

CONTENTS



KAZISS

Kazakhstan Institute
for Strategic Studies under
the President of the Republic
of Kazakhstan

Issued Quarterly Since 2003

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ASSEL NAZARBETOVA

Head of the Department of
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Editor

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Research Fellow of KazISS

Responsible for publication:

Almas Arzikulov

Layout:

Pavel Romanenko

Translation by LLC «Delta Consulting
Group»

Address:

Kazakhstan Institute
for Strategic Studies under the President
of the Republic of Kazakhstan
4, Beybitshilik St.
Nur-Sultan, 010000, Republic of
Kazakhstan

Phone: (7172) 75 20 20

Fax: (7172) 75 20 21

E-mail: office@kisi.kz

www.kisi.kz

This Journal was registered
with the Ministry of Culture and Information
of the Republic of Kazakhstan
on January 24, 2003.
Registration certificate No. 3529-zh.

ISSN 2414-570X (print)

ISSN 2788-5909 (online)

doi.org/10.52536/CAA

None of the articles shall be
reproduced without reference to the
Journal.

The opinion of the editorial board may
differ from that of the authors
of articles.

Printed by «Nadegda 2050» LLP,
Kokshetau, Baimukanov street, 3.
Copies: 250

Bolat Auelbayev

The Countries of Central Asia during the Covid-19
Pandemic in 2020: View from Kazakhstan.....7

Iskender Usupbaev

Entrepreneurial Education and Youth Development
in Central Asia: Kazakhstan.....21

Aigul Nasirdinova

To the Question of the Necessity of Creating a National
Project to Prepare Cities for Adaptation in the Conditions
of Climate Change31

Aibolat Abitbekov

Parliamentary Diplomacy in Kazakhstan: Evolution,
Institutionalization and Implementation Mechanism.....40

Slyamzhar Akhmetzharov

The Combat Against the Torture in Kazakhstan:
Trends, Challenges and Prospects.....52

ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA: KAZAKHSTAN

doi.org/10.52536/KS/vol_82_issue_2_A2

Iskender Usupbaev¹

Head of Business Incubator,
School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Monitoring
and Evaluation Officer for Development programs,
Almaty Management University (AlmaU)
Master in International Relations
(Almaty, Kazakhstan)

Abstract. This chapter discusses entrepreneurial education in Kazakhstan, based on the case of the School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation (SEI) of the Almaty Management University (AlmaU). Provided that the President of Kazakhstan defined stimulation of entrepreneurship among communities in Kazakhstan, the business community as well as higher education institutions began to build academic programs around entrepreneurship. The School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation (SEI) of the Almaty Management University (AlmaU), also previously known as the International Academy of Business has been the first to launch entrepreneurship-related academic programs. AlmaU has the opportunity to learn from models and best practices of teaching entrepreneurship in universities all over the world and focus on integrating the most relevant content. The following chapter focuses on the entrepreneurial initiatives promoted by SEI - student start-ups, meet-ups, the ‘Ecosystem of Student Entrepreneurship’ project, which are aimed at educating future leaders, market influencers and market shapers who would advocate positive socioeconomic and sociocultural changes in Kazakhstan.

Key words: *Entrepreneurship, School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation (SEI), Higher Education Institution (HEI), Ecosystem.*

¹ Isken.usu@gmail.com

ОРТАЛЫҚ АЗИЯДАҒЫ КӘСІПКЕРЛІК БІЛІМ БЕРУ ЖӘНЕ ЖАСТАРДЫҢ ДАМУЫ: ҚАЗАҚСТАН

Искендер Усупбаев

Андатпа. Мақалада Алматы менеджмент Университетінің (AlmaU) Кәсіпкерлік және инновациялар мектебі (SEI) мысалында Қазақстандағы кәсіпкерлік білім беру талқыланады. Қазақстан Президенті Қазақстандағы қоғамдастықтар арасында кәсіпкерлікті ынталандыруды айқындағанын назарға ала отырып, бизнес-қоғамдастық, сондай-ақ жоғары оқу орындары кәсіпкерлік төңірегінде академиялық бағдарламалар құра бастады. Алматы менеджмент университетінің (AlmaU) Кәсіпкерлік және инновациялар мектебі (SEI), сондай-ақ бұрын Халықаралық бизнес академиясы ретінде белгілі, кәсіпкерлікпен байланысты академиялық бағдарламаларды алғаш болып іске қосты. AlmaU бүкіл әлем бойынша университеттерде кәсіпкерлікке оқытудың модельдері мен үздік тәжірибелерінен білім алуға және ең өзекті контентті интеграциялауға көңіл бөлуге мүмкіндігі бар. Мақалада Қазақстандағы өзгерістердің позитивтік әлеуметтік-экономикалық және әлеуметтік-мәдени аспектілерін насихаттайтын, нарықты қалыптастыратын болашақ көшбасшыларды оқытуға бағытталған, SEI-студенттік стартаптар, кездесулер, «Студенттік кәсіпкерліктің экожүйесі» жобасы алға бастыратын кәсіпкерлік бастамаларға баса назар аударылады.

Түйін сөздер: кәсіпкерлік, кәсіпкерлік және инновациялар мектебі (SEI), жоғарғы оқу орны (ЖОО), экожүйе.

ПРЕДПРИНИМАТЕЛЬСКОЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ И РАЗВИТИЕ МОЛОДЕЖИ В ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ: КАЗАХСТАН

Искендер Усупбаев

Аннотация. В статье обсуждается предпринимательское образование в Казахстане на примере Школы предпринимательства и инноваций (SEI) Алматы менеджмент университета (AlmaU). Принимая во внимание, что Президент Казахстана определил стимулирование предпринимательства среди сообществ в Казахстане, бизнес-сообщество, а также высшие учебные заведения начали создавать академические программы вокруг предпринимательства. Школа предпринимательства и инноваций (SEI) Алматы менеджмент университета (AlmaU), также известная ранее как Международная академия бизнеса, первой запустила академические программы, связанные с предпринимательством. AlmaU имеет возможность учиться на моделях и лучших практиках обучения предпринимательству в университетах по всему миру и сосредоточиться на интеграции наиболее актуального контента. В статье основное внимание уделяется предпринимательским инициативам, продвигаемым SEI - студенческим стартапам, встречам, проекту «Экосистема студенческого предпринимательства», которые нацелены на обучение будущих лидеров формирующих рынок, которые будут пропагандировать позитивные социально-экономические и социокультурные аспекты изменений в Казахстане.

Ключевые слова: *предпринимательство, Школа предпринимательства и инноваций (SEI), высшее учебное заведение (ВУЗ), экосистема.*

Introduction

Almaty Management University (AlmaU) is the premier higher education institution in Kazakhstan which is set to encompass the field of entrepreneurial education. AlmaU has redesigned its scope a few times, it began as a merely business academy with a focus on executive business education. Later, it enlarged the availability of its academic programs embedding several academic disciplines on entrepreneurship in 2014. In 2015, AlmaU shifted from an Academy to University and began to build entrepreneurial curricula. The same year, Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovations have been founded which was responsible for building curricula on entrepreneurial core subjects. With an advent of entrepreneurial subjects offered to the students, AlmaU lacked a solid unit which would be responsible for delivering and overseeing majors in entrepreneurship. As a result, the university came up with Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, a center which developed two undergraduate courses: Business Administration: Entrepreneurship and Minor in Entrepreneurship. Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation transformed into School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation (SEI) in 2019.

School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation (SEI) is one of the core units of the Almaty Management University. Besides academic programs, SEI prioritizes professional experiences for students, exchange of knowledge for faculty, establishment of entrepreneurial culture and entrepreneurial ecosystem for partner universities. SEI provides an active learning experience to all students and teachers at AlmaU through additional training and educational programs that are designed to teach the skills necessary for the successful implementation of projects and ideas of high potential. By gaining knowledge and skills, people become more prepared to identify and use opportunities to solve problems in rapidly

changing and rapidly developing communities of the 21st century. SEI holds academic and practical expertise to share with the student body, faculty members, and existing partner institutions across Kazakhstan.

School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation places a great emphasis on entrepreneurial skills and mindset and aims students, faculty and university to acquire these features. Entrepreneurial education is more about helping a person who wants to become an entrepreneur, and not about training, as such. Education institutions create the conditions in which a student has a desire to become an entrepreneur, and helps him/her to acquire experiences that will be crucial for becoming an entrepreneur.

In the field of entrepreneurship, there are parts that can really be taught - certain knowledge and skills [1]. However, when successful entrepreneurs, or people who work with them, attempt to explain the reason for their outstanding achievements, they often refer to certain personal qualities, abilities or mindset for which the word training is irrelevant. Possibly, if entrepreneurship could be taught in the same way as they are taught to solve quadratic equations, then most of the graduates of all courses in entrepreneurship would immediately become entrepreneurs [2]. Practice of numerous educational programs on entrepreneurship demonstrates that the vast majority of students lack a sufficiency of knowledge and skills to start their own business. The main question of this part is whether entrepreneurship can be taught in a classroom setting or not. In order to see effectiveness and necessity of the entrepreneurial education, one may assume that career success can be dependent variable. Other than that, it is important to define what entrepreneurial education is.

This part of the chapter will focus on what entrepreneurial education is, and whether it can be taught in a classroom setting. These

two guiding questions will serve as a basis for this chapter, especially in the analysis of entrepreneurial education in Kazakhstan.

Methods

Before examining what entrepreneurial effects there might be within an academic institution, it is important to approach the definition of entrepreneurial education or what is known as entrepreneurial education. My paper attempts to come up with a guiding definition that will be utilized throughout this paper. After the definition is determined, I will look into the scope of operation of the institution – Almaty Management University (AlmaU), as it pioneers entrepreneurial education in Kazakhstan and widely in Central Asia.

As western academic institutions fortify their research, off-site projects and initiatives, AlmaU, in this regard, is committed to “serve-to-community” activism by contributing to the development of different sectors of society. This being said, it is necessary to examine start-ups and academic curriculum to portray a clear vision of how potentially entrepreneurial education is capable of impacting a certain niche within a society.

A detailed glance at curriculum will be insightful for this paper as it will display how entrepreneurial mindset and key skills and competencies are (can) be obtained throughout the program.

Defining Entrepreneurial Education

In the analysis of entrepreneurial education, there many conceptions of entrepreneurship education, most of European countries have been making efforts to form a definition of entrepreneurship education. In the English context, *entrepreneurship education*, *enterprise education*, *entrepreneurial learning* and *entrepreneurial education* are often used when discussing entrepreneurial education.

Denmark. Entrepreneurship education - content, methods and activities that support the development of motivation, skill and

experience, which make it possible to be entrepreneurial, to manage and participate in value-creating processes.

Wales uses two definitions: Entrepreneurship education is about developing young people’s attitudes and skills to help them realize their own potential. It is also about having the drive to turn ideas and opportunities into reality, enabling young people to be positive, proactive and successful in their approach to life and work. Enterprise education is about providing the opportunity for young people to apply their skills and develop their understanding in practical ways.

Norway. Entrepreneurship in education includes development both of personal qualities and attitudes and of formal knowledge and skills:

- Personal qualities and attitudes that increase the probability of a person seeing opportunities and doing something about them. Work on entrepreneurship in education must primarily place emphasis on development of personal qualities and attitudes. In that way a basis is laid for later utilization of knowledge and skills in active productive work;

- Knowledge and skills regarding what must be done to establish a new enterprise, and concerning how to be successful in developing an idea into a practical, goal-oriented enterprise.

The South East European Center for Entrepreneurial Learning is an independent institution founded by 8 countries in south-Eastern Europe with the aim of developing software. Entrepreneurial education - concept of education and training which supports an entrepreneurial way of thinking and is based on the development of individuals, including basic principles of efficiency in everyday life without a particular focus on business startup - all of which leads to entrepreneurial literacy for the society as a whole.

European Commission (2006). Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship refers to an individual’s ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk-taking,

¹ Bosnia and Herzegovina uses a similar definition in its software development strategy

as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports individuals, not only in their everyday lives at home and in society, but also in the workplace in being aware of the context of their work and being able to seize opportunities, and is a foundation for more specific skills and knowledge needed by those establishing or contributing to social or commercial activity. This should include awareness of ethical values and promote good governance.

European Commission (2008). In the survey a broad definition of entrepreneurship education has been applied, seeing it as all activities aiming to foster entrepreneurial mindsets, attitudes and skills and covering a range of aspects such as idea generation, start-up, growth and innovation. Hence, entrepreneurship has not, as it is the case in some studies and in the minds of people not involved in entrepreneurship, been seen as only about starting up business ventures [3]. However, it has been equally emphasized that general business and management courses are not considered as entrepreneurship education.

European Commission (2012). In 2011, a working group was formed, which included representatives from several European countries, as well as the European Education Foundation (ETF), the Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), the International Labor Organization (ILO), the International Center for Technical and Vocational Education and the training of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO-UNEVOC). By 2012, this group reached an agreement on the definition. Entrepreneurship education is about learners developing the skills and mind-set to be able to turn creative ideas into entrepreneurial action. This is a key competence for all learners, supporting personal development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability [4].

European Commission (2015). In this study, entrepreneurship education is taken to cover all educational activities' that seek to prepare people to be responsible, enterprising individuals who have the skills, knowledge and

attitudes needed to prepare them to achieve the goals they set for themselves to live a fulfilled life. In the late 1990s, the Finnish researcher Erkkila tried to understand what the meaning of the term software in the USA, Great Britain and Finland. Erkkila proposed to use the term "entrepreneurial education" instead of "entrepreneurship education", mainly used in the USA, and "enterprise education", widely used in the UK. This term has also become widely spread, but it has not replaced the first two. For example, it is used in the 2015 OECD report, which provides a fairly detailed study of this concept [5].

Consequently, entrepreneurial education is the process of organizing the activities of a group of people, aimed at developing their ability to independently translate ideas into actions, including actions aimed at creating and developing a new business, as well as the formation of the interests and knowledge they need to create and develop a new business, skills, competencies, personal qualities and mindset.

AlmaU and Regional Universities in Developing Entrepreneurial Education. ERG is one of the leading companies in Kazakhstan which work in the field of natural resource and production of diversified natural resource production. ERG empowered the School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation to implement a project on the development of student entrepreneurship and generally building an environment conducive to entrepreneurship. Provided that Kazakhstan is set to strengthen its economic, business and entrepreneurial dimensions, the Ecosystem of Student Entrepreneurship has an outstanding locational presence around the country: four regions: Karaganda, Aktobe, Kostanay, Pavlodar. The project run by SEI is set to fill in the gap in the existence of entrepreneurial education. The objective of the project is to transform the classical regional educational institutions into entrepreneurial, the development of the business community in the regions, as well as the development of entrepreneurial skills

among students, to build a natural incubator (entrepreneurial university) that tries to provide a supportive environment in which the university community can explore, evaluate and exploit ideas that could be transformed into social and economic entrepreneurial initiatives in a region.

These regional universities in Karaganda, Aktobe, Kostanai and Pavlodar are involved in partnerships to generate an umbrella for interaction, collaboration and cooperation between civic community, university, government and business. SEI trained faculty members – delivered sessions on how to encourage students to solve business cases, initiate market research, analyze need assessment prior to project start off. Moreover, SEI has a limited funding for student projects which can potentially be implemented in the regional domains. Rapid developments in science, the multidisciplinary nature of frontier research, legislative changes have been made recently.

- Private sector (ERG Group)
- Ecosystem of Student Entrepreneurship
- AlmaU (SEI), Regional universities

The impact of an entrepreneurial university should be focused on generating “Intellectual Capital” as an element of competitive advantage for a new generation of leaders. Additionally, SEI involves private companies, organizations, entrepreneurs and businessmen into the formation of the Ecosystem of Student Entrepreneurship. For the past 4 years, School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation has provided over 1000 courses, workshops and training related to Entrepreneurship and Innovation for diversified categories of audiences all over Kazakhstan, starting from Social Entrepreneurship projects all the way to Youth Entrepreneurship Camps and International Forums on Entrepreneurial Education. With going through a fundamental reform in the content of our Academic block, we generate and conduct more than 2700 hours of Entrepreneurial Studies for more than 3000 students every year. Participants are expected

to develop their own projects in their cities and villages.

In holding the following events, such as Project Creation (Project Day) Championship day, Championship on Solving Business Cases (Kemel Kasipker), Summer Entrepreneurial cases (BigIdeasCamp), Regional Entrepreneurial Weekends (Karagandy, Aktobe, Kostanai, Pavlodar), Olympic Entrepreneurial Games (Meet-Up in Astana) SEI is very closely linked to external stakeholders: Karaganda (Karaganda State Medical University); Aktobe (Aktobe Regional University by Zhubanov, Aktobe High Polytechnical College, Chrome-Tay Mining and Technical University); Kostanai (Qostanai Engineering and Economic University by Dulatov, Rudny Industrial Institute), and; Pavlodar (Pavlodar State Pedagogical University, Innovative University of Eurasia).

Impact of the program Ecosystem of Student Entrepreneurship

Based on field work from throughout the regions and particularly our learning through the monitoring and analysis sessions, we have created a flexible road map that provides both an organizing framework and process for growing community’s optimal entrepreneur-focused economic development strategy.

Due to the specifics of each region, AlmaU has developed separate strategies and road maps for each educational institution. Karagandy State Medical University (KSMU) established a Center for Development of Entrepreneurship (CDE) for incubation and acceleration of student projects aimed at healthcare system. Major challenges of KSMU is the lack of knowledge and skills in medical entrepreneurship. SEI helps KSMU faculty members to build an ecosystem within KSMU which is conducive to student entrepreneurship targeted at healthcare system in Kazakhstan.

With the participation of experts of AlmaU in educational institutions, an infrastructure for opening new structural units – a business incubator and an office for academic entrepreneurship programs has

being created. In 2019, new positions were opened – Head of business incubation and acceleration programs, and methodologist for academic entrepreneurship programs. Also, it is worth noting that in 2017 were appointed supervising Vice-rector in higher education institutions and Deputy Directors in colleges, who are responsible for coordinating the implementation of entrepreneurial education. This distribution and division of responsibilities for the introduction of entrepreneurial education in universities contributes to a systematic and gradual process, which allows strengthening the capacity of each employee.

Development and capacity building of employees and teachers during the two years of the project, about 600 employees and teachers of educational institutions were trained in the basics of the design of entrepreneurial disciplines, new teaching technologies, technologies for creating an entrepreneurial community in an educational institution, skills for developing incubation and acceleration programs, etc. In 2019, for the accelerated acquisition and developing new skills and competences will be applied to «BigIdeasCamp» for the organization «YbyraiCamp». «YbyraiCamp» – Boot Camp for the faculty and staff of educational institutions.

The development of the business community in educational institutions is possible because of the active involvement of students and young entrepreneurs. In 2018 and 2019, about 2,000 students took part in special events (Creative April, Project Day, Кемел Кәсіпкер, BigIdeasCamp, Regional Entrepreneurial Weekends, Olympic Entrepreneurial Games). ERG with the technical support of Almaty Management University and the Friends of Tel Aviv University Association in Kazakhstan have created an initiative that inspires, stimulates and helps students, teachers, school administrators, entrepreneurs and businessmen, representatives of government agencies and non-profit organizations to establish productive links for the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the region and in the country [6]. Project now encompasses 7 educational

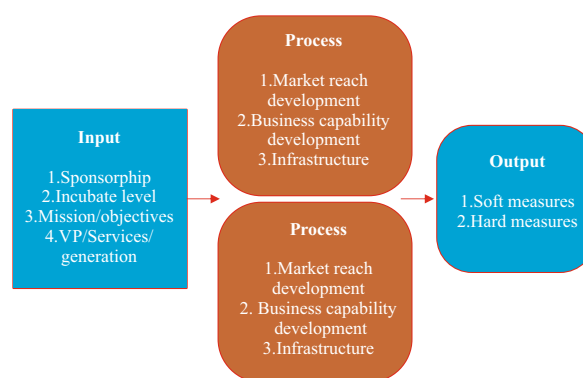
institutions; 547 trained persons of teaching staff and administration; 2873 students.

AlmaU Business Incubator as a Youth Development Strategy

A definition of business incubator/incubation: as an organization (facility), process and intermediary: as “organizations whose purpose is to support the creation and growth of new businesses...” [7], “...that support the establishment and growth of new businesses with tangible (e.g. space, shared equipment and administrative services) and intangible (e.g. knowledge, network access) resources during a flexible period and are funded by a sponsor (e.g. government or corporation)” [8] that delivers its value proposition through business incubation process [9].

SEI students have the opportunity to develop their real business thanks to the “Incubation and Acceleration Program” through the AlmaU Business Incubator. In 2018-2019, 150 applications were received, of which 40 projects were selected, 13 projects were trained, 7 projects continue to incubate. The IPO model of business incubator is important, especially when approaching the teams being incubated (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Process of Incubation



- **The IdeaFest Incubation Program.**

The IdeaFest incubation is the program where about 200 students undergo Tripod training (a three-level educational program that takes as a basis the cases of Israel, Singapore and the UK). For the period 2018-2019 - residents of the business incubator, 25% (about 55 startups

with prototypes of MVP formed in 2018-2019) go to the next stage of traction on an annual basis.

- **Acceleration Program AlmaU Spark.** Selected cohort of students undertakes an intensive tracking and spin-out (these programs are designed to work teams on their projects with local trackers and international mentors in order to achieve first sales, scaling, selling or closing a startup). During 2018-2019, 34 teams with projects focused on edutech, e-commerce, agropreneurship, creative entrepreneurship were supported by the Acceleration Program. As of today, 11 startup projects are functioning at the sales stage, 4 startups at the scaling stage and 2 projects at the closing stage.

- **Business Idea Clinic 911.** Business Idea Clinic 911 is a consulting support program for existing entrepreneurs from SMEs in Almaty. The program involves students who have experience in solving business cases. The program began in 2017 reaching 120 entrepreneurs operating in the city of Almaty.

One of the main strategic area of the School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation is to create an entrepreneurial community at the university. Availability of a plethora of events make it possible for the university to achieve its ends. Events, such as competitions, major conferences, and championships are organized annually. StartUp Night, an event on which students spend a night on-campus generating ideas for their startup is an essential event, in which over 150 students participate. StartUp Night AlmaU is a university projecathon (project/marathon). Students work on their startups during the night. A jury composed of entrepreneurs and faculty members selects winners. The winning team is provided with access to incubation resources at AlmaU.

Academic Curricula

Minor: Entrepreneurship (language of instruction: Russian, Kazakh and English). The notion “minor program” is new to the higher education institutions in Kazakhstan. This notion began to become popular when the

Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan permitted international donors and institutes to foster innovations in the education field. AlmaU piloted minor program in 2017 when SEI launched entrepreneurial academic disciplines. Minor: Entrepreneurship aims to equip students with entrepreneurial skills.

Minor program was largely supported by ERG Group Executive Director - Mr. Erkin Tatyshov who aimed to empower students from economically disadvantaged communities to access education and professional opportunities. With that incentive, SEI developed a student-centered program that enables students to become entrepreneurs, intrapreneurs and go beyond of the traditional list of jobs offered in the market of Kazakhstan. For instance, students minoring in entrepreneurship, particularly sophomore students came up with fashion startup. Apparently, students with unique skills and expertise will be either self-employed or will develop unique products in the region of CIS.

SEI adheres to the principle that students learn and develop through their experience throughout the entire period of study, both at the university itself, through the creation of startups, participation in solving business cases, participating in competitions and in the community, through projects student organizations seeking to change their society and improve the quality of life through entrepreneurship. This approach to learning outcomes is focused on the development of specific skills and abilities that will prepare students for their professional life. Today, an additional training path “Entrepreneurship” can be chosen by students of “Management” and “Marketing” majors.

Major Business Administration: Entrepreneurship, a four-year program, taught in Russian, Kazakh and English. Students majoring in BA: Entrepreneurship aims to prepare “independent”, “corporate” and “social” entrepreneurs who will be the drivers of development with the innovations they accomplish, as well as the volume of business

and employment opportunities they create. An important feature of this program is the shift in the traditional orientation of vocational education from the “production” of future employees to the formation of self-sufficiency of graduates and to create and implement their own business initiatives.

The relevance of the modern competencies of graduates of the specialty and their relevance to the skills of the 21st century will be in demand: in the field of developing ecosystems of entrepreneurship in the regions, in the public sector, in companies and businesses, in rural areas, when implementing projects (of any scale), creating an environment for business incubation and involving the population in entrepreneurial processes. See appendix of mandatory courses all BAE students must take to confer a degree in entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

Definition of entrepreneurial education varies from country to country, however, this chapter employed the definition of European scholars who define entrepreneurial education as a process of acquiring skills, competences and knowledge to form a start-up. The chapter assessed the impact of entrepreneurial education in Kazakhstan. Almaty Management University through its School of Entrepreneurship and Innovation advocates positive changes and integrates best practices to develop and popularize entrepreneurship in the region. This objective is attainable when there is an entity which is set to develop academic curricula, build business incubator/accelerator, regional projects and monitors the progression of these initiatives. It is possible that at this time, no impact can be measured based on the sample of current SEI students because the cohort of students has not yet finalized educational

training. Measurement of impact of the entrepreneurial education should be embodied after the cohort of students establishes start-ups immediately after the completion of educational training, in a perspective of 5 years.

Developmental effects are an integral part in assessing effectiveness of the academic programs. Not only academic performance is vital, but also the School encourages its students to engage start-ups, such as Global Student Challenges initiated by Babson College, USA; L’Oreal International Student Contest, Creative Spark Fashion Entrepreneurship, Demo Day Start Up programs so that students are able to apply their theoretical knowledge into the real life. In the western countries, especially in the United States, undergraduate program is meant to connect individuals so that they collaborate with one another and work on large-scale initiatives. The School is set to inherit this idea of connecting individuals – entrepreneurs, intrapreneurs, change-makers, and decision-makers.

That being said, it is important to highlight that 6 of 13 sophomore students launched their start-ups, 5 of them are sustainable to this date. As for junior students, out of 20 students, 17 students undertook internships at prestigious companies such as Danone, Deloitte, McKinsey, KPMG, PWC, JP Morgan as well as local Kazakhstani companies the Ritz-Carlton, Salem Social Media, Technodom. 15 of this cohort were offered part-time employment in 2019. Senior students (7) hold their own enterprises with revenues of minimum \$20,000.

Considering these effects, it is possible to form the skills, competencies and knowledge of the cohort by designing not only academic curriculum, but also designing and facilitating student life.

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