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Kazakhstan



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Introduction

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NATIONAL POLICIES OF ADULT AND LIFELONG LEARNING AND EDUCATION: KAZAKHSTAN

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General Historical Background of ALE and LLL

Historical studies indicate that, as part of the broader Soviet educational system, Kazakhstan had extremely low literacy rates in the early 20th century, particularly in rural areas, prompting intensive state-led efforts to expand access to basic education. To improve literacy, two ways were adopted: teaching adults to read and write and sending children to elementary schools. In 1939, the active eradication of illiteracy led to an 83.6% literacy rate among those aged 9 to 49 (Tugelova, 2025). These literacy campaigns represented one of the earliest forms of structured adult education in the region, as they mobilized adult populations into literacy classes and community-based learning initiatives. From a contemporary perspective, such initiatives align with the foundational principles of ALE as defined by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), which conceptualizes adult learning as organized educational processes enabling adults to acquire basic skills and participate in social and economic life (UNESCO UIL, 2016). Although not framed as lifelong learning at the time, these early interventions established the principle that education extends beyond childhood and serves broader societal transformation goals.

During the Soviet period, adult education became more systematically institutionalized through the expansion of vocational training and higher education systems. Research shows that Kazakhstan's education system increasingly incorporated mechanisms for continuous skill development, particularly to support industrialization and workforce planning (Mynbayeva & Pogolian, 2014). These structures allowed individuals to combine work with ongoing education, reflecting an early form of learning across the life course. The World Bank (2019) emphasizes that such systems of continuous skills development are essential for maintaining workforce adaptability and productivity in rapidly changing economies, a

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principle that resonates with Soviet-era practices despite their ideological framing. Similarly, OECD (2018) analyses of education systems in transition economies highlight that historically embedded vocational and adult training structures have often laid the institutional and cultural foundations upon which modern lifelong learning systems are built. These developments align with Human Capital Theory, which positions education as a cumulative, lifelong investment in skills and productivity rather than a one-time acquisition (Becker, 1992).

In the post-Soviet period, Kazakhstan's education system underwent substantial restructuring, moving toward internationally recognized models of lifelong learning. Following independence, reforms focused on decentralization, modernization, and alignment with global education standards, culminating in Kazakhstan's accession to the Bologna Process in 2010, which strengthened academic mobility and introduced flexible, modular learning pathways (OECD, 2018; Yergebekov & Temirbekova, 2012). According to UNESCO UIL (2020), lifelong learning systems are characterized by inclusiveness, flexibility, and the integration of formal, non-formal, and informal learning opportunities across the lifespan, principles increasingly reflected in Kazakhstan's education reforms.

Despite these developments, the UNESCO report identifies significant structural and systemic challenges that continue to limit the effectiveness of adult learning and education (ALE) in Kazakhstan. Key constraints include gaps in education-related legislation, the absence of a unified system for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and the lack of a coherent national framework to support advocacy and coordination in the lifelong learning sector. Furthermore, there is limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of existing initiatives, particularly digital learning platforms such as skill.enbek.kz. Understanding whether adult learners are able to translate acquired skills into meaningful employment outcomes remains a critical area for further investigation.

This report highlights that the government has acknowledged the necessity of promoting lifelong learning. To bridge knowledge gaps and meet the growing demand for continuing education, universities have been offering Silver Education since 2022. However, fostering adult and lifelong learning in Kazakhstan requires cooperation and coordination among various ministries and stakeholders (OECD, 2021) to provide possibilities for adults to engage in lifelong learning. Otherwise, non-formal education providers alone cannot address the competency challenges of the adult population. Moreover, translating Coursera contents into Kazakh may not effectively encourage adults to participate in lifelong learning unless certificates obtained are accredited by employers.

Current relevant national legislation pertaining to adult and lifelong learning (ALE) and lifelong learning (LLL)

Today, education leaders and policy-makers generally embrace the idea that learning is a lifelong and all-encompassing process and that all education should adhere to this premise (UNESCO, 2022). Accordingly, the Kazakh higher education system is currently undergoing a period of modernization that includes both structural adjustments and upgrading the content of educational programmes and learning tools. Furthermore, on March 28, 2023, No. 248, the Kazakh government approved the *Concept of Development of Higher Education and Science* in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023-2029, and it acts as the main guide for putting Lifelong Learning into practice (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023). Furthermore, Kazakhstan has launched the State Programme of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship Development 2017-2021 (*Enbek*) to provide short-term modular vocational education and training (VET) courses to unemployed, under-employed and low-skill individuals (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2022). The State program implementation covers the following areas:

- 1) Provision of technical and vocational education and short-term vocational training for the State program participants.
- 2) Mass entrepreneurship development.
- 3) Labour market development through employment promotion and labour mobility.
- 4) Implementation of complex measures of the national project *Zhastar - el tiregi* (Translation: *Youth are the pillar of the nation*)

(United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2022).

Challenges Identified and Priorities for Action

In terms of equity, the government in Kazakhstan has made efforts to provide education opportunities across all levels. According to a study conducted by the OECD in 2017, Kazakhstan has more than 630,000 people with disabilities, which is approximately 3.5% of the total population (OECD, 2017 as cited in OECD, 2021). The Legal Information System of Regulatory Legal Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan highlights the government's commitment to offering students with special needs various opportunities for self-development and lifelong learning throughout all stages of education. These opportunities include the freedom to choose their preferred type of education, taking into consideration

their unique developmental characteristics (Legal Information System of Regulatory Legal Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2007).

However, there are still a series of barriers identified by the OECD study not only to the employability of people with disabilities in Kazakhstan but also to access to adult learning opportunities because of weak anti-discrimination laws (OECD, 2017 as cited in OECD, 2021). For instance, analysing the situation in the education and employment of disabled people in Kazakhstan, Cherevyk (2016) notes that about 45% of people with disabilities in Kazakhstan have no education and less than 1% of all people with disabilities study in higher education institutions in the country. Most universities have not yet created a unified system for students with disabilities, and noted that none of the participants pointed out that Kazakhstan's legislation in the field of education does not correspond to Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by the Republic in 2015.

Similarly, participation rates in adult learning in Kazakhstan are consistently lower than those in OECD countries across various socio-demographic characteristics, including gender, age, and education level (OECD, 2021). This may be because there are no systems in place to recognise informal and non-formal learning, nor are there any incentives for businesses to engage in workforce development through adult education (Milovanovitch, 2020). Furthermore, adult learning is not yet a standardised framework for decision-makers and key stakeholders to persuasively disseminate its value and necessity to the public. Consequently, many working-age populations may not be aware of the idea of adult and lifelong learning (OECD, 2021).

The pandemic in 2020 has forced distance learning to completely replace traditional education during the pandemic, and ever since then, schools and universities have opted for online teaching in times of extreme weather conditions. Furthermore, since 2022, vocational training for citizens has been organized in three directions², one of which is an online learning platform for workforce training, which was modelled after global e-learning marketplaces. Regarding the online learning platform, there are 162 courses on the Platform, including 73 free and 56 paid, as well as 33 promotional courses that cover 230 skills out of more than 8 thousand used in the Electronic Labour Exchange³. As of January 1, 2023, 25.9 thousand unemployed people have been enrolled in online training in in-demand skills on the platform skills.enbek.kz, of whom 23.4 thousand completed their courses and

² Training in educational organizations at the request of employers, on-the-job training from an employer, and an online learning platform for workforce training.

³ The Electronic Labor Exchange (enbek.kz) is a unified digital employment platform that updates job and candidate listings daily from employers, state databases, private agencies, and online job sites.

received certificates (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023). These numbers prioritise the action of empirical research to explore the quality of learning outcomes because for learning activities to benefit adults, policymakers should focus beyond simply enhancing the number of participants. Instead, training effectiveness, participants' future employment prospects, and the alignment of programmes with both individual aspirations and labour market demand should be under scrutiny (OECD, 2020).

Despite the increased number of training and individuals who completed their courses, only one fifth of Kazakhstani have an advanced degree of digital skills and the critical majority of Kazakhstan citizens (50%) are solely involved in the simple repetition of information. Furthermore, even if non-formal education providers are on the rise in Kazakhstan, a significant portion of the adult population ceases to learn after completing their formal education. Consequently, acquired skills are lost and acquiring new ones becomes more difficult (Omirbayev et al., 2021). For instance, examining the lifelong learning tendencies and technological skills of primary school teachers, Sapieva et al. (2023) argue that primary school teachers aged 50 and older perceive their technological competence as lower. Technological competence perception tends to decline with age. Therefore, one of the main strategies for reforming Kazakhstan's education and training system is to provide possibilities for lifelong learning for adults.

There will undoubtedly be two implementation strands for the commitment to lifelong learning (Legal Information System of Regulatory Legal Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2020). The first policy strand seeks to maintain and improve work-related abilities by giving adults the chance to pursue lifelong learning in order to advance their fields of expertise, increase their productivity at work, and maintain their competitiveness in the job market. An emphasis on competencies, the implementation of a credit system, the modularization of courses at all vocational and education training (VET) levels, and professional growth in the workplace are a few examples. On the other hand, the second policy strand supporting adult education is more rehabilitative in character and intends to give working-age individuals who are unemployed, unqualified, and/or in precarious employment because they lack alternatives, second-chance education and training. The Roadmap for Employment for 2020 - 2021, which became the Enbek programme 2017-2021, is one of the policy initiatives. Its goal is to encourage entrepreneurship and gainful employment for job seekers, those without professional credentials, and those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. Similarly, within the framework of active labour market measures for registered job seekers, the network of VET providers also provides training (Milovanovitch, 2020).

Vision statements for ALE and LLL

One of the main expected outcomes by 2029 is a working adult education system that builds on the achievements of non-formal education and considers the skills and competencies gained at previous educational levels. Furthermore, it is projected that 88.5% of those aged 6 to 74 will possess digital literacy by 2029. There is also an expectation that the percentage of working-age persons with non-formal education will increase from 30% in 2023 to 50% by 2029. It is anticipated that by 2029, 75% of the population will have finished a higher education programme (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023).

Strategies for implementation and targets

The Concept approved by Decree No. 248 of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan to develop higher education and science in Kazakhstan for 2023 - 2029 acknowledges the importance of lifelong learning because the active working period has extended to 50-60 years, requiring continuous education due to evolving job markets and emerging professions (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023). Higher education institutions have implemented a cumulative learning system, enabling students and working professionals to quickly acquire essential professional skills, build individualized learning pathways, address knowledge gaps, and meet the demand for continuing education through *Silver Universities* (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024). The *Silver University* is an international movement that helps older adults gain a second profession. The program includes social support services aimed at empowering and engaging individuals aged 50 and older. This model has been successfully implemented for over 60 years in countries including France, the UK, China, and Japan. In Kazakhstan, universities have been offering Silver Education programs since 2022 as part of the concept of lifelong learning. Currently, 32 universities in Kazakhstan run Silver University programs, with more than 1,500 participants (Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024). To advance the Silver Universities model, higher education institutions will develop teaching materials, course programs, and scientific-methodological support mechanisms (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024).

To increase public awareness and maximise outreach, an information support system will be put in place to encourage lifelong learning, and it will involve creating a media strategy for social media, radio, and television. In order to highlight the advantages of continuing education, field information sessions will also be held in cooperation with local government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) headquartered in educational

institutions, with a special emphasis on youth impacted by labour market shifts. Educational organizations and providers of non-formal education, with the support of local executive bodies, will conduct various master classes, webinars and seminars for citizens on the benefits of micro-qualification and nano-training to obtain skills and competencies that allow them to conduct independent work, and to achieve an appropriate level of education. Adult education will be monitored by conducting a survey of the population on the level and quality of non-formal education. This will make it possible to determine the range and directions of non-formal education services, as well as the factors motivating non-formal education and skills development (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023).

Furthermore, in OECD (2021), it has been recommended that the Kazakh government consider fostering better cooperation and coordination among various ministries and stakeholders. For instance, the European Training Foundation (ETF) has supported Kazakhstan in aligning its vocational education and training (VET) systems with the demands of a modern economy. Additionally, Kazakhstan has engaged in the ETF's peer learning initiatives, fostering cross-border collaboration to develop effective VET policies (European Training Foundation, 2024). Additionally, the Council of the European Union supports reforms aimed at enhancing the quality of education, including higher education and vocational training, while fostering stronger connections between educational systems, the labour market, and digital learning (Council of the European Union, 2019).

In order to improve the digital literacy of the adult population, courses on basic digital literacy and the popularisation of digital technologies (basic digital and media skills, information security skills, Egov usage, and others) will be organized. The improvement of the digital competencies of citizens will be continued through the system of training and retraining of personnel and obtaining micro qualifications in the field of ICT. Furthermore, digital competencies will become a mandatory element of all professional standards because key priorities will include the digital transformation of libraries and their systems, integration of open education platforms (Open University, Coursera, etc.), and digitization of business processes. A dual training system will be implemented in partnership with IT companies to develop mechanisms for expanding the digital education network and establishing new IT companies (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023).

In each region, together with the Astana Hub International Technopark Corporate Foundation, IT specialists will be trained in technoparks, incubators or accelerators. As a result, free startup development programmes, incubation, online mentoring and tracker school programs will also be implemented (training courses aimed at training mentors who

accompany projects from the idea stage to the finished business). Conditions will be created for continuous self-education and professional development, including through the unified educational portal of the electronic labour exchange (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023).

Since 2022, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Kazakhstan has partnered with Coursera, and the relevant course content has been integrated into university programmes to provide students with essential, career-ready skills (Coursera Enterprise, n.d.), and it also supports flexible and accessible learning for adults. Furthermore, the project "Coursera - in Kazakh" has been launched along with the translation of Coursera courses into Kazakh. A practical mechanism has been implemented to allow students to transfer credits earned through online courses. The strategy also covers the creation of short-term courses provided by colleges, vocational schools, and training facilities, frequently in partnership with private sector businesses. These programmes enable fast skill learning for adults and produce a more adaptable workforce, bridging the gap between graduate qualifications and employer requirements. The overall goal of the strategy is to make lifelong and adult learning an essential part of Kazakhstan's educational system so that people can adapt to shifting needs, acquire novel skills, and maintain their competitiveness in the fast-paced labour market of today (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023).

Kazakhstan has implemented the new Concept for Lifelong Learning that aims to establish a system recognizing formal, non-formal, and informal learning, enabling individuals to earn certified lifelong learning credits at any phase of their life (European Training Foundation, 2021). To support this, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education issued Order No. 544, which approved the Rules for the Recognition of Learning Outcomes Acquired Through Non-Formal Education⁴ (Government of Kazakhstan, 2023). According to the European Training Foundation (2021), Kazakhstan has implemented validation processes in some industries, with 36 centres assessing specialists based on occupational standards. Furthermore, Kazakhstan approved a list of regulated occupations requiring independent certification, covering 72 professions—70 in health care, 1 in accounting, and 1 in auditing. Currently, professional activities in 202 occupations are regulated. The recognition centres decide whether to recognise informal education as part of the recognition of professional qualifications (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022).

⁴ Non-formal education is a type of education that is planned, organized, and delivered by organizations providing educational services, regardless of location, duration, or format of learning, and is accompanied by the issuance of a document confirming learning outcomes (Government of Kazakhstan, 2023).

Extent of devolution of powers in ALE and LLL to regions and cities, and to social partners

The governance of adult learning and education (ALE) and lifelong learning (LLL) in Kazakhstan reflects an evolving, but still largely centralized system in which devolution of powers to regional authorities and social partners remains partial and uneven. National policy frameworks, including the Concept for the Development of Higher Education and Science and the State Programme for Education and Science Development, position lifelong learning as a strategic priority linked to skills development, employability, and economic modernization (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023). While these reforms signal alignment with international lifelong learning agendas promoted by organizations such as the OECD (2021), strategic authority over curriculum standards, qualification frameworks, and financing remains predominantly centralized, with ministries setting priorities and overseeing implementation across sectors. Consequently, subnational actors operate within a hierarchical governance structure that limits their policy-making autonomy.

Regional (oblast) and city (akimat) authorities are responsible for implementing nationally defined ALE and LLL programmes, including managing vocational education institutions, coordinating short-term training initiatives, and delivering labour-market-oriented upskilling schemes. However, their ability to design independent strategies, allocate financial resources, or adapt programmes to local socio-economic conditions remains constrained. The OECD (2017) characterizes Kazakhstan's governance system as highly centralized, with limited fiscal and decision-making authority at subnational levels. As a result, regional actors function mainly as implementers of centrally determined priorities rather than autonomous policy actors, which restricts responsiveness to local labour market needs and demographic diversity. This limited devolution often means that large-scale state programs, such as the Enbek program, fail to reflect specific regional labour market needs or geographic differences (OECD, 2021).

OECD evidence confirms that subnational authorities are primarily responsible for implementing centrally defined programmes, with limited decentralization of decision-making powers (OECD, 2021). This is further reinforced by national policy frameworks. The Government of Kazakhstan's Concept of Lifelong Learning (Lifelong Education) explicitly establishes a unified national system with standardized mechanisms, such as recognition of

non-formal learning and national qualification structures designed and regulated at the central level rather than locally (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021). This creates a system where regions execute centrally defined priorities rather than develop locally tailored solutions. The World Bank (2019) emphasizes that effective lifelong learning systems require strong, coordinated, and decentralized partnerships that align training provision with labour market demand and that ensure shared governance among key actors. In Kazakhstan, however, such mechanisms remain fragmented and underdeveloped.

Overall, while Kazakhstan has made progress in integrating lifelong learning into national policy agendas, the extent of devolution in ALE and LLL remains limited. The system is best described as administratively decentralized but strategically centralized, with constrained autonomy at regional levels and weakly institutionalized engagement of social partners. To strengthen lifelong learning outcomes, Kazakhstan needs to move beyond administrative delegation toward genuine devolution. This includes increasing regional autonomy, introducing more flexible financing mechanisms, and formalizing the role of social partners in governance. Without these changes, lifelong learning policies may continue to face limitations in responsiveness, effectiveness, and participation.

Influence and/or policy linkages to supranational organisations

Kazakhstan regularly interacts and takes part in a variety of international initiatives. For example, Kazakhstan and the OECD have been actively collaborating in the field of professional education since 2008 as part of the OECD Eurasian Competitiveness Programme. Furthermore, since the signing of the Country Cooperation Program in 2015, all OECD projects in Kazakhstan have been implemented under its framework. The program had two phases: the first phase lasted from 2015 to 2016 and included 20 events, while the second, which ended in December 2018, involved 16 activities. Cooperation focused on industry reviews, participation in OECD committees, and adoption of legal instruments. Following the program's completion, collaboration continues under a Memorandum of Understanding for 2019-2022 (Economic Research Institute, n.d.).

Kazakhstan has been supported by the European Training Foundation (ETF) for three decades, since 1995, in enhancing education and training to improve job prospects. A key initiative of the ETF is the Torino Process, which is a biennial assessment involving stakeholders such as the Ministry of Labour and Atameken to improve VET policies. It also facilitates peer learning among partner countries, especially in the Eastern Partnership and

Central Asia (European Training Foundation, n.d.). Additionally, the ETF has assisted Kazakhstan in implementing its National Qualifications Framework (NQF), first adopted in 2012 and updated in 2016. This support helps the country develop a flexible, skilled workforce and establish educational pathways that promote lifelong employability (European Training Foundation, 2024).

Financing of LLL

Kazakhstan's formal education system is mostly supported by public funds. This includes the cost of teachers' continuing formal education (as part of the education sector budget), higher education, and a component of formal technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Additionally, money for unemployed people who want to pursue an education is included in the labour and social protection budgets. Some students, however, who are enrolled in post-compulsory TVET, higher education, and adult non-formal education (NFE), must pay their own tuition or accept sponsorship from businesses or foreign organisations. In Kazakhstan, education makes up 18% of the national budget as of 2017 (UNESCO, 2020). Nonetheless, the country's strategic goals for raising the competitiveness of scientific potential, fostering the development of highly skilled workers, and adhering to OECD norms and standards are not being met by the amount of money allocated to science and education (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2019). Therefore, to increase the effectiveness of science for the country's economy, research activities will be modernized, and spending on science will be increased. Education financing will reach the level of 7% of GDP (Official Information Resource of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2019).

The role of sectors and involvement of community stakeholders

Established in 2013, the Association of Colleges of Kazakhstan actively contributes to discussions and decisions regarding changes in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Universities are also gaining more autonomy, with student self-governance and student-centred learning becoming more common in higher education institutions (UNESCO, 2020). The British Council's programme, such as the Going Global Partnership, works in Kazakhstan to align higher and vocational education with societal and economic needs (British Council, n.d.). Furthermore, state programmes, including the Digital

Kazakhstan initiative, have a significant role in promoting lifelong learning and modernize education, and their courses have been effectively implemented throughout Kazakhstan, progressively enhancing the population's digital literacy to reach 83% by 2022 (Electronic Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023). Despite Kazakhstan's educational progress, further efforts are needed to modernize education and improve its relevance to future employment, particularly in IT skills. The country has a significantly low student-to-computer ratio of 57-to-1, highlighting the demand for adult education in computing. However, adult education receives limited government funding and is largely supported by international organizations and NGOs through Community Learning Centres (CLCs) (UNESCO, 2014). The lack of recognition, validation, and accreditation (RVA) and employers' interest further hinder youth and adults from participating in non-formal education (UNESCO, 2020).

Formal and non-formal

Both formal and non-formal learning significantly contribute to society overall. For instance, individuals benefit from both formal and non-formal education in terms of career opportunities, competitive salaries, and opportunities for upward social mobility, whereas employers benefit from the training to enhance productivity, drive growth, and foster innovation (OECD, 2018). Kazakhstan offers a diverse range of adult learning opportunities through both formal and non-formal education channels, including vocational education and training (VET) colleges, higher education institutions, private training providers, and professional development centres. Large enterprises, many of which are state-owned and employ a significant portion of the workforce, often establish their own training centres. Like the OECD and other countries, multiple ministries oversee Kazakhstan's adult learning system, notably the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES), the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population (MLSP), and the Ministry of National Economy (MNE). These ministries have implemented various state programs aimed at enhancing participation in adult learning, such as the Enbek program, the Digital Kazakhstan State Programme⁵ (2018-2022), and the State Programme for the Development of Education and Science (2020-2025).

However, Omirbayev et al. (2021) note that involvement of adults in lifelong learning remains minimal in Kazakhstan, and this shows the mismatch between the adult population's competencies and Kazakhstan's strategic goal to be among the top 30 most competitive nations globally by the year 2050. For instance, OECD (2021) data show that the percentage of Kazakh adults aged 25-64 participating in non-formal education reached 15%, which is

⁵ The Digital Kazakhstan program aims to boost the country's economic growth and enhance the quality of life for its citizens.

notably less than the 47% average across OECD countries. Furthermore, as in many other countries, Kazakhstani employers play a key role in promoting adult learning by offering training opportunities. Among the 15% of adults engaged in non-formal training, 13% participate in job-related education, while only 2% take part in other forms of non-formal learning. This level of participation in job-related education is comparable to that of other upper-middle-income countries, such as Turkey (17%) and Russia (16%). However, the overall share of adults involved in job-related education in Kazakhstan remains significantly lower than the OECD average (37%).

The extent to which the role of non-formal entities is planned and supported nationally

The Ministry of Science and Higher Education has recently introduced the “Silver Universities” program to expand non-formal higher education opportunities for older adults. This initiative requires all higher education institutions to offer individuals aged 50 and above opportunities for skill development, retraining, and intellectual engagement, though specific implementation details are still being finalized (OECD, 2021). The courses at the “Silver University” cover various fields, including digital skills, foreign languages, entrepreneurship, law, culture, religion, and physical activity (Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024, para. 6). However, Begunova (2024) analyses three administrative documents on the implementation of Silver Universities and actualisation of lifelong learning in Kazakhstan and finds low elderly participation, leading to weak faculty motivation. Key challenges include low engagement, pricing issues, lack of experienced instructors, and limited resources. To address this, the author suggests public funding, faculty training, course integration into workloads, and better promotion through various information channels.

Despite Kazakhstan's educational progress, modernization is needed to enhance its relevance to future employment, particularly in IT skills. With a 57-to-1 student-to-computer ratio, the country lags other newly independent states, therefore, creating a high demand for adult education in computing. However, government support for adult education is limited, leaving it largely to international organizations and NGOs. Community Learning Centres (CLCs) help bridge this gap by offering educational programs for adult learners. CLCs in Kazakhstan provide non-formal education in rural and urban areas, supported by UNESCO and local communities. Hosted in existing facilities like schools and libraries, the seven UNESCO-backed CLCs in Almaty and Zhambil regions offer courses in languages, ICT, health, and vocational skills based on community needs (UNESCO, 2014).

The tracking of the effective implementation of policies

The effectiveness of adult learning and lifelong learning (LLL) policies depends on robust monitoring and evaluation systems. Recent policy frameworks, including the *Concept for the Development of Higher Education and Science (2023-2029)*, emphasize the need to introduce statistical tracking and population surveys to assess participation and quality in non-formal education. Although the document fails to specify implementation mechanisms in detail, it establishes the intention to develop monitoring systems, including statistical tracking and population surveys. This reflects a start of shifting toward more evidence-based policymaking.

However, current monitoring practices remain limited. National data systems, particularly those managed by the Bureau of National Statistics, focus mainly on enrolment, completion, and institutional indicators within formal education. Programme-level data from initiatives such as Enbek and digital learning platforms also track participation, but there is little evidence linking these data to labour market outcomes such as employment or income gains. For instance, the report by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (Times of Central Asia, 2024) highlights participation and training provision indicators, such as the number of registered users, course completions, and types of courses offered. However, it provides little evidence on labour market outcomes, including employment status or income gains following training. International assessments by the OECD (2021) and the World Bank (2019) highlight the need for outcome-based monitoring systems that connect training participation with economic and social impact

In addition, data remain fragmented across institutions, limiting the ability to track learning pathways across formal, non-formal, and informal education. Strengthening monitoring systems through integrated data platforms, outcome-based indicators, and regular impact evaluations will be essential to ensure that lifelong learning policies deliver measurable results.

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