ФИЛОСОФИЯ – PHILOSOPHY – ФИЛОСОФИЯ

THE PHYLOSOPHY BEHIND A PHD PROGRAM IN KAZAKHSTAN

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Abstract. The Kazakhstani education system has gradually shifted to the three-tiered European system after joining the European Higher Education Area in 2010. This transition to the new directions of training for specialists triggered doubts and concerns among Kazakhstani scholars. Hence, this study aims to examine the educational philosophy underlying PhD programs based on the experience of PhD candidates at one Kazakhstani University.

This study employed the exploratory sequential design, and PhD candidates from the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 cohorts in one Kazakhstani University took part in the study. In total, 29 respondents out of 40 completed a survey at the end of the course, and three PhD candidates agreed to participate in an in-depth individual interview. The open-ended questions of the survey and three interview responses were analyzed through the constructivist grounded theory analysis.

Research results indicate that, according to the normative rules, PhD candidates are required to publish articles in order to receive permission to defend their thesis. Individual interviewers stated that money is either collected in advance or requested from a project fund in order to get published in Q1-Q4 journals. As a matter of fact, 68% of respondents confirmed the feasibility of their being published within three years, whereas 21% highlighted their preference for writing their thesis and further expanding their knowledge. Thereby, the philosophy of educating PhD candidates leads to the mantra "publish or perish" rather than nurturing young researchers.

Keywords: academic writing; one Kazakhstani university; PhD candidates; publishing articles; philosophy of education; PhD programs; transition to three-tiered system

ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ PHD БАҒДАРЛАМАСЫНЫҢ ФИЛОСОФИЯСЫ
Гүлдана АХМЕТОВА

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ФИЛОСОФИЯ ПРОГРАММЫ ДОКТОРАНТУРЫ В КАЗАХСТАНЕ
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Аңдатпа. Қазақстандық білім беру жүйесі 2010 жылы Еуропалық жоғары білім кеңістігіне қосылғаннан кейін бірте-бірте үш деңгейлі еуропалық жүйеге көшті. Мамандарды даярлаудың жаңа бағыттарына көшу қазақстандық ғалымдар арасында күмән мен алаңдаушылық тудырды. Демек, бұл зерттеу бір қазақстандық университетінде доктоаранттардың тәжірибесіне негізделген PhD бағдарламаларының негізінде жатқан білім беру философиясын зерттеуге бағытталған.

Бұл жұмыста ретті зерттеу дизайны қолданылды және зерттеуге бір қазақстандық университеттің 2021-2022 және 2022-2023 жылдар аралығындағы доктоаранттары қатысты. Барлығы 40 респонденттің 29-ы курс соңында сауалнаманы толтырды, ал үш PhD кандидаты тереңдетілген жеке сұхбатқа қатысуға келісті. Сауалнаманың ашық сұрақтары мен үш сұхбат жауаптары конструктивистік теориялық талдау арқылы қарастырылды.

Зерттеу нәтижелері көрсеткендей, нормативтік ережелерге сәйкес PhD кандидаттары диссертациясын қорғауға рұқсат алу үшін мақалалар жариялауға міндетті. Жеке сұхбат берушілер қаражаттың алдын ала жиналатынын немесе Q1-Q4 журналдарында жариялау үшін жоба қорынан сұралатынын атап өтті. Шын мәнінде, респонденттердің 68%-ы үш жыл ішінде жариялау мүмкіндігін растады, ал 21%-ы диссертация жазуға және білімін одан әрі кеңейтуге басымдық бергенін атап өтті. Осылайша, докторанттарды оқыту философиясы жас зерттеушілерді тәрбиелеп, қолдаудың орнына керісінше, «жарияла немесе жойыл» мантрасына әкеледі.

Түйін сөздер: академиялық жазу; бір қазақстандық университет; PhD кандидаттары; мақалаларды жариялау; білім беру философиясы; PhD бағдарламалары; үш деңгейлі оқу жүйесіне көшу

Аннотация. Казахстанская система образования, после присоединения к Европейскому пространству высшего образования в 2010 году, постепенно перешла на трехуровневую европейскую систему. Этот переход к новым направлениям подготовки специалистов вызвал сомнения и опасения у казахстанских учёных. Целью данного исследования является изучение образовательной философии, лежащей в основе программ докторантуры (PhD), на примере опыта докторантов одного из казахстанских университетов.

В работе использовался исследовательский последовательный дизайн, в котором приняли участие докторанты 2021-2022 и 2022-2023 учебных годов одного из казахстанских университетов. В общей сложности 29 из 40 респондентов заполнили анкету по окончании курса, а трое докторантов согласились на участие в углубленном индивидуальном интервью. Открытые вопросы анкеты и три ответа в интервью были проанализированы с помощью конструктивистского анализа обоснованной теории.

Результаты исследования показывают, что, согласно нормативным правилам, докторанты обязаны публиковать статьи для получения разрешения на защиту диссертации. Отдельные интервьюеры отмечали, что средства либо собираются заранее, либо запрашиваются из проектного фонда для публикации в журналах Q1-Q4. Фактически, 68% респондентов подтвердили возможность публикации в течение трех лет, в то время как 21% отметили свое предпочтение написанию диссертации и дальнейшему расширению знаний. Таким образом, философия обучения докторантов сводится к мантре «публикуйся или исчезни», а не к воспитанию молодых исследователей.

Ключевые слова: академическое письмо; один казахстанский университет; докторанты; публикация статей; философия образования; программы докторантуры; переход к трехуровневой системе

Introduction

The lack of and subsequent necessity for trained and qualified specialists within Kazakhstan was noted after the collapse of the USSR. The repatriation of different ethnic representatives had resulted in a deficiency of professionals. Although universities had kept endowing work fields with young specialists, their qualifications were unfitted to the goals that the government intended to reach. While the previous education system served the planned economy of the USSR, the novice approach in reorganizing the overall national management system required young and educated trained specialists to foster the prosperity of the country.

Shifting from the post-Soviet system to the three-tiered system of the Bologna process sparked the hope to bring about these changes. The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) merged education and research in the doctoral programs to nurture research skills via an independent learning path, equipping candidates with transferable skills (EHEA, 2005; EUA, 2005). Henceforward, PhD holders were expected to possess the skills of critical and analytical thinking, being able to generate knowledge, working in a team, and communicating and cooperating with people from different ethnic groups (EUA, 2010). Thus, the idea of training PhD holders who will promote innovative changes through research has attracted Kazakhstani politicians.

Doctoral Programs in EU and POP Culture

In European universities, a doctoral program, which represented a branch of the three-tiered system was launched in 2003 (EHEA, 2003). By 2007, 82% of European universities reported the implementation of the PhD programs (Crosier, Purser and Smidt, 2007). Although the aim of the doctoral program is identical its implementation involved slightly diverse approaches based on a local context within which the universities operated (Crosier et al. 2007). Nevertheless, all approaches led to supporting and creating learning environments for doctoral candidates to become researchers. This was generated by organizing graduate and research schools, engaging PhD candidates in projects, supervisions, and academic mobility (Crosier et al. 2007; EUA, 2005; EUA, 2010). One of the obstacles that practitioners reported at the early stage was that of designing programs within the framework of restrictions within the existing legislations (Crosier et al., 2007).

Kazakhstan has adopted the idea of PhD training from Europe. In Kazakhstan, the idea of launching a doctoral program was delivered in 2004 and implemented in 2010 (Asanova, 2018; Uvaleeva, 2018). Indeed, there were many misunderstandings among practitioners about its aim and how to perform it accordingly. Regarding legislative issues, Kazakhstani universities obtained academic autonomy only in 2019 (SPED,2011). Meanwhile, all interventions were guided by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MES RK). In terms of the aims of doctoral programs, Kazakhstani universities follow a major principle to train researchers, which was limited to their publishing articles based on their research results in order to defend their doctoral thesis (MES, 2011). This implies that a researcher is recognized as a researcher if they have published articles. Consequently, do educational reforms in Kazakhstan maintain fidelity to the implementation? The concept of fidelity of implementation (FOI) means to keep the core idea of change within the intervention (Carroll et al. 2007). Thereby, reforms in the graduate education system in Kazakhstan are headed towards a publish or perish policy.

Jete – Journal of Philosophy, Religious and Cultural Studies
ISSN: 3080-1281. eISSN: 3080-6895.

2025,
No4 (153)

9

The routes representing the term publish or perish (hereinafter-POP) remain unknown (Moosa, 2018). However, its core idea is that one should get published in order to sustain a position of work in academia (Moosa, 2018). This imperative to publish elicits the expression that one size does not fit all. For instance, archeologists are less interested in being compelled to publish their findings of historical artefacts (Beck et al., 2021). African scholars are concerned that their knowledge production and contribution be treated equally within a neoliberal paradigm (Vurayai & Ndofirepi, 2020; Amutuhaire, 2022).

Meanwhile, publishing per se has revealed types of "honorary" authorships such as "guest" or "gift" or "coercive" authorships that implies the unethical inclusion of authors who were viewed as being considerably higher up in Asian countries compared to North American ones (Aliukonis et al., 2020). In addition, due to policy tensions, in Uzbekistan, scholars publish their articles in junk journals (Eshchanov et al., 2021). In Kazakhstan, scholars have referred to the fact that they covered their own publication expenses (Kurambayev & Freedman, 2020). Hence, this idea of getting published destroys the harmony that was intended to achieve an equilibrium between research and education (Bello et al., 2023).

One of the major obstacles for non-native English speakers is writing papers in academic English (Vurayai & Ndofirepi, 2020). Journals of Scopus and Web of Science, with the highest percentile and quartile (Q1-Q4), accept articles written only in English. However, even though students have enrolled in universities based on their IELTS and TOEFL results, these tests are not guaranteed to predict students' further academic writing success (Singh, 2014). Indeed, they required extra training to upgrade their academic writing skills.

TO SUM UP, in Kazakhstani universities POP policy prevails as a manipulative tool. PhD candidates are expected to get published in Q1-Q3 journals before their thesis defense, and faculty members are required to publish articles to maintain their academic position for three years. An" instrumentalism" of diverse levels fits a POP culture as a consequence of POP policy (Lucka & Bekker, 2022). Hence, research and education are in disharmony as training researchers entails diverse skills and activities beyond publishing.

Kazakhstan's Context

In the early 21st century, the transition of the State Programs to a three-tiered system was set (SPED, 2011). This means that previously existing training programs (e.g., specialists, aspirantura, candidature for science degrees, doctor of science) were replaced by the degrees brought by the Bologna process parameters (Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD). The transition was launched in 2004 and completed in 2010 (Asanova, 2018; Uvaleeva, 2018). One of the issues raised by scholars was a requirement established by the Ministry of Education and Science that research results be published in advance of theses defenses. Indeed, this involved discussions and misunderstandings among practitioners and scholars (Solovyeva, 2012; Ibraev et al., 2015).

To join the 30 OECD countries, one should demonstrate achievements in the social, economic and political areas (OECD.org). The First President N. Nazarbayev believed that at the core of political, economic, and particularly social changes lies the importance of people's modes of thinking (Modernization of Public Consciousness, 2017). Hence, all efforts were expended to provide and ensure a high quality of education. At the level of PhD training per se, defining quality was a challenge. We presume that it is aligned with the university's ranking system,

10   2025,
No4 (153)   *Jete – Journal of Philosophy, Religious and Cultural Studies*
ISSN: 3080-1281. eISSN: 3080-6895.

which enables the identification of educational institutions where one can obtain a high level of training. There, the publications of scholars are identified as one of the indicators used for being ranked at the top (QS Top Universities). Highly cited journals publish research results in English, and only the younger generations are expected to overcome this challenge. In light of this, to contribute to this political aim, the Kazakhstani education system has restructured its paradigm regarding the training of specialists.

To enhance the quality of the PhD programs, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan endorsed an order on *Rules for the Activities of Educational Organizations Implementing Educational Programs of Higher Education* (MES, 2005). Its core principle regarding the defense of these was to have several publications on a candidate's thesis topic. This requirement for PhD candidates has been changing according to the international journals' citation rate and impact-factor. At first, universities required seven publications prior to a thesis defense (MES, 2011; Shamatov and Isenova, 2016), but from 2021, there should be a maximum of four. According to the latest order endorsed March 9, 2021, №98, there are three options available for publishing. First, a PhD candidate should publish one article in an indexed journal (Q1) rated in the Scopus or the Web of Science Core Collections. Second, a PhD candidate should publish three articles in local journals plus one in a Scopus or the Web of Science Core Collections journal (Q4). Finally, a PhD candidate should publish two articles in the middle quartile Q2 and Q3 of the Scopus or the Web of Science Core Collections to obtain permission to defend their PhD thesis. Furthermore, PhD programs are designed to last for three years, and candidates are allowed to work for a limited number of hours. Meanwhile, getting published in a short period costs money; otherwise, a negotiation process that consumes a considerable time and effort could be embarked upon. In view of these facts, this study aims to explore the philosophy of education for doctoral programs based on the experiences of PhD candidates in one Kazakhstani University. Hence, the research question is what PhD students' experiences reveal about the philosophy underlying the program in one Kazakhstani university?

Methods

This study employed the exploratory sequential design (Creswell, 2012), a mixed-method design where a qualitative approach was predominant during the data collection. The design enables the exploration of PhD candidates' opinions and experiences, revealing the philosophy underlying the program. A survey with open-ended questions was used to accumulate students' opinions about their preparedness to write about their publication strategies in English, the financial aids that were available to them and the feedback they received for their manuscript drafts, and based on their responses, three in-depth interviews were conducted. The survey questions consisted of open-ended questions to avoid preconceived answers, while the interviews were conducted to explore students' in-depth experiences. In addition, during the class participatory observation was employed to enrich the understanding of the process.

Overall, out of 25, 19 students (10 female and 9 male) participated in the survey in 2021-2022, and two of them agreed to participate in the interview. In 2022-2023, out of 15, 10 (all female) respondents participated in the survey and one was interviewed. The Informed Consent Form was pasted on the front page of the Google form. Right after the confirmation, students could continue on to fill out the survey. An Informed Consent Form was sent to respondents willing to participate in the interview as well.

Jete – Journal of Philosophy, Religious and Cultural Studies
ISSN: 3080-1281. eISSN: 3080-6895.

2025,
No4 (153)

11

The academic writing course is an elective with a total of fifteen weeks allocated to three-hour face-to-face meetings. The class was designed in a format where PhD candidates were guided in the drafting of their first paper. The course consisted of five ECTS credits, each credit dedicated to developing a certain section of a manuscript. The final credit embodied the evaluation of a peer's drafted article as well as one external review from another university's faculty member. After the course, students were able to polish their work based on the peer and external reviewer feedback before submitting their work to the journal where they had been planning to do so.

The constructivist grounded theory was employed to conduct the data analysis (Sharmaz, 2012). The open-ended questions were coded and divided into themes.

The trustworthiness of the study was ensured through the triangulation of the survey, interview, and observation methods (Creswell, 2012). In addition, the interview responses were sent to the participants for member checking.

The principal limitations of the study are its low number of participants and the fact that it was conducted in one university only.

Results

The survey consists of 11 open-ended questions. Such open questions are helpful in enabling researchers to discover respondents' perspectives and code them according to their given views. To respond to the survey questions, 19 responses and two interviews were received from 2021-2022 cohort, and 10 responses and one interview were collected from 2022-2023 cohort, totaling 29 (72.5%) PhD candidates out of 40. These PhD candidates' opinions and experiences were grouped into four themes: Academic Writing Skills, Publication Strategies and Support, Harmony in Work and Study, and Challenges in Peer-Evaluation.

Academic Writing Skills

The initial question was dedicated to students' language capacities regarding a language that write and speak fluently. Here, 74% (14) of respondents indicated this language to be Russian, 21% (4) Kazakh, and 5% (1) English. Observation conducted in their class revealed that most of the candidates employ diverse translation applications to understand the core idea of the articles they read. In creating a table for their literature review list, most of them copied ideas that they intend to use in their article; very few used paraphrasing skills.

Respondents of the survey from the 2022-2023 cohort had not reflected upon getting published in English yet. In addition, 40% (4) presumed that they might take English language courses, another 40% (4) were still unsure about what they would do, 10% (1) were considering obtaining financial help, and 10% (1) had decided to translate from Russian into English.

Regarding the publication stipulation, 84% (16) of respondents stated that they knew prior to admission that publication in highly cited journals was required, whereas the remaining 16% (3) were unaware of it. The individual interviews expanded our understanding of the respondents' choice to embark on doctoral studies. For example, "*I worked at X place two years and realized that I have reached my level. I had two options either to continue working at this level or to learn English, pass IELTS and go further, upper to reach a new level. I knew that it will be difficult but I wanted it*" (An_Interviewee_1_Female). Another interviewee stated "*My previous experience gave me confidence. I have worked for a long time researching [title a field of study] in*

projects. Since Master's programs I have accumulated data on this topic. This topic is more than my work it is my personal interest, it is my aspiration" (An_Interviewee_2_Male).

In addition, from 2021-2022 cohort, 89% (17) stated that they constantly read in English and 74% (14) had already obtained academic writing experience before their admission. It is worth mentioning that all candidates were enrolled into the program with English language test results. In other words, they all have IELTS and TOEFL test results. However, despite possessing a high degree of fluency in English, their limited learning experiences continue to be a source of their academic challenges. An interviewee pointed out the following: *"I cannot write reflections in English as you taught us in our class. I read in Russian and I think in Russian. Therefore, for me easier to translate whole article and read and write in Russian the main ideas. My adviser [name] suggested me to use this [name of the program] program for translation. It saves the meaning and you do not need to correct the text after translation" (An_Interviewee_1_Female).* Indeed, candidates refer to using translations programs, and this was obvious during the class observation. The second interviewee's experience was the following: *"I take notes in the file, usually highlight. It takes time to write while you are reading. Therefore, I use paraphrasing only within writing theoretical part of my article" (An_Interviewee_2_Male). The third interviewee's experiences involved the following: "I always write in Russian. Then I translate it, then my husband checks it for me. After I send it to a translator" (An_Interviewee_3_Female).* As it can be seen, candidates have yet to learn how to develop their own approaches to paraphrasing and working with English-medium academic texts. During the class, they were told that there is no one single and right way to write reflections from articles they have read. Therefore, their experiences were accepted and were questioned by the researcher to reveal ways that facilitate their work.

To write an article in a local journal is not as straightforward as it was before. Since 2020, all the requirements have been changed, and journals that ignore the updated norms of the Committee on Quality Control of the MS and HE RK have been excluded from the list of recognized journals. For example, one of the new requirements is that the theoretical part of an article should contain and cite at least thirty articles in English from the Scopus and the Web of Science databases. In light of this, reading through translations causes time-consuming challenges for PhD candidates.

Publication Strategies and Support

The candidates' awareness of the publication stipulation echoed their choice of publication strategy. For example, 53% (10) preferred to write four articles, three in Kazakhstani journals, as required by the Committee of Quality Control of the Ministry Science and Higher Education (CQC MS HE) and one article in a Scopus Journal quartile Q4; 15% (3) referred to publications in highly cited Scopus journals quartile Q1; and 32% (6) mentioned two articles in Scopus journal quartile Q2 and Q3. The analysis of the reasons provided by candidates points out that those who aimed high in the Q1 Scopus journals were confident in their research. The group of candidates who have chosen two articles in Scopus journals Q2 and Q3 also consider their research rich enough to publish and some were inspired to become published without a solid foundation. Finally, with respect to the strategy involving four articles, students found this way less stressful and more achievable in a given timeframe. We noted that the interview results revealed that this choice was also intertwined with the financial obstacles of the publication, for instance, *"I choose the strategy three Kazakhstani journals and one Q4 journal because of financial affordability. Q1, Q2 are expensive to publish I have had an experience with my colleagues" (An_*

*Interviewee_1_Female). I*n contrast, those who had chosen publications in international journals were less concerned about financial issues, for example, *"I choose the strategy one publication in Q1 Scopus journal. This was based on recommendation of my advisor because he/she aware the scope of my data. He/she has a great experience and publications in Q1 journals. So, he/she has enough background to guide me in getting published. If this will not work, we can resubmit to Q2 and Q3 journals" (An_Interviewee_2_Male).* Hence, those who have an advisor that promotes the manuscript experience less stress concerning financial aid and developing the manuscript due to their advisor's support or to project requirements. However, those who are not involved in a project and are relatively independent have obstacles to overcome when it comes to publishing their work.

Concerning practicalities such as finances and timelines, 68% (13) of respondents confirmed the feasibility of getting published within three years, whereas 21% (4) highlighted the importance of their writing thesis and exploring knowledge rather than focusing on publications. The remaining students skipped this question. Furthermore, 70% (7) respondents of the surveyed 2022-2023 cohort also confirmed the feasibility of getting published within three years, while 10% (1) hesitated, 10% (1) thought their chances of being published were 50/50, and 10% (1) found they had less time to get published and write a thesis simultaneously.

Regarding this issue, an interviewee stated *"I have three options to resolve publication issue in a Q4 Scopus journal. First, I do save money, even it is not considerable sum, but I do it. Second, I might ask the university to help me at least to cover 25% of the payment. Third, is to ask my research advisor to help from the collaborating university side. Ultimately, I can rely on my savings" (An_Interviewee_1_Female). The second interviewee's response: "I am part of the research project. In this project a money was allocated to publish three articles within the project" (An_Interviewee_2_Male).* It is clear that PhD candidates are aware of the necessity of paying to get published quickly. As the respondents of the 2022-2023 cohort pointed out, 60% (6) were expecting to cover publishing expenses on their own, 20% (2) to cover expenses via a project fund, 10% (1) were seeking to publish for free, and 10% (1) found it difficult to answer this question. Hence, candidates focused on financial issues, whereas the quality of the academic experience involved in developing an article remains implicit, albeit unstated. Further, we can see from the candidates' responses that their confidence originates from their advisor's support and guidance.

Regarding the needed assistance and support, 26% (5) of respondents mentioned receiving financial aid to publish articles, 26% (5) mentioned academic editing help, and 15% (3) mentioned the shared experiences of other scholars. One interviewee confirmed, *"It would be great to receive some financial aid to publish an article in the Q4 journal" (An_Interviewee_1_Female). However, another interviewee raised the challenge: "Financial part of the article is covered on my own, in [name of the specialty] it is seldom that you can find a sponsor. If it is cost $1000 then you divide it among seven people. In case where your advisor also included you have to pay for him/her as well. It is usually on our expenses" (An_Interviewee_3_Female).* At this stage students had only drafted their first papers and they yet had not yet encountered any publication expenses. A substantial percent of respondents of the 2022-2023 cohort 40% (4), suggested shifting to a part-time working system, while 30% (3) advocated shifting to an online system, 20% (2) solely working in the research field, and 10% (1) found it difficult to address this particular issue.

Harmony in Work and Study

Three years is actually a very short time to complete a PhD program. Nevertheless, if this time is spent wisely, this experience is sufficient for students to obtain the necessary skills. The

candidates were asked how they merge work and thesis writing in one time frame. In order to work and study simultaneously, 42% (8) of respondents referred to their time management capacity. An individual interview discovered the following: *«I do work from first year, and I can manage both, writing thesis and leading my courses. Yes, it takes time to assess students' work but overall, I am capable to manage" (An_Interviewee_1_Female). Another interviewee pointed out "I rely on planning. Having an accurate plan and to follow it, is the only way to combine different types of responsibilities. I have not worked yet on my thesis. I am working towards an option to publish three articles and to present results rather than writing a thesis. I think publication is important for a researcher" (An_Interviewee_2_Male).*

Challenges in Peer-Evaluation

The evaluation process has formed part of the learning. PhD candidates were involved in providing peer-review to the drafted articles of their colleagues. One of the challenges in this section was to facilitate constructive feedback and knowing how to be critical and what to critique. Here is an interviewee's point about review: *"For me to receive critical feedback is ok, however to criticize someone's work is most challenging. I just cannot do it" (An_Interviewee_1_ Female).* The second interviewee's response is as follows: *"For me receiving feedback is a valuable experience. I perceive every new person who I have not met before as a teacher. And any opinion even if it is far from a reality for me always interesting to listen. That is why I perceive any critic regardless its positive or negative character as a way to grow. Regarding to provide critical feedback was also interesting, to dig in the theme of my peer with employing my own skills. If those my suggestions will be helpful for them, I will be only happy and hope no one take it personally" (An_Interviewee_2_Male).* The third interviewee hesitated: *"Criticizing the work of your colleague I find not fair. As we say in Kazakh 'qarga qarganyn kozin shuqymaidy' [a raven does not peck a raven's eye]. So, I would rather point strong points" (An_Interviewee_3_Female).* Hence, from these responses, we can see that all candidates employ a sensitive approach to critiquing their peers *"I just cannot do it"* and *"hope no one take it personally."* This signals previous ways of thinking where idea of critique another's work was blurred and was often conceived as a rejection rather than a technique for constructing a common understanding. Being able to provide constructive feedback is also a significant and requisite skills of future researchers. Instead of focusing on acquiring that capability, PhD candidates are mainly concerned about getting published, searching ways and strategies to obtain the permission to defend their thesis. Who is responsible for incorporating this standard into the philosophy of PhD programs?

Discussion

In this study, students have expressed their ideas about the feasibility of having their research results published within three years, an endeavor that requires academic writing skills. As this survey was undertaken during the participants' Academic Writing course, they were provided tips on how to get published in a local journal. Moreover, they practiced drafting their first article during the course.

This study confirms Manjet's (2020) findings that students face challenges in writing in academic English and reading academic texts. PhD candidates basically wrote their articles in Russian, stating that it is easier to translate them into English once they have been structured and completed. In addition, in this study, students mentioned that they read in English at most two times a week, thus correlating with Manjet's (2020) finding, where slower readers were

identified as those with poor background learning. Meanwhile, PhD candidates do possess depth of knowledge; however, they read articles through translation programs. They also highlight ideas and paraphrase textual material during the writing process.

Administering courses in English within a non-English speaking environment entails challenges. This implies the intricacies of providing courses in English, whereby a local language could predominate in the classroom environment (Al Fadda, 2012). Although in this study, the course was led through a combination of English and Russian, as the literature used in the Academic Writing course was in English. Moreover, this study required students to publish in international journals despite the fact that most of their courses were conducted in Russian. Yet, in order to start thinking in English, students should read and speak in English as this would facilitate the formation of ideas directly in the English language without the need for translation. Observation of class meetings showed that students use translator programs to understand the core content of the articles necessary for the literature review section. An interviewee admitted to translating entire articles before proceeding to reading them and subsequently writing their reflection. This concurs with the findings of studies conducted by Seitzhanova et al. (2015) and Kirkpatrick (2014) where students also relied on translators.

Research by Puspitasari et al. (2020) and Myrzakulova (2019) found that receiving feedback causes tension in students due to the anxiety engendered from obtaining negative comments therein. This study also confirms the tension experienced while providing feedback; however, this was related to critiquing the work of their peer rather than being on the receiving of such feedback. PhD candidates had nonetheless been informed in advance about the criteria of providing and receiving feedback. The observation of the evaluation process of each other's work showed the positive and constructive work of the candidates. Overall, the attitude of PhD candidates towards critiquing their peers' writing point to a lack of experience in conceiving the point of such feedback.

Before admission to the PhD program, candidates were required to pass IELTS or TOEFL language tests. In this respect, this study echoes findings of research conducted by Singh (2014, 2015), where students with high IELTS test results face challenges in academic writing due to their learning background. In this study all PhD candidates possess the required IELTS test results; nevertheless, only a few have decided to write articles purely in English and most of them rely on the translation of their articles into English.

Last but not least, regarding PhD candidates' loyalty towards the implementation concept, this study shows that they do try to fulfil the requirements of the doctoral program (Caroll et al. 2007). However, they face challenges in merging the dual tasks of conducting research and publishing its results. On the one hand, they pushed getting published, and on the other hand, they depend on their research results and their project funds. As in the myths of Sisyphus, they need to attempt to accomplish these two requirements and undergo an evaluation of their performance every three years after their graduation, as publishing a certain number of articles is a university requirement.

Conclusion

To conclude, PhD candidates entered the program with the awareness of the stipulation whereby they must get published in either local or international journals before their thesis defense. Their reasons for choosing the specific publication strategies available to them indicate

that most of them rely on their research to do so. However, conducting research and sharing the ensuing results through written communication is quite different. The students were provided with tips to help them get published in local journals, which gave them the confidence to choose the strategy of publishing four articles, out of which three should appear in local journals. Although PhD candidates believe that they will get published before their thesis defense, they still depend on their research and need to consider how it will be funded and conducted. In addition, they need assistance in editing their text, which has been translated from Russian into English. Hence, the paradox of PhD training is navigating the dual paths of getting published before the thesis defense and handling obstacles encountered while conducting research.

The study findings are limited to the data of one university's PhD candidates only. Further studies could be conducted among other medical and non-medical universities in Kazakhstan to better generalize the experience of PhD candidates. This would also show the philosophy of doctoral programs in the Kazakhstani educational context.

Table 1. Reasons Behind Selected Publication Strategy_2022

	Publishing Strategies	Reasons
15% (3)	Q1	I have original investigation, I hope that I can make good article, which will publish in q1 journal
		I believe that the level of my research is in corresponds to the publications in recent most well-known journals
		I know what I want and how to do it
32% (6)	Q2 and Q3	I think over this question now
		Because of an objective of my thesis and quantity of possible topics for publications
		Experience in writing article
		I want it
		Question is inappropriate
		I and my supervisor prefer this strategy, because it is reliably
53%(10)	Q4 and 3KZ (required by the CQCMES)	It seems to be an easiest way
		I dont know
		It's more comfortable to me
		I chose this strategy due to availability, but in the course of work it may change
		Because it is more achievable than to write the article in Q1
		according to our requirements
		I am beginner at writing articles, that's why I prefer this way. I think it's easier to be published in KZ journals.
		Easier way
		It is more possible
		High price of publishing

Jete – Journal of Philosophy, Religious and Cultural Studies
ISSN: 3080-1281. eISSN: 3080-6895.

2025,
No4 (153)

17

Table 2. Reasons Behind Selected Publication Strategy_2023

	Publishing Strategies	Reasons
7 (70%)	3(KZ)+1 (Q4)	1)Easier 2)I chose this strategy due to the long passage of reviews in Q3 and Q4 journals, although I will still try 1 (Q2)+ 1 (Q3) 3)Because it takes less time 4)because i think that its harder to get published in Scopus 5)To make it easier to pay 6) Because we already published articles in KZ journals, now we are working on Scopus journal article 7)We have already published three articles in KZ journals and the final article planning to submit to a Scopus journal
3 (30%)	1(Q2)+1(Q3)	1) Because I think it will be more accessible to me 2) Because it interesting and short way 3) I find it difficult to answer

Table 3. PhD candidates' reflections on gained skills

Yes. Absolutely. I learned about scientific bases and how to work in them correctly, how to write scientific articles correctly (Student_2_Survey_2023)
For me personally, this subject became one of the most important subjects in the first year of doctoral studies, because I learned a lot of new things, and I have how to work correctly on various platforms with articles, how to properly conduct a critical analysis of articles, and most importantly, writing a scientific article according to the requirements of highly rated journals (Student_3_Survey_2023)
there was a lot of new things for me, because each part of the article was studied in details and there was an opportunity to sort out errors in each part of the article..it was very useful for me.. (Student_6_Survey_2023)
Yes, the design of the article, where you can publish in and then (Student_7_Survey_2023)
Yes. While studying the "Academic Writing" course, we learned to analyze scientific articles and search for articles on rating sites (Student_8_Survey_2023)
While studying the academic writing course, I received new information that I will need when writing a dissertation or article. For example, how to write a plan for writing an article, reflection on articles, how to choose journals for publishing an article, how to work with bibliography (Student_9_Survey_2023)

Conflict of interests
The author declares no relevant conflict of interests

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ISSN: 3080-1281. eISSN: 3080-6895.

2025,
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19

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