakhstan are still extremely weak.

3) Despite the difficulties that have arisen in the pandemic era, the faith of Kazakhstani students in higher education is still strong. The quality of distant education in Kazakhstan is

assessed by young people as high, but to a grade of 4.

Unlike foreign students, who are increasingly asking the question “Is it worth continuing their studies at university?”, the overwhelming majority of Kazakhstan students (82 %) are sure that higher education will help them to get successful career and self-realization. It seems that the reason for this is in a consistent and stable society, strong family traditions developed in Kazakhstan after the USSR collapse, and in a social support of the state.

Kazakhstan is a country with small population (only 19 million people). And there are fewer problems with admission to higher educational institutions, with employment and other issues than in other countries of the world characterized by a high population density, migration, military conflicts, etc. Therefore, students in Kazakhstan feel more protected and look forward with greater optimism.

4) Nevertheless, the global trends and pandemic mood did not pass by Kazakhstani students. Every fifth student in Kazakhstan experiences negative feelings (a state of imbalance, anxiety, depression, indifference, etc.). Among the main fears of young people: fear of not fulfilling oneself, problems with employment, fear of being left without a livelihood, health problems and marital status.

In this regard, Kazakhstan is no exception. Just like young people from other countries in the world, stress and depression among young people is growing in Kazakhstan. However, the level of stress, as shown by the survey, is not as high as among students from other countries.

For comparison, according to the UNICEF survey on the impact of COVID on mental health of adolescents and young people, conducted in 9 countries of the world and covering more than 8 thousand respondents, one in three responded that felt anxiety (27 %) and another 15 % were

depressed. 43 % of girls and 31 % of guys were pessimistic about the future³³.

According to the International Labor Organization's report “Youth and COVID-19 Pandemic: Impact on Jobs, Education, Rights and Mental Health”, 50 % of young people have the potential to experience feelings of anxiety or depression, and another 17 % are likely to have already experienced these problems³⁴.

In Russia, along with the growth of traditional fears, young people started to have new, pandemic ones. These fears were either absent before the coronavirus, or were very weak. According to the study, 88 % of survey participants noted that the pandemic increased their state of anxiety. 65.9 % of respondents were worried about the state of health, both their own and their relatives and friends. Fears about the future are among leaders (57.2 %): respondents note that they are losing control over the situation and their lives³⁵.

In Canada, one out of four student respondents noted that the stress level was above critical thresholds [18].

In the USA analysis based on student interviews showed increased stress and anxiety following the COVID-19 outbreak (71 %). Multiple factors that contributed to increased levels of stress, anxiety and depressive thoughts among students were identified. These include fear and anxiety for their own health and for the health condition of people close to them (91 %), difficulties with attention concentration (89 %), sleep disturbances (86 %), decreased social

interactions due to physical distance (86 %), and increased anxiety for their academic progress (82 %)³⁶.

As we can see, the level of stress and depression among Kazakh youth is less than among young people in Europe, America or Russia. However, Kazakhstani students did not escape the negative impact of pandemic and also began to experience more negative feelings.

Abstracting from the results of study conducted among students in Kazakhstan during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as from the results of other world studies, we will summarize some theoretical results.

The neoliberal model of university organization, which has become especially popular in the world and post-Soviet countries after the USSR collapse, does not justify itself. Having become the ideology of globalization and penetrating deeply into the sphere of education, neoliberalism enables the disintegration of personality rather than its formation. This is evidenced by disorientation of student youth in the USA, Europe and Australia – the market chain “education-skill” – “prestigious work-high income” was interrupted. And the meaning of whole education now is also under the question. In this regard, in countries with a high level of neoliberalism penetration, the level of stress, anxiety and depression among young people is growing especially rapidly.

In Kazakhstan, neoliberal ideas in education meet with widespread opposition among teachers and public figures, many of whom were brought

³³ The impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of adolescents and youth. 2020. URL: <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/impact-covid-19-mental-health-adolescents-and-youth>

³⁴ Youth and COVID-19: impacts on jobs, education, rights and mental well-being. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 70 percent of young people are unable to study

properly. *Report of the International Labor Organization*. 2020. URL: https://www.ilo.org/moscow/news/WCMS_753125/lang--ru/index.htm

³⁵ Young people developed pandemic fears. 2020. URL: <https://urfu.ru/ru/news/35209/>

³⁶ How COVID-19 and Other Events are Shaping Young People's Perceptions of the Future. Equitable Futures National Youth Poll 2020–2021. URL: <https://www.equitablefutures.org/covid19/>

up by the Soviet Union school along with the values of traditional Kazakhstani society. Therefore, young people treat education in a slightly different way than their peers from other countries, highlighting spiritual, non-material aspects of education and thereby suffering less from financial difficulties that they may face in future. For the majority of Kazakhstani students the main life goals, as well as the goals of studying at university are to become qualified specialists, achieve self-realization, career growth, create a family, get financial independence, success in business and travelling. Only 4 % of students linked university studies with subsequent financial well-being. Most students see the value of education in the acquisition of a profession (44 %), education (33 %) and preparation for an independent life (15 %).

Nevertheless, Kazakhstan is a part of the global market, including education. This means that the problems of neoliberal school will sooner or later appear on this stage, too.

On one hand, the neoliberal governments of the world are striving to cope with the pandemic as quickly as possible, trying to balance the risks between the disease of society and the decline of economies, continuing “development” (read: survival)³⁷. On the other hand, more and more scientists all over the world are criticizing a neoliberal approach to education that does not teach young people to cope with life, but only provides them with a set of standardized,

fragmented and rapidly aging skills and information³⁸.

It is worth noting that scientists had actively criticized neoliberalism in earlier times. An American scientist Michael Apple is convinced that neoliberalism undermines the foundations of the entire educational system. It led to the extreme commercialization and consumerization of the educational system. “Private education is undoubtedly good, but state one – is bad. Public schools seem to be “black holes” into which money is poured, and then they disappear without giving any results Schools are created for teachers and officials, not for “consumers.” In a nutshell, for neoliberals the world is a huge supermarket. “Consumer choice” is a guarantor of democracy. Education is considered to be the same product as bread, cars or television”³⁹.

The main disadvantages of neoliberalism in education are outlined as follows:

– new social inequality, as better-off young people can afford better education. “There has been a change in the main line in the goal-setting of educational process: now education is not a tool for overcoming social inequality, but, on the contrary, now it is a kind of factor of social differentiation through the provision of educational services at different level depending on the economic capabilities of the “customer” of education. This situation spurs the mechanism of “natural selection”, within the framework of which new criteria of social justice are established”⁴⁰.

³⁷ McCloskey S. COVID-19 has Exposed Neoliberal-Driven ‘Development’: How can Development Education Respond? *Policy and practice. A development education review*, 2020, pp. 174–185. URL: <https://www.developmenteducationreview.com/issue/issue-30/covid-19-has-exposed-neoliberal-driven-‘development’-how-can-development-education>

³⁸ Gupta A. Value education in higher education. 2020. DOI <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.16787.84005>

³⁹ Apple M.W. Between Neoliberalism and Neoconservatism: Education and Conservatism in a Global Context. In: Torres, N.B. (Ed.) *Globalization and Education: Critical Perspectives*. Routledge, New York, 2000, pp. 57–78. URL: <https://longviewoneducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/BetweenNeoliberalismNewconservatism.pdf>

⁴⁰ Khmelinin A. A. The Problem of Social Justice in Neoliberal Political Doctrine and Practice: A Theoretical Analysis. *Scientific Yearbook of the Institute of Physics*

– standardization of educational process to the detriment of scientific schools and university traditions⁴¹,

– loss of cultural identity, a gap between education and national cultures in the conditions of globalization. As a result, education becomes incapable of performing the function of society reproduction.

– a decrease in the share of public investments in higher education establishments due to competition and university entrepreneurship, which leads to decrease in fundamental research and continuation of academic traditions,

– transformation of teachers and professors into sellers of educational services, and students into their clients, which significantly changes the architectonics of educational process, forcing teachers to adapt to the wishes of students, often to the detriment of their own education,

– symbolic replacement of the concept of “knowledge” with “information”, fragmentation of this information and its presentation (sale) in the capacity of knowledge and skills to students, a rapid obsolescence of this information, the need to acquire knowledge (read: information) throughout entire life,

– absence of disciplinary, formative part and any other part necessary for life in the community, only money-making part is involved in the educational process.

The coronavirus pandemic, which suddenly spread all over the world, especially strongly in the most “educated” neoliberal countries, revealed inability of people to cope with it, lack of unity and solidarity. The widespread dissemination of fake information and mass

ignorance in the fight against the virus showed the true education of people. And growing depressions and stresses reflect their disorientation and lack of spiritual basis in the value picture of the world.

In this regard, many scientists agree that a return to the past (neoliberal approach to education) can no longer be considered acceptable. The pandemic is no longer a temporary phenomenon, which will pass with the opening of universities and return of traditional education. The pandemic means abruption. Complete abruption with the past system and its educational approach.

“Coronavirus has brought the mighty of this world to their knees, and the world has slowed down like no one else could. Our minds are still tearing around, trying to find desperately a way to return to “normality”, to sew future with the past without noticing abruption. But the gap has already happened. And in the midst of despair now we are given a chance to rethink the doomsday machine that we made for ourselves. There can be nothing worse than a return to normality. Pandemics have always forced people to break up with the past and re-imagine the world. The current pandemic is no exception. It is a portal, a gate that separates one world from another to come. We can walk through them, dragging behind us a dead weight of prejudice, hatred, greed, databases, empty ideas, poisoned rivers and dirty sky. Or we can – move forward light, without these belongings, ready to imagine another world and fight for it”⁴².

The gap is now more evident than ever. And necessary conditions are already being created for the formation of a new type of education –

and Problems of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2014, no. 3, pp. 159.

⁴¹ Naletova I. Diversification of higher education: a challenge to universities. *Higher Education in Russia*, 2005, no. 5, pp. 39–45.

⁴² Roy A. Pandemic is a Portal. *The Financial Times*. 2020. URL: <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>

education that would take into account all mistakes of the old neoliberal school and learn the best lessons of the pandemic.

Among the trends in future education researchers identify the following:

1. A gradual decline in the level of commercialization of education sector and transformation of education into an intrinsic value. The pandemic gives a chance to turn our universities not into a gathering place for “intellectual technicians”, but into a place where “people of thought, trained to think conceptually, holistically, transdisciplinary” will gather [19].

2. Striving to strengthen interdisciplinarity in the educational process and inclusion of discipline “impact on the planet” “Impact on the planet” should become an integral part of disciplinary knowledge, – says R. Gorur, – not as a six-week course in the first semester, but as a fundamental basis of any discipline. Focusing each discipline on understanding how decisions in this area affect society, with case studies assessing past contributions and effects, will substantiate and implement the abstract missions and visions supported by universities” [20].

3. Democratization of sphere of higher education through the widespread development of digitalization, expanding access to high-quality education for everyone (open resources, databases, courses, etc.).

4. Development of distant education with elements of interactivity and different forms of education.

5. Transformation of learners into knowledge producers and contributors to knowledge communities (based on networking communities).

6. Formation of new thinking based on criticism and creativity [21].

The pandemic has sharply raised the question of neoliberal or value price of education: studies have shown that young people around the

world come to the conclusion that the cost of education today is determined not by the market, but by the spiritual needs of young people. In the face of growing anxiety, stress and depression, education can become a medicine, a panacea for young people from spiritual crisis. Accordingly, the future of education, its foundations, values and essence, and the possibility of neutralization of the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic with the help of new educational system depend on the efforts of modern scientists and educators around the world.

Conclusions

The crisis, which all world education was previously hidden in a latent form, today – has shown itself in the most impressive proportions. The pandemic did not create problems in higher education, but only exacerbated the existing ones to the extent, after which a return to “normality” will no longer be considered normal.

The neoliberal model of education, based on fierce competition, individualism and free trade, has failed. During pandemic this model has shown all its inconsistency. Developed societies with a strong neoliberal approach to the educational system are experiencing an acute crisis in economy, politics, as well as in the mental health of population. Young people from the USA, Europe, Australia, according to numerous studies, experience more stress and depression due to the capitalist market collapse happening in their eyes.

In their turn, developing societies classified as traditional, such as Kazakhstan, are less affected by pandemic in terms of mental well-being of young people, since not only market relations are important but other traditional and cultural values are appreciated by them.

It seems that a future prospect for the development of higher education in the world will be revised towards reducing the influence of neoliberalism and market, strengthening state



control and financing in this area, humanization, humanitarization, fundamentalization and environmentalization of the sphere of higher education. Only in this form the higher education

will continue to develop forward towards the creation of a fair, educated and culturally tolerant society.

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Madina S. Ashilova

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Kalimash K. Begalinova

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Information about the Authors

Madina Serikbekovna Ashilova

PhD, Associate Professor,
Departments of International Communications,
Abylai Khan Kazakh University of International Relations and Foreign
Languages, Muratbayev str., 200, 050001, Almaty, Kazakhstan.
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7634-7727>
E-mail: madina.almatytv@mail.ru (Corresponding Author)

Alibek Serikbekovich Begalinov

PhD, Professor-lecturer,
International Information Technology University,
34/1 Manas str., 050001, Almaty, Kazakhstan.
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7439-221X>
E-mail: alibek557@inbox.ru

Kalimash Kapsamarovna Begalinova

Doctor of Philosophical Science, Professor,
Department of Religious Studies and Cultural Studies,
Al Farabi Kazakh National University,
71 Al-Farabi Ave., 050001, Almaty, Kazakhstan.
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5575-5142>
E-mail: kalima910@mail.ru



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Смена неолиберальной концепции образования в эпоху COVID-19 и перспективы постковидного образования

М. С. Ашилова ¹, А. С. Бегалинов², К. К. Бегалинова³

¹ Казахский университет международных отношений и мировых языков имени Абылай Хана,
Алматы, Республика Казахстан

² Международный университет информационных технологий, Алматы, Республика Казахстан

³ Казахский национальный университет им. Аль-Фараби, Алматы, Республика Казахстан

Проблема и цель. Авторами исследуется проблема ценностных изменений, происходящих в системе высшего образования. Пандемия COVID-19, распространившаяся в начале 2020 г., оказала серьезное влияние на сферу высшего образования. Она привела к необходимости пересмотра аксиологических основ современного образования. Целью настоящей статьи является анализ неолиберальной концепции высшего образования в современном мире и выявление трендов будущего, постковидного образования.

Методология. Материалами исследования выступили научные статьи зарубежных ученых за 2020 и 2021 годы, посвященные изучаемой тематике, а также социологическое исследование, проведенное в Республике Казахстан и рассматривающее самочувствие и ценностные ориентиры студенческой молодежи в период пандемии COVID-19. Всего было опрошено 1000 студентов из всех 14 регионов Казахстана. В выборке была сохранена основная доля учащихся (по гендеру, языку обучения, национальности, курсам и специальностям). Исследование проводилось с применением приложения Google Forms. Основными методами исследования выступили контент-анализ научной литературы (более 40 зарубежных источников), а также анализ по итогам социологического опроса студентов в Казахстане.

Результаты. Авторами показано, что если в самом начале ученые обращали внимание на такие негативные аспекты пандемии, как слабая техническая оснащенность, сбои в работе интернета, неподготовленность педагогов и студентов к онлайн-обучению, рост студенческих долгов в связи с потерей работ и др., то вскоре стало ясно, что пандемия затронула не только внешнюю (экономическую, техническую) сторону образования, но и её самую суть.

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 Автор для корреспонденции: Мадина С. Ашилова, madina.almatytv@mail.ru

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Сегодня учеными подвергаются критическому анализу основания современного высшего образования – неолиберальные концепции, которые в конце XX в. с развитием глобализации господствуют в разных странах мира. Показывается, что нынешний мировой образовательный кризис порождает не пандемия, а неучтенные негативные последствия глубокого проникновения в общество идей неолиберализма (рыночных отношений, неконтролируемой конкуренции, ослабления роли государства, слабой поддержки социальных секторов экономики и др.). Показано, что общества с развитой системой неолиберального высшего образования испытывают больше стресса, нежели развивающиеся, традиционные, как Казахстан, поскольку основу образования первых составляет преимущественно рынок и денежно-рыночные отношения, основу вторых – духовные, нематериальные ценности образования.

Заключение. Исследуя перспективы постковидного образования на материале зарубежных ученых, авторы выдвигают идеи о необходимости отказа от неолиберализма в пользу большей гуманизации, фундаментализации и экологизации образования, усиления государственного контроля и финансирования. Только в таком виде возможно поступательное развитие, а не регресс сферы высшего образования после пандемии.

Ключевые слова: неолиберализм; пандемия COVID-19; высшее образование; философия образования; постковидное образование; самочувствие молодежи.

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Заявленный вклад авторов:

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Информация о конфликте интересов:

Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Информация об авторах

Ашилова Мадина Серикбековна

доктор философии PhD, ассоциированный профессор, кафедра международных коммуникаций,

Казахский университет международных отношений и мировых языков имени Абылай Хана,

ул. Муратбаева, 200, 050001, Алматы, Республика Казахстан.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7634-7727>

E-mail: madina.almatytv@mail.ru

Бегалинов Алибек Серикбекович

доктор философии PhD, профессор-лектор, кафедра медиакоммуникаций и истории Казахстана,

Международный университет информационных технологий,

ул. Манаса 34/1, 050001, Алматы, Республика Казахстан.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7439-221X>

E-mail: alibek557@inbox.ru

Бегалинова Калимаш Капсамаровна

доктор философских наук, профессор, кафедра религиоведения и культурологии,

Казахский национальный университет им. Аль-Фараби,

пр. Аль-Фараби, 71, 050001, Алматы, Республика Казахстан.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5575-5142>

E-mail: kalima910@mail.ru