**Format of entrance examinations to higher educational institutions of Kazakhstan in the transition to 12-year education.**

1. **Entrance examinations to higher institutions: experience of the Republic of Kazakhstan**

World practice of testing technologies in determining the quality of students' knowledge is more than a century, but in Kazakhstan, such technologies were developed only in the early 90's of the last century. First of all, testing has been applied for the entrance exams to higher institutions. National testing center was established in 1992 which main task was to implement the testing for a selection system of university students.

In 1993, entrance exams were held in some universities of the country on a test basis. The widespread use of test technologies at entrance examinations began in 1994. Tests were conducted in the form of complex testing in seven school subjects with 20 test questions for each discipline. Those years National Testing Center formed the technology based on the use of tests with a choice of a single correct answer, special forms of optical scanners to input marker responses and specialized computer software.

Perspectives on quality of education in Kazakhstan are constantly improving. Past experience, achievement of colleagues from other countries, the development direction of the republic as a whole, and its system of education in particular are taken into account in the new developments.

In 2004, Common National Test (CNT) was introduced in the country which allowed to combine the final certification of school graduates with entrance exams to higher institution.

The purpose of introducing the CNT in Kazakhstan is the creation of an independent assessment of students’ learning achievements.

In accordance with regulations applicants for General Certificate of Secondary Education "Altyn Belgi", General Certificate of Secondary Education with honors, winners of national scientific competitions and school contests on general subjects current year are are mandatory to pass final certification in the form of CNT.

To date, the CNT is conducted in five subjects: Kazakh or Russian language (language of teaching), Mathematics, History of Kazakhstan, Kazakh language in schools with Russian language of teaching and Russian language in schools with Kazakh language teaching and one of the optional subjects, depending on the chosen specialty.

CNT is held on the basis of 154 points for testing, located in 105 regional centers and 49 universities. All items come with the necessary equipment (computers, scanners, printers and copiers), and established communication via the data network.

For high school graduates of previous years, college graduates, graduate schools who have not participated in CNT or graduated from schools abroad pass Complex Testing of Applicants.

Complex testing is conducted on the basis of testing points at will coming in the Kazakh and Russian languages ​​in the amount of secondary education curriculum in four subjects: Kazakh or Russian, History of Kazakhstan, Mathematics, and one elective subject.

The minimum number of grades required to participate in the contest or admission for paid education is 50 grades, for entering the national higher education for at least 70 grades, including at least 7 grades on profile subject (at least 10 grades in each art exam) in other subjects of CNT at least 4 grades.

In the case of the applicant gets less than 4 grades for one subject under CNT or CTA he is not allowed to be enrolled in the paid education or participation in the competition for the award of educational grants.

This is the case today with the admission of applicants to higher educational institutions.

**2. Entrance exams to higher institutions: a new format**

Having analyzed the world experience in assessing the quality of education National Testing Center provides to change the format of the entrance examinations to higher educational institutions of Kazakhstan as follows: final certification school and matriculation to be held separately.

The degree of centralization in the development of tools and conducting final testing of schoolchildren - mixed centralization, that is part of the exam to be conducted by the school, and some -by National Testing Center.

Regarding the entrance exams the change will be as follows – since 2015 we offer the **e**ntrance exams to higher institutions to be held in two stages:

• the first stage applicants will be tested on the test of formation of functional literacy;

• The second stage - the tests for examination on two major subjects in accordance with the chosen specialty.

These changes have been made in accordance with the President's message to the people of Kazakhstan, where the government charged with taking a five-year National Plan of Action for the development of students’ functional literacy.

Functional literacy includes the following elements such as: mathematical literacy, literacy in reading and writing, literacy in science, computer literacy, literacy for family life, legal literacy etc.

Knowledge, skills, on various subjects, which are filled with new content, then move on to a higher stage of development and the formation and converted to functional literacy and life skills are the fundamentals.

  This format of the entrance exams will be introduced in stages, therefore, 2013-2014 are to be experimental.

In 2013:

- Tests used in the first stage of entrance examinations to higher education will be used to test mathematical literacy, that is, assessment of the ability of applicants to carry out such mental operations as analysis, synthesis, generalization, comparison, assimilation etc.

In 2014:

- Tests of the first stage will be used for verification of formation of legal literacy.

Tests of the first stage will be referred to a general test, and it will include tests of time testing different types of literacy. They are: mathematical literacy, reading literacy and writing, information literacy, etc.

Reading literacy is understood as the ability of a people to comprehend written texts and reflection on them, to the use of their content in order to achieve their own goals, to participate actively in society. Thus, the term "reading literacy" has a broad meaning, and is estimated not as a technique of reading, but the ability of students to use reading as a means of acquiring new knowledge for further study.

"Mathematical literacy" - human ability to determine and understand the role of mathematics in the world in which he lives, to express well-founded mathematical judgments and to use mathematics as to meet present and future needs of the thinking citizen. The content of this notion precise as follows.

By mathematical literacy it is understood the ability of students to:

• identify problems that can be solved by means of mathematics;

• formulate these problems in the language of mathematics;

• solve these problems using mathematical knowledge and techniques;

• the methods used to analyze the decision;

• interpret the results in the perspective of the problem;

• formulate and write the final results of the solution of the problem.

Test items of the second stage of entrance examinations will be used to test subject knowledge on core subjects according to specialty.

According to the results of the abovementioned two-step entrance exam applicants on a competitive basis may qualify for a state grant to study at the universities of Kazakhstan.

One reason for choosing this area on the way to modernization of the education system of Kazakhstan were the results of Kazakhstani students in international comparative studies in education. These results are TIMSS-2007, PISA-2009.

As analysis of TIMSS-2007 students in 4 form in RK scored 549 grades in math, which is equivalent of medium level of mathematical preparation of schoolchildren. Mathematical research training within the TIMSS-2007 showed that the students of Kazakhstan perform well the task on application, and hampered in performing tasks on the knowledge and argument. This means that our students are not able to apply mathematical knowledge to solve various non-standard tasks, a loss to explain his decision, poorly oriented in the materials presented in different formats (tables, charts, drawings, diagrams, etc.). The highest in the study, that is advanced to 19% of the students of RK.

Science training students figure slightly lower than the mathematical training, and it is equal to 533 grades, which also corresponds to the average level of training of students in this field. According to the results of students in this area you can say the Kazakh students do not know how to apply their knowledge of natural processes and relationships to perform custom tasks. Advanced level reached only 10% of the students of RK.

In studies on PISA-2009 reading literacy Kazakh students scored 390 grades, which corresponds to the level of I out of six. Tasks at this level require the student organizing one or more distinct parts, determining the main themes of the text, or to create a simple relationship between the information in the text, using daily knowledge. This means that the 15-year-olds in our country are not able to perform tasks that require the use of subject knowledge in unusual situations, a deep understanding of one or more texts and to integrate information from more than one test, learning unfamiliar material, based on the information, and so etc.

Subject to errors of measurement the students’ results of RK correspond to 59 position among 65 countries.

In the PISA-2009 six levels of knowledge of mathematics were used. In mathematical literacy students of RK scored 405 grades, which correspond to one out of six. Assignments at this level are designed so that all relevant information is presented in a completed form, the question is formulated clearly. And to perform such tasks requires students ability to apply conventional methods. Therefore, students are not able to carry out tasks requiring mental exercise such operations as analysis, synthesis, comparison, assimilation, generalization and does not know how to develop strategies for new, not previously encountered situations.

According to the results of mathematical literacy of our students meet the 53rd position of 65 participating countries.

All of this suggests that knowledge-orientation training in Kazakhstan does not allow the walls of the school to form a broad skills spectrum. School children, having a large amount of theoretical knowledge, can not fully use this knowledge to solve various problems in life, do not know how to use the available knowledge in unusual situations.

All abovementioned suggest that results and existing school in Kazakhstan experience in teaching children, the government has developed a national plan of action to develop functional literacy students. According to the plan, by 2013 there will be changes in state compulsory standards of secondary education curricula, textbooks and educational-methodical complexes. Format and content of monitoring studies will be educationally modified as well.