

The Impact of Honours College on Student Development and Motivation

Nurlanov Sh¹, Absatova M², Kolumbayeva Sh³, Bilyalov D⁴

*National Center for the Development of Higher Education of Kazakhstan; Abai Kazakh
National Pedagogical University; Nazarbayev University*

Abstract

This study explores the impact of the Honours College at Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University on students' personal, professional, and academic development. Through a qualitative research approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 students to assess how participation in the Honours College influenced their intellectual growth, leadership skills, and career aspirations. The findings indicate that the programme significantly enhances students' critical thinking abilities, fosters leadership development, and reinforces cultural identity. Additionally, experiential learning, particularly through internships in specialised schools, emerged as a transformative component, equipping students with real-world skills and professional preparedness. Despite these benefits, students identified several challenges, including time constraints, difficulties balancing honours coursework with standard university requirements, and, in some cases, a lack of initial interest in the teaching profession. Furthermore, while the programme provided valuable opportunities for networking and skill-building, students expressed the need for stronger mentorship structures, improved curriculum integration, and greater flexibility in academic scheduling. This study underscores the importance of refining honours education to align more closely with student needs and career aspirations. Strengthening mentorship opportunities, enhancing interdisciplinary collaboration, and addressing logistical barriers can further improve the effectiveness of such programmes. By providing insights into the evolving landscape of honours education in Kazakhstan, this research contributes to broader discussions on optimising specialised academic pathways for high-achieving students in both national and international contexts.

Keywords: experiential learning, honours education, Kazakhstan, professional growth, student motivation