

**Sh.B. Kadirsizova** 

Semey Medical University, Semey, Kazakhstan

e-mail: synar2024@mail.ru

## **SOME FACTORS FOR FORMING THE READINESS OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS FOR ACADEMIC MOBILITY**

Undoubtedly, the changes taking place as a result of the society's entry into the global community require competitive high-quality specialists. Such changes are directly related to the field of education, including the training of future teachers, because the status of the teacher is highly valued in the country, and laws and concepts are adopted at the state level. This necessitates the training of a flexible, mobile, professional, adaptable and competent specialist who can compete in accordance with the ongoing changes in the international arena. Academic mobility is a key step in a prospective teacher's professional and academic growth. The purpose of this paper is to identify several factors influencing future teachers' readiness for academic mobility. To achieve the set goal, a qualitative research method was used, which included a theoretical analysis of the problem, as well as a focus group interview, with responses recorded and coded. The identified results were discussed, institutional, curricular, and professional factors of future teachers' readiness to undergo academic mobility were determined and analyzed. We expect that the proposed factors would allow future teachers to prevent obstacles in their academic mobility. The issue presented in the article may encourage other researchers to focus on various large-scale solutions for preparing future teachers for academic mobility in higher education institutions.

**Keywords:** academic mobility, future teacher, training, institutional, curricular, and professional factors.

**Ш.Б. Кадирсизова**

Семей медицина университеті, Семей, Қазақстан

e-mail: synar2024@mail.ru

### **Болашақ мұғалімдердің академиялық ұтқырлыққа даярлығын қалыптастыру факторлары**

Қоғамның әлемдік қауымдастыққа кірігуінің нәтижесінде орын алып жатқан өзгерістер бәсекеге қабілетті жоғары сапалы мамандарды талап етері сөзсіз. Мұндай өзгерістер білім саласына, оның ішінде болашақ мұғалімді даярлауға тікелей қатысты, өйткені, елімізде мұғалімнің мәртебесіне аса жоғары мән беріліп, мемлекет дәрежесінде заңдар мен тұжырымдамалар қабылдануда. Бұл халықаралық аренадағы күнделікті өзгерістерге сай бейімделіп, бәсекеге түсе алатын икемді, ұтқыр, кәсіби және құзіретті маман даярлауды талап етеді. Болашақ мұғалімнің кәсіби-ғылыми дамуына ықпал ететін маңызды қадамдардың бірі студенттің академиялық ұтқырлықтан өтуі. Мақаланың мақсаты болашақ мұғалімдердің академиялық ұтқырлықтан өтуге даярлығын қалыптастырудың бірнеше факторларын айқындау. Қойылған мақсатқа қол жеткізу үшін зерттеу әдістері ретінде сапалы зерттеу жүргізілді, оның ішінде мәселе бойынша теориялық талдау жасалып, фокус-топ интервью өткізіліп, жауаптар таспаға салынып, кодталды. Анықталған нәтижелер талқыланып, болашақ мұғалімдердің академиялық ұтқырлықтан өтуге даярлығын қалыптастырудың институционалдық, бағдарламалық, кәсіби факторлар айқындалып, талданды. Ұсынылған факторлар болашақ мұғалімдердің академиялық ұтқырлықтан өтуде кездесетін кедергілердің алдын-алуға мүмкіндік береді деп үміттенеміз. Мақалада көтерілген мәселе жоғары оқу орындарында болашақ мұғалімдердің академиялық ұтқырлыққа даярлығын қалыптастырудың басқа да ауқымды шешімдерін табу үшін басқа зерттеулерге түрткі бола алады.

**Түйін сөздер:** академиялық ұтқырлық, болашақ мұғалім, даярлық, институционалдық, бағдарламалық, кәсіби факторлар.

Ш.Б. Кадирсизова

Семейский медицинский университет, Семей, Казахстан  
e-mail: synar2024@mail.ru

### **Факторы формирования готовности будущих учителей к академической мобильности**

Изменения, происходящие в результате вхождения общества в мировое сообщество, требуют конкурентоспособных специалистов высокого качества. Подобные процессы напрямую связаны со сферой образования, в том числе с подготовкой будущих учителей, поскольку в стране высоко ценится статус учителя, а законы и концепции принимаются на государственном уровне. Это требует подготовки гибкого, мобильного, профессионального и компетентного специалиста, способного адаптироваться к непрерывным изменениям на международной арене и конкурировать. Одним из важных шагов, способствующих профессионально-научному развитию будущего учителя, является академическая мобильность студента. Цель статьи – выявить несколько факторов готовности будущих учителей к прохождению академической мобильности. Для достижения этой цели было проведено качественное исследование, включающее теоретический анализ проблемы и фокус-групповое интервью, в ходе которого ответы были зафиксированы и закодированы. Результаты были обсуждены и проанализированы, выявлены некоторые факторы готовности будущих учителей к прохождению академической мобильности. Предложенные факторы позволят будущим учителям предотвратить препятствия в их академической мобильности. Проблема, поднятая в статье, может помочь в мотивации других исследований по поиску масштабных решений, направленных на формирование подготовки будущих преподавателей к академической мобильности в высших учебных заведениях.

**Ключевые слова:** академическая мобильность, будущий учитель, подготовка, институциональные, учебные, профессиональные факторы.

#### **Introduction**

The entry of Kazakhstan into the area of international integration will undoubtedly necessitate changes in the labor market in the country, including the quality of future specialists. The modern world society creates the need for the future specialist to be competent, as well as to be ready for comprehensive, ongoing global and professional changes. In this regard, it is not surprising that the aim is “to establish a training system that maintains alignment with the requirements of the labor market and encourages everyone to make the most of their knowledge-based individual potential in society” (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Education, 2007). In addition, meticulous changes are taking place in the country’s education system, as well as educational standards and strategies are being developed in accordance with new requirements, and among them, the issue of training a competitive future teacher has transformed into one of the greatest concerns in the country. Its proof is the adoption of the Law “On the status of a teacher” in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2019), which recognizes “the special status of a teacher” and “provides the necessary conditions”. The organization of the educational process and training curriculum for future teachers are designed to ensure that the specialist receives high-quality education and develops into a highly

capable expert. Increasing the importance of academic mobility is one of the most effective means of increasing the effectiveness of the future teacher’s professional potential and competence. After all, academic mobility among students is regarded as the primary determinant in the development of professional competencies (Law RK on the status of teachers, 2019). Academic mobility has become an essential component of higher education in today’s progressively interconnected world. It enables students and instructors to broaden their horizons, gain new perspectives, and promote cross-cultural understanding. Future teachers benefit immensely from academic mobility, as their responsibility in influencing the next generation necessitates a broad and diversified educational experience. To prepare future teachers for academic mobility, it is crucial to consider all aspects of students’ potential, including opportunities for professional knowledge formation. As a result, there is an immediate need to modify the goals and objectives of the higher educational institution in order to enhance the professional-pedagogical training of the future teacher, that is, the development of the “mobility” of the future teacher, and the search for effective factors that contribute to the formation of the academic mobility of the future teacher is an urgent problem (Hou, 2022). For this reason, this article explores the essential factors necessary for preparing future teachers for

academic mobility, examining both institutional and individual factors that contribute to their readiness. It was aimed to undertake a theoretical analysis of these challenges, determine the ways to increase the academic mobility of the future teacher, conduct a focus group interview with future teacher students who have passed the academic mobility, code and analyze the results of the interview. In the presented article, an effort was undertaken to find an answer to the following research question: What are possibly the most significant institutional, curricular, and professional factors in preparing future teachers for academic mobility?

### Literature Review

The concept of higher education and science development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023-2029(2023), states that it is crucial to collaborate with science and knowledge; to promote and establish circumstances for the advancement of international academic and scientific-technical partnerships. In addition, it is indicated that “extensively growth of multiple methods of both internal and external academic mobility of learners and faculty members of higher educational organizations is predicted”. The fact that this document states “multiple languages education by means of mobility programs shall continue to be put into effect for the complete involvement of students in the internationally recognized academic community” (Concept of development of HES in RK, 2023) can be evidence of the country’s emphasis on academic mobility in its higher education institutions. Academic mobility might be characterized as “the exchange for students or researchers for a particular academic duration (which incorporates training or employment experience), generally a semester or an academic year, to an additional higher education institution (local or abroad) to perform investigations or study findings, which takes the form of credit at their own higher education institution and must be reconfigured in the prescribed manner of gained proficiency in educational programs” (Methodological recommendations, 2018). Rostovskaya, Skorobogatova et al.(2021) note that academic mobility makes a contribution to the accumulation of human and cultural scientific capital by connecting research communities in different nations. Academic mobility refers to future teachers’ commitment (or aptitude) to encounter international standards, language acquisition, and geographical challenges in order to accomplish their educational and academic goals (Seggie, 2021).

The Republic of Kazakhstan is a full participant of the European higher education space, that is, the processes of reforming the national education system take into account European trends (Methodological recommendations, 2018). In accordance with the European Higher Education Strategy, academic mobility for students and faculty is expected to enhance the effectiveness of programs and scientific research accomplishments. It promotes the academic and culture internationalizing of European higher education, reinforces the European Higher Education Area’s multilingual historical context, and facilitates more substantial competition as well as collaboration among higher education institutions. As a consequence, mobility should be the primary element of the European higher education environment (Mobility strategy for EHEA, 2020). Academic mobility has been considered to be important in the European area because it ensures that students acquire knowledgeable, interpersonal, and multicultural abilities while additionally improving their potential for employment. Subsequently is additionally suggested that students from higher education institutions who participate in academic mobility internationally are far more probable to find work within a year subsequent to completion (European Education, 2023). Academic mobility in our country is carried out within the framework of the Bologna process. Kazakhstan actively cooperates with other countries within the networks of ENIC (European Network of Information Centers), NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centers in the European Union) (Methodological recommendations, 2018).

Kazakhstani scientists classify academic mobility into two types: mutual and level. Mutual academic mobility guarantees that a student accumulates completely educational institutions at a foreign higher educational institution and investigates at a different one higher educational institution at the following level of education, while level mobility enables a student to continue their education at a foreign university for a limited period (semester, academic year) (Abdykhalykova, 2021), (Kabanbayeva, 2019).

Conversely, researchers occasionally criticize the academic mobility of students and researchers, calling it “a certain “choice” within the framework of specific and individualized restrictions”, as well as “the absence of “intra-national” inter-institutional mobility” (Ackers, 2008). Kondakci reveals that long-term academic mobility is effective (2011), Granja, Visentin argued that short-term

academic mobility is the best element of mobility in higher education (2024). Despite this, Quiroz-Schulz(2024) asserts, that academic mobility fosters relationships with fellow students abroad, encourages educational and research experiences, makes a contribution to the transformation of investment in the scientific field, and provides practical knowledge about the requirement to publish outcomes in order to acquire recognition around the world. Ples-sis and Joey(2022) argue that the development of “pedagogical mobility,” which includes academic mobility, is critical for future teacher preparation in higher education institutions. Nevertheless, contrary to the notion of how beneficial academic mobility is, as well as growing enthusiasm and popularity of it, the country’s academic mobility procedures continues to produce inconsistent outcomes. Specifically, with regard to the different perspectives and significant distinctions between the internal structure of the educational system in our country and the foreign education system, a student of a higher educational institution may not be prepared for an outstanding foreign academic mobility program, since the future teacher “is influenced by his subsequent previous knowledge and expertise as well as desires to acquire new concepts,” and in order to comply with their expectations, they must be able to relocate effectively(Bradly, 2023).

### Research methodology and methods

Based on the article’s research topic and research question, a theoretical analysis of scientific and pedagogical literature was conducted, a focus group interview was organized among 5 future teachers – students who had undergone academic mobility, and effective, ineffective, advantages and disadvantages of academic mobility were analyzed. A focus group is defined as “listening to and collecting information and opinions on a specific question”. A focus group, according to Winke P.(2017), is a technique to learn more about the members’ perspectives on the issue

being discussed. A focus group is a kind of discussion that focuses on a certain topic and produces qualitative data. The names of future teachers who participated in the focus group were coded as “Future Teacher 1”, “Future Teacher 2”, “Future Teacher 3”, “Future Teacher 4”, “Future Teacher 5”. The participants visited Sweden, the Czech Republic, Poland, South Korea, and China with the academic mobility program. The interview for the focus group mainly consisted of 10 open-ended questions within the framework of one topic, additional questions were asked during the focus group interview. The discussion in the focus group was recorded in detail, the findings were thematically coded, and the responses were analyzed in categories. The contradictions and issues in the answers were highlighted and prompted to provide a clarification to the article’s research question. Consequently, objective variables for preparing future teachers for academic mobility were identified and evaluated. An investigation concluded with recommendations for further research on the subject, as well as additional proposals for the factors encountered in future teachers readiness for academic mobility.

### Results and discussion

To answer the article’s research question, we first conducted a focus group interview with 5 future teacher students from different cities of the country who had undergone academic mobility abroad. Furthermore, in order to acquire the information required to define the major institutional, methodological, and professional factors that contribute to the effective creation of future teachers’ readiness for academic mobility. Based on the experience of the future teacher-students, it was aimed to analyze and code the proposals and demands during the focus group interview. The focus group questions are presented in the table below (Table 1). The focus group interview was conducted in face-to-face meetings.

**Table 1** – Focus group interview questions

Questions for the focus group	Open answers
What motivated you to participate in the academic mobility program?	
How important was the academic mobility program to you?	
What difficulties did you encounter during the academic mobility program? In terms of education system and scientific skills?	
What knowledge and skills does the candidate need (in advance) during the academic mobility program?	



Continuation of the table

Questions for the focus group	Open answers
After completing the academic mobility program, what knowledge and skills did you improve, what advantages did you get?	
What personal qualities should a future teacher undergoing academic mobility have?	
Were there any intercultural difficulties during the academic mobility?	
Did you develop any scientific interest or desire to conduct research within a scientific topic while familiarizing yourself with pedagogical-innovative methods, various advanced educational contexts and strategies?	
As a result of the academic mobility, did you find like-minded friends and mentors in accordance with your professional and scientific interests? Do you have a professional relationship with them?	
Do you feel that you are fully prepared for academic mobility ahead of your group?	

Upon completing analyzing the focus group responses from participants and using thematic coding, we identified a number of categories, settling particular consideration to the contradictions and challenges encountered by future teachers during academic mobility, and then pointed out two or three issues to analyze independently. The suggested categories are the following: 1) Institutional issues; 2) Integration of educational programs; 3) Professional-scientific issues; 4) Personal qualities. Analyzing the proposed categories, we answer the research question of the article.

**Institutional issues:** Participants in the focus group frequently stated that they encountered an imbalance in the choice of mobility programs for their particular subject, that the student's proficiency was insufficient to be successful at a foreign educational institution, along with the fact they had many difficulties with a foreign language. The responses provided by each of the students revealed that there were some challenges with the aforementioned issues.

*Future Teacher 1: My English is at a sufficient level, basically a good language. However, during the course, I realized that my language was bad at the academic level, and that was the obstacle in the process of understanding.*

*Future Teacher 4: My language "let me down" during the lesson, but I had to study a lot. I also used a translator. However, I got a good knowledge.*

*Future Teacher 3: I am a future teacher of chemistry. But in the environment I entered, I had to go to the classes they set, not my desired field and subject.*

*Future Teacher 5: To be honest, the level of education I learned here is completely different from that there. Teaching methods, organization, communication are completely different. I have learned a lot, and there is much to learn.*

**Issues of curriculum integration.** The similarity of the answers of the majority of the respondents led to the inclusion of the issue of curriculum integration as a separate category. For example, to the question "What knowledge and skills does the candidate need (in advance) during the academic mobility program?", the participants unanimously responded that a student who goes on academic mobility should first develop certain knowledge and skills and acquire certain competencies. Cultural competency is recognized as essential for future teachers to properly manage different educational situations.

*Future Teacher 2: If we, as future teachers, are aware of the world experience, structure and methods, the knowledge we get there will be of high quality. This is because a person who knows something easily absorbs new knowledge, and if you don't know it, it takes time to absorb and process that information, and you partially accept other new information. I don't know, that's how I understood it from my experience.*

*Future Teacher 3: During the academic mobility there were intercultural inconveniences; we have a different mentality and culture. We gradually got used to it, being there and seeing it. But there were many differences. There are a lot of things to learn and a lot of things not to learn (laughs).*

**Professional and academic issues.** The professional-academic problem of academic mobility was identified as a result of categorizing future teachers' responses. The future teachers underlined that they all had mentors in higher education institutions abroad who provided them with thorough academic, scientific-organizational, and personal support to the students. Furthermore, the participants gained a distinct perspective on scientific knowledge and networking opportunities.

*Future Teacher 1: What I really liked there it was the mentor's help. A mentor is not just a helper, but a real, true motivator and helper from the academic point of view. To be honest, even though we were studying, we did not pay attention to the academic part. It looked like something difficult and scary. It turns out that the methods, strategies, and topics used in the lesson are all related to science and can be studied. From this point of view, my attention was opened and I returned knowing "the edge" of true research. If only we had such a mentoring and training system. For example, if I knew all this before then, I would even "fly".*

*Future Teacher 4: Yes, I think so too. Our knowledge and research can be combined and studied. For example, I can conduct experimental work with students and in my classes. In general, it is really interesting.*

*Future Teacher 5: What is new for me is networking. For example, when we meet someone, usually we become friends if we have similar hobbies. Networking here is a like-minded person, where you can get to know and communicate with anyone. For example, if he and I are future physicists, if our common topic is physics, I will hang out with that person, maybe we will write an article together, and then invite each other to conferences. I liked this very much. In our country, it is not so developed.*

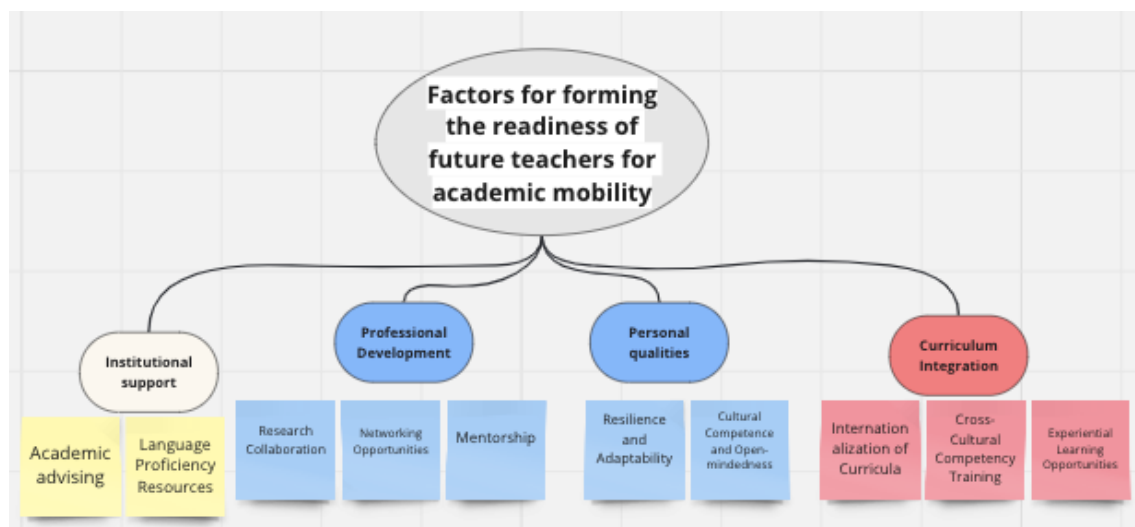
At the same time, having analyzed the focus group data, we made another additional important core factor. The analysis of the following questions became prompts for arising of this factor: What personal qualities should a future teacher who undergoes academic mobility have?, What motivated you

to participate in the academic mobility program?, How important was the academic mobility program for you? In terms of education system and scientific skills? etc. Along with the responses, the majority of prevalent attributes required for a potential teacher were friendliness, abilities to communicate, tolerance and adaptation, cultural competence, and intellectual curiosity, among others.

*Future teacher 3: The first thing a student needs abroad is sociability. Openness and cultural competence are needed as well. Because you get to know many students, you need to communicate with mentors and teachers.*

*Future teacher 5: These qualities are needed not only abroad, but for teachers in general. Since the teacher works with the child, openness and communication skills are very important.*

Careful subject matter coding of focus group interviews revealed that there are professional and scientific challenges, organizational problems in future teachers' academic mobility programs, and educational initiative incorporation. That example, if we describe and categorize aspects that contribute to the prevention of identified difficulties, we can use institutional assistance, academic counseling, and language learning tools. The integration of curriculum factors include: internationalizing of educational programs, multicultural competence training, and practical training possibilities. Mentoring programs, research collaborations, and networking opportunities might be characterized as professional-academic issues. Personality attributes include resilience and flexibility, cultural competency, and openness. (Figure 1).



**Figure 1** – Factors preventing future teachers' problems with academic mobility

The focus group interview results provided the answer to the article's research question. According to the findings of the study, future teachers in the country who are undergoing academic mobility will confront a variety of institutional, curricular, professional, and personal challenges. Nevertheless, we believe that the stated difficulties and problems can be overcome by planning various events with prospective teachers in advance. For this reason, we categorized the focus group interviews and highlighted institutionalized curriculum integration, professional-academic, and personal attributes as potential preventative factors for the difficulties observed throughout the analysis. We believe that focusing on the mentioned characteristics is crucial to educate future instructors for academic mobility. It is accomplished through the integration of educational programs. For instance, future teacher education programs should include components on international perspectives in education, multiculturalism, and student-centered teaching strategies, among other things. Additionally, "the management of extracurricular initiatives at the college or university is extremely significant because it guarantees familiarization of the future teacher to self-awareness, self-improvement, professional growth, rapid adjustments to new circumstances and preparedness to actively change challenging circumstances" (Bradly, 2023). Special academic advisors should assist future teachers in choosing suitable mobility programs and making sure the experience aligns with their professional and academic objectives in order to prepare them for academic mobility. In other words, one of the factors determining the future teacher's preparedness for academic mobility is the requirement for institutional encouragement from the student.

The language of instruction is one of the main obstacles to academic mobility overseas. Future educators have to "be familiar with a foreign language or possibly different foreign languages" in order to support educational interaction (Khramova et.al, 2013). Unfortunately, for the vast majority of upcoming learners across our nation, language adaptation is still a significant problem. Language courses and competency assessments, for example, are required provided to enable future teachers to communicate successfully in multilingual environments while participating in academic discourse. Academic mobility is characterized as "a instrument for strengthening beneficial interpersonal abilities as well as comprehension among students" highlighting the need of intercultural competence for future

teachers throughout this process (Doyle et.al, 2010). A future teacher is expected to be able to integrate academically into a new setting while also demonstrating "hard," "soft," and "adaptive" skills (Sylvie, 2024).

Training and seminars for future teachers is supposed to be available to help students improve their intercultural competence. These training sessions should focus on interdisciplinary interaction, resolution of disputes, and cultural knowledge, preparing potential teachers to perform competently and respectfully in varied educational situations. Multidisciplinary learning activities, particularly programs for studying abroad, foreign internships, and teaching training programs in culturally diverse educational institutions, allow potential teachers to obtain comprehensive experience with different systems of education and methods of instruction. At the most basic level, "academic mobility of the future teacher is required as an indicator of a specialist, since not every mobile individual has the capacity to acquire the essential skills on themselves, establish novel concepts on their basis, and subsequently to impart this knowledge to other people" (Didenko et.al, 2021). Regardless of the growing popularity of academic mobility programs, the research potential of future teachers remains limited. Foreign higher education institutions still neglect to consider students' academic mobility very seriously (Teichler, 2015). As a component of academic mobility, future teachers' professional growth, and entry into the world of scientific cooperation, it is vital to encourage involvement in joint research projects with international partners. These rules persuade future teachers to pursue academic mobility and to share best practices in education. The collaboration would allow students to develop novel teaching approaches, improve the global reputation of teacher education programs, and advance the professional growth of future teachers. Research cooperation assists a student in overcoming the "ongoing global challenges" around the future teacher and will prepare them for academic mobility (Pfingsthorn, 2017). Organizing networking events, conferences, and symposia allows potential teachers to connect with like-minded students, scholars, and educational leaders from around the world. These experiences allow them to form professional relationships, exchange ideas, and stay up to date on the latest advancements in education. Furthermore, cultural competence is required for potential instructors to properly use diverse educational settings. Future teachers should be compassionate, adaptable, and sensitive to the

diverse cultural norms, languages, and methodologies of instruction encountered throughout academic mobility programs. Cultural sensitivity promotes meaningful cross-cultural contacts and trains future teachers to participate productively in a variety of learning situations. The ability to succeed despite failure, deal with stress, and adjust to new situations enhances their academic preparedness while simultaneously fostering their development as individuals and professionals. It is critical to include sessions, classroom instruction, and experiences that can influence the future teacher's emotional resilience in the educational curriculum.

### Conclusion

In accordance with the research question stated in the article, a focus group interview was conducted with five students who had undergone academic mobility abroad, while making a theoretical analysis of the works of scientists. As a result, the challenges encountered during academic mobility were identified, and factors influencing future teachers' preparation for academic mobility were proposed. To prepare future teachers for academic mobility, a multidimensional approach is required, including institutional support, curricular integration,

professional development activities, and personal traits. Therefore, by providing various learning opportunities and creating comfortable surroundings, educational institutions encourage future teachers to thrive in multicultural environments, integrate global viewpoints, and make meaningful contributions to global education. We may foster a fresh generation of educators capable of meeting students' changing requirements in an interconnected world by making particular investments in future teacher preparation for academic mobility. Furthermore to the factors mentioned above, cultural competency, language skills, multidisciplinary knowledge, global awareness, and tolerance additionally have an impact on future teachers' academic mobility readiness.

By developing these qualities and providing a positive learning environment, we may effectively prepare future teachers to thrive in diverse educational contexts and contribute to the advancement of global education. One of the limitations encountered during the writing of the article was the absence of Kazakh conversion programs for audio recording of the focus group interview. Extensive information had to be manually typed and recorded. The article suggests holding a larger focus group interview to discuss the issue and thoroughly researching the scientific potential of academic mobility.

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**Автор туралы мәлімет:**

Ш.Б. Кадирсизова – КеАҚ Семей медицина университетінің Жалпы білім беру пәндері кафедрасының аға оқытушысы, PhD (Семей қаласы, Қазақстан, эл.пошта: [synar2024@mail.ru](mailto:synar2024@mail.ru))

**Сведения об авторе:**

Ш.Б. Кадирсизова – PhD, старший преподаватель кафедры общего образования, КАО «Семипалатинский медицинский университет» (г. Семей, Казахстан, эл. почта: [synar2024@mail.ru](mailto:synar2024@mail.ru))

**Information about the author:**

Sh.B. Kadirsizova – Senior lecturer of general education department, PhD, NAO Semey Medical University (Semey city, Kazakhstan, e-mail: [synar2024@mail.ru](mailto:synar2024@mail.ru))

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