

Hui Xin 

Al-Farabi business school, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan
E-mail: hu.huixin@mail.ru

WORKING CONDITIONS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS AT UNIVERSITIES IN CHINA AND KAZAKHSTAN

Abstract. This study aims to compare the working conditions and career prospects of university teachers in China and Kazakhstan. It also seeks to identify the factors influencing their professional development amid the modernization of higher education systems. The scientific significance lies in providing deeper insights into how to support academic staff and enhance human resource policies within higher education. For the first time, it offers a thorough comparison of institutional, organizational, and socio-economic factors shaping faculty careers in both countries. Additionally, the SWOT analysis method is applied to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of existing faculty development models. The article addresses key scientific topics such as the legislative framework, educational policy, working conditions, career advancement mechanisms, and motivators for teachers' professional growth. Practically, the findings can guide improvements in teacher support systems, optimize HR management, and boost university competitiveness. The research methodology combines comparative analysis, review of scientific literature and regulatory documents through content analysis, along with structural-functional and system analysis approaches. The results of the study demonstrated that the academic career system in China is characterized by a high degree of centralization and an emphasis on quantitative indicators of scientific productivity, such as publications and participation in government scientific programs. At the same time, there is great flexibility in the work of institutes in Kazakhstan, but there are still problems associated with a lack of resources, high academic workload and limited opportunities for scientific development.

Keywords: teachers, career growth, working conditions, university, educational policy, China, Kazakhstan

Introduction

The modern higher education system plays a crucial role in developing human capital and boosting the scientific capabilities of nations. A particular focus is placed on the working conditions and career opportunities for educators, as the quality of education heavily relies on their professional growth, job satisfaction, and motivation. Amid globalization and the rapid digital transformation of education, both China and Kazakhstan are actively reforming their university systems to enhance competitiveness and better integrate into the global academic community. This topic is especially relevant because it sheds light on the working environment for university professors in these two countries. Despite differences in culture, economy, and administration, China and Kazakhstan share common challenges such as heavy workloads, limited funding, and insufficient opportunities for research advancement and international collaboration. There are strategies available to raise the profession's prestige and foster a supportive academic atmosphere. This study aims to compare the working conditions and career prospects of university professors in China and Kazakhstan, identifying their similarities and unique traits while proposing effective approaches to support academic staff.

The study offered a comprehensive examination of the legal framework, statistical data, and academic policies, alongside an evaluation of subjective elements like teachers' job satisfaction and career goals. Analysis of the gathered information revealed that teachers' professional development is shaped not only by institutional factors but also by governmental education policies. Employing a

comparative approach combined with system analysis allowed for a detailed evaluation of teachers' current conditions, identification of challenges, and suggestions for effective interventions. The research methodology draws on cross-country analysis and incorporates sociological and political-economic viewpoints, making the findings particularly valuable to both researchers and education practitioners. Investigating teachers' working conditions and career opportunities is vital for understanding the quality of the educational environment and gauging the long-term viability of the university system overall. Socio-economic influences, the extent of financial backing for scientific research and education, along with political priorities, directly impact teachers' status, their professional training, and motivation for advancement. Amid increasing global competition and heightened expectations for universities' scientific output, assessing how well the systems in China and Kazakhstan provide teachers with not only comfortable working environments but also sustainable career paths is especially important.

Materials and methods

This research focuses on the working conditions and career development opportunities available to teaching staff in higher education institutions in China and Kazakhstan. The primary sources of information included regulatory documents governing higher education, strategic development plans of universities, official statistics, and findings from international comparative studies such as the QS World University Rankings, Times Higher Education, and OECD reports. The study employed comparative and SWOT analyses to uncover shared traits and differences in how the two countries approach creating favorable work environments and supporting professional growth for educators. Additionally, content analysis of official documents helped pinpoint key government policies and institutional frameworks regulating educational activities. To organize the data collected, structural and functional approaches were applied to examine the link between working conditions and student academic outcomes. The selected methods allowed for a thorough investigation using publicly accessible and official data, ensuring the findings are objective and reproducible.

Discussion

In Kazakhstan and China, there's ongoing research into the working conditions and career prospects of university faculty, driven by updates in higher education systems and rising expectations for academic staff. Reviewing scientific literature reveals that most studies focus on how educational policies, promotion systems, and professional development impact the quality of higher education. Kazakhstani researchers, including S. G. Abdirayimova and colleagues, have made notable contributions to understanding academic careers. Their work, "Young scientists of Kazakhstan: Experiences of building an academic career," explores how young teachers and researchers develop (Abdirayimova G. S. et al., 2019:120). A sociological survey in this study highlighted that access to scientific research, involvement in international projects, and institutional support play key roles in career advancement. At the same time, challenges such as heavy academic workloads, insufficient research funding, and limited academic mobility opportunities were identified as barriers. The authors recommend expanding support programs for young scientists and fostering environments conducive to research to make academic careers more appealing. Additionally, the research by Aitjanov N. et al., Yelubayeva P., Tashkyn E., and Berkinbayeva G. provides an in-depth look at the professional development of teachers (Aitjanov N. et al., 2025:126; Yelubayeva P., Tashkyn E., Berkinbayeva G., 2023:14311). Their analysis of professional training options in Kazakhstani universities revealed a strong demand for continuing education programs for faculty. A survey of over six hundred teachers indicates that the current professional development system does not fully address contemporary requirements associated with digitalization and the internationalization of education.

The researchers conclude that updating professional standards for teachers and enhancing mechanisms for continuous professional training are necessary.

D. Belkhozhaeva, E. Buribaev, and J. Khamzina examined issues concerning labor relations and working conditions among teaching staff (Belkhozhaeva D., Buribaev Y., Khamzina Z., 2024:25).

The researchers observe that during Kazakhstan's reform period, universities gained increased independence, while expectations for teacher effectiveness became more stringent.

The study emphasizes that successful academic career development depends on the transparency of job evaluation mechanisms, the stability of employment relationships, and the adequacy of social guarantees.

The authors conclude that improving university personnel policies and establishing a more reliable teacher support system are necessary.

Yulian Zheng, a Chinese researcher, investigates the challenges associated with teachers' professional development (Zheng Y., 2023:5).

Zheng's research examines educators at university leadership training centers and concludes that they are frequently required to engage in research, teaching, administration, and consulting simultaneously, resulting in increased workloads.

The study reveals that career advancement criteria in Chinese universities primarily emphasize quantitative measures of scientific productivity, often neglecting teachers' actual achievements. Zheng argues for improvements in the academic evaluation system.

Chaolin Tian, Xunyi Jiang, Yurui Huang, and colleagues studied the academic labor market in China (Tian C. et al., 2026:379). Their analysis of scientists' career paths identified a distinct hierarchy among universities, significantly influencing employment and promotion opportunities for professors.

The study found that graduates from less prestigious universities face greater challenges securing positions at leading institutions. The authors conclude that academic careers in China are characterized by intense competition and a strong dependence on university reputation.

Yurui Huang, Xueseng Chen, and colleagues examine factors influencing motivation for scientific activity and the recruitment of young professionals into academia (Huang Y. et al., 2024:517). The authors analyze the impact of government talent-attraction programs on scientists' professional development.

The authors conclude that additional grants, research funding, and institutional support enhance academic productivity and accelerate faculty career progression. Consequently, government policy plays a crucial role in shaping a competitive academic community in China.

A review of the literature indicates that in both countries, teachers' career advancement is closely associated with their scientific output and the quality of support provided by educational institutions and government policies.

In China, the academic system is more centralized, and evaluation criteria for teachers are stricter. The incentive system for scientific engagement is also more developed. In contrast, Kazakhstan emphasizes expanding university autonomy and improving conditions for teachers' professional development.

These differences underscore the importance of ongoing comparative analysis of support mechanisms for academic staff and the identification of effective strategies to enhance the attractiveness of the teaching profession.

Research results

The comparative study identified both similarities and differences in the academic landscapes of China and Kazakhstan. Both countries prioritize increasing scholarly output, professional development, and participation in international academic activities. In China, career advancement is governed by a structured system with clearly defined criteria, encompassing teaching, research, and participation in national and party initiatives. In contrast, Kazakhstan's system is more flexible and less standardized, resulting in varying interpretations of assessment criteria across institutions (table

1).

Table 1 – Comparative analysis of working conditions and career growth of teachers in China and Kazakhstan

Comparison Criteria	China	Kazakhstan
Career Advancement System	Formalized, based on clear criteria and performance indicators	More flexible, often depends on internal university policies
Faculty Evaluation Criteria	Publications in international journals, participation in national projects	Publications, teaching workload, often without standardized evaluation
Government Policy	Centralized, supported through large-scale national initiatives	Decentralized, focused on modernization and digitalization of education
Impact on Research Activity	Strong support, targeted grants available, performance-based incentives	Limited resources, heavy workload, middle level of grant-based support
International Involvement	Active participation in global academic projects and university networks	Limited involvement, developing cooperation with foreign universities
Common Challenges	Administrative overload and high competition	Imbalance between teaching and research activities

Analysis indicates that Chinese higher education policy prioritizes support for research-intensive universities, including the “211”, “985”, and “Double First-Class” programs (Krishna V. V., Zhang X., Jiang Y., 2025:163). These initiatives are designed to enhance the global rankings of Chinese universities.

Faculty members within these initiatives are evaluated according to multiple criteria, including publication counts in high-impact, internationally recognized journals such as Scopus and Web of Science, success in government-funded research projects, and participation in international academic collaborations.

Career advancement at institutions such as Beijing University or Tsinghua University requires faculty to deliver lectures and publish three to five articles in Q1 journals over several years (Tie Y., Wang, 2022:101769). Additional considerations include mentoring graduate students, participating in conferences, and meeting national research objectives. This system fosters competition among educators, especially at leading universities.

Staff rotation is encouraged, with faculty members temporarily transferring to other universities, undertaking internships in industry, or participating in international research projects. These measures are intended to renew the talent pool and support professional development.

In Kazakhstan, the government adopts a distinct approach, emphasizing modernization through credit-based learning, digital platforms, and enhanced university infrastructure. For instance, the “Digitalization of Education” program is currently being implemented under the supervision of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Kazakhstan (Nurbekova, Nurbekov, 2023: 220).

Although the government establishes the overarching strategy, individual universities in Kazakhstan determine their own faculty evaluation criteria. This autonomy results in diverse practices across institutions. For example, Nazarbayev University maintains rigorous standards for research and publication, whereas other universities prioritize teaching and administrative reporting (Bayanbayeva A., 2026:4).

Faculty at regional universities in Kazakhstan frequently balance academic and administrative

responsibilities, which restricts opportunities for research and professional growth. Teaching loads can reach 800 to 900 hours annually, alongside mentoring, curriculum development, and participation in accreditation processes. In contrast to China, where government support for publication and grants is more accessible, Kazakh faculty often finance their own publication activities.

Applying the structural and functional approach facilitates examination of the relationship between educators' working conditions and university performance. In Chinese universities, academic output is closely linked to institutional support, including grants, scholarships, and incentives. Conversely, in Kazakh universities, faculty often balance academic, administrative, and extracurricular duties, which can impede scientific productivity. These contrasts underscore the need for enhanced institutional support and clearer career trajectories in Kazakhstan.

At Tsinghua University, researchers benefit from targeted institutional support, including annual government grants from the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC), scholarships for international internships, and incentives for publishing in prestigious journals (Wang S. et al., 2025:1587). The university also reduces teaching loads for active researchers, resulting in increased publication output, higher citation rates, and improved global rankings (QS, THE).

Kazakh National Pedagogical University (KazNPU), one of Kazakhstan's oldest and most respected pedagogical institutions (Berikkhanova A., Azimbayeva G., Mukhamedkhanova A., 2024:120), faces challenges including high faculty workloads and significant administrative responsibilities. Nevertheless, the university is undertaking efforts to modernize education and enhance teaching and learning quality.

Faculty at KazNPU typically teach 18 to 24 hours per week, in addition to contributing to curriculum development and preparing reports for accreditation and state certification (Sarmurzin Y., 2024:103142). They also engage in university activities such as community service and career guidance.

A significant challenge for KazNPU faculty is the limited availability of internal research funding, as most resources are allocated to larger research institutes and technical universities. While incentives exist for publishing in international databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, these often fail to cover the full publication costs (Kudaibergenova R. et al., 2022:454). Consequently, faculty members frequently prioritize pedagogical and methodological responsibilities over research activities.

Findings indicate that the educational systems in China and Kazakhstan are at distinct developmental stages. China is establishing a highly structured and centralized academic system focused on international scientific excellence, whereas Kazakhstan maintains elements of the post-Soviet system, characterized by standardized requirements and limited academic opportunities.

These divergent approaches result in varying working conditions, levels of government and university support, and career opportunities. To comprehensively assess the strategic advantages, risks, and future prospects for academic staff, a comparative analysis utilizing the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) framework is recommended (in table 2).

Table 2 – SWOT analysis of working conditions and career growth of university professors in China

Strengths	Weaknesses
Clear career structure, government-funded grants, strong motivation for publishing.	Excessive reporting workload, pressure from ranking systems.
Opportunities	Threats
Joint research projects between universities of both countries.	Potential brain drain of qualified faculty to the private sector or abroad. Decreasing motivation due to administrative

Growth of international academic mobility. Development of digital platforms for research and teaching.	burden and lack of transparent career mechanisms
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Table 3 – SWOT analysis of working conditions and career growth of university professors in Kazakhstan

Strengths	Weaknesses
Institutional flexibility, focus on digitalization and modernization of educational standards.	High teaching load, inconsistent evaluation of faculty work, weak grant support.
Opportunities	Threats
Cooperation in the field of scientific research between higher educational institutions of the two countries. An increase in the number of students and teachers who participate in international academic exchanges. Creation and development of digital tools for scientific research and educational process.	The risk of losing experienced faculty to the private sector or other countries. The decline in enthusiasm due to excessive administrative tasks and the absence of clear career paths.

As a result of the SWOT analysis, key aspects of working conditions and career opportunities for university professors in China and Kazakhstan were identified. An analysis of the strengths revealed that both countries have certain advantages for developing academic careers.

China maintains a structured career development system grounded in transparent criteria for evaluating scientific activities, alongside a robust government funding system for research and grants. These factors contribute to increased publication output and incentivize faculty to pursue scientific achievement.

In contrast, universities in Kazakhstan demonstrate greater institutional flexibility and actively implement digital technologies. This modernization of educational standards facilitates the adaptation of the higher education system to contemporary requirements.

Despite these strengths, the study also identified significant drawbacks in both countries.

The Chinese training model has some unique features: it requires a significant amount of administrative work, the preparation of numerous reports, and constant attention to international and national rankings. All this can potentially have a negative impact on the quality of education and the well-being of teachers.

In Kazakhstan, some of the main challenges remain the heavy academic workload, lack of a unified system for assessing teacher effectiveness, and limited opportunities for receiving research grants. These issues can reduce teachers' motivation to engage in scientific work and slow their professional development.

Recent research indicates significant potential for enhancing cooperation between China and Kazakhstan in the field of higher education.

The implementation of joint scientific initiatives, increased mobility of teachers and researchers within the academic community, as well as the introduction of digital tools for organizing scientific and educational activities, can create additional opportunities for improving the quality of education and enhancing the scientific potential of universities.

Special attention should be given to the exchange of best practices in academic career management and the development of support mechanisms for teaching staff. Nevertheless, several

challenges may adversely affect the sustainable development of the university sector.

Among the most significant threats is the outflow of qualified teachers and researchers to private companies or foreign educational institutions. Additionally, a decrease in motivation for professional development can occur due to excessive administrative burdens and insufficient transparency regarding career prospects.

Over time, these factors may diminish the scientific capacity of universities and reduce the competitiveness of national higher education systems. Consequently, improving working conditions, expanding opportunities for professional growth, and developing effective support mechanisms for faculty should be prioritized in educational policies in both China and Kazakhstan.

Conclusion

A comparison of working conditions and professional development for university teachers in China and Kazakhstan shows that, while both aim to improve higher education, each country uses different strategies to create a positive academic environment.

China uses a centralized system with clear teacher evaluation criteria, strong government grants, and programs to encourage research. These efforts aim to make Chinese universities more competitive internationally.

Kazakhstan focuses more on university independence, using digital technology in teaching, and updating educational standards. However, teachers there still face heavy workloads, limited research funding, and unclear career paths.

The SWOT analysis helped assess the strengths and weaknesses of each system and pointed out possible opportunities and risks for building sustainable academic careers.

The study demonstrates that the success of teachers' professional development depends on financial rewards and evaluation systems, but also on the academic environment, access to research resources, chances for international collaboration, and support from their institutions. An environment that fosters the development of scientific potential, academic mobility, and innovative activities among teachers. This will enhance the quality of higher education.

This research helps us better understand how academic careers develop as higher education systems change.

The results add to current studies on university staff management and show how different factors, like institutions and the economy, affect teachers' professional growth.

This study also adds to discussions about modern academic jobs and career paths in countries with different education systems.

This research can help government agencies, university leaders, and policymakers improve support systems for teachers.

The study's findings and suggestions can be used to create better professional development programs, improve teacher evaluations, increase grant opportunities, and build stronger strategies for academic growth.

In the future, these findings could help raise the status of teaching, strengthen university staff, encourage international collaboration, and make national higher education systems more competitive worldwide.

Therefore, to establish a modern and globally competitive higher education system in both China and Kazakhstan, both countries need a balanced academic career framework. This should focus on long-term talent development, growing scientific potential, raising the status of teachers, and connecting universities more closely with the global education and research community.

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Хуэй Синь

*Әл-Фараби бизнес мектебі, Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық
университеті. Алматы, Қазақстан
E-mail: hu.huixin@mail.ru*

**ҚЫТАЙ ЖӘНЕ ҚАЗАҚСТАН УНИВЕРСИТЕТТЕРІНДЕГІ
ОҚЫТУШЫЛАРДЫҢ ЕҢБЕК ЖАҒДАЙЛАРЫ МЕН МАНСАПТЫҚ ӨСУІ**

Аңдатпа. Зерттеудің міндеті-Қытай мен Қазақстан университеттеріндегі оқытушылардың жұмыс жағдайлары мен мансаптық өсу перспективаларын салыстыру. Сондай-ақ, жоғары білім беру жүйелерін жаңғырту жағдайында олардың кәсіби дамуына әсер ететін факторларды анықтау қажет. Жұмыстың ғылыми құндылығы-бұл академиялық персоналды қалай қолдау керектігін жақсы түсінуге және жоғары білім саласындағы кадрлық саясатты қалай жақсартуға болатынын анықтауға көмектеседі. Зерттеу алғаш рет екі елдегі оқытушылық мансапқа әсер ететін институционалдық, ұйымдастырушылық және әлеуметтік-экономикалық аспектілерді жан-жақты салыстыруды жүргізеді. Профессорлық-оқытушылық құрамды дамытудың қолданыстағы модельдерінің күшті және әлсіз жақтарын бағалау үшін SWOT талдау әдісі де қолданылады. Мақалада заңнамалық базаны, білім беру саясатын, жұмыс жағдайларын, мансаптық өсу тетіктерін және оқытушыларды кәсіби дамуға ынталандыратын факторларды зерттеуге байланысты негізгі ғылыми мәселелер қарастырылады. Зерттеудің практикалық құндылығы мынада: алынған нәтижелер оқытушыларды қолдау жүйесін жақсарту, адам ресурстарын басқаруды оңтайландыру және университеттердің бәсекеге қабілеттілігін арттыру шараларын әзірлеу үшін пайдаланылуы мүмкін. Зерттеудің негізі салыстырмалы талдауды, мазмұнды талдау арқылы ғылыми еңбектер мен нормативтік құжаттарды зерттеуді, сондай-ақ құрылымдық-функционалдық тәсіл мен жүйелік талдау әдістерін қолдануды қамтитын әдістеме болып табылады. Зерттеу нәтижелері Қытайдағы академиялық мансап жүйесі орталықтандырудың жоғары деңгейімен және басылымдар мен мемлекеттік ғылыми бағдарламаларға қатысу сияқты ғылыми өнімділіктің сандық көрсеткіштеріне баса назар аударатындығын көрсетті. Сонымен қатар, Қазақстанда институттар жұмысында үлкен икемділік байқалады, бірақ ресурстардың жетіспеушілігімен, жоғары оқу жүктемесімен және ғылыми даму үшін шектеулі мүмкіндіктермен байланысты проблемалар әлі де бар.

Кілт сөздер: оқытушылар, мансаптық өсу, еңбек жағдайлары, университет, білім беру саясаты, Қытай, Қазақстан

Хуэй Синь

Бизнес школа Аль Фараби, Казахский национальный университет

им. Аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан

E-mail: hu.huixin@mail.ru

УСЛОВИЯ ТРУДА И КАРЬЕРНЫЙ РОСТ ПРЕПОДАВАТЕЛЕЙ В УНИВЕРСИТЕТАХ КИТАЯ И КАЗАХСТАНА

Аннотация. Задача исследования – сопоставить условия работы и перспективы карьерного роста преподавателей в университетах Китая и Казахстана. Также необходимо выявить факторы, которые влияют на их профессиональное развитие в условиях модернизации систем высшего образования. Научная ценность работы состоит в том, что она помогает лучше понять, как поддерживать академический персонал, и определить, как можно улучшить кадровую политику в сфере высшего образования. В исследовании впервые проводится комплексное сравнение институциональных, организационных и социально-экономических аспектов, которые влияют на карьеру преподавателей в двух странах. Также применяется метод SWOT-анализа для оценки сильных и слабых сторон существующих моделей развития профессорско-преподавательского состава. В статье рассматриваются основные научные вопросы, связанные с изучением законодательной базы, образовательной политики, условий работы, механизмов карьерного роста и факторов, мотивирующих преподавателей к профессиональному развитию. Практическая ценность исследования заключается в том, что полученные результаты могут быть использованы для разработки мер по улучшению системы поддержки преподавателей, оптимизации управления человеческими

ресурсами и повышения конкурентоспособности университетов.. В основе исследования лежит методология, которая включает в себя сравнительный анализ, изучение научных трудов и нормативных документов с помощью контент-анализа, а также применение структурно-функционального подхода и методов системного анализа. Результаты исследования продемонстрировали, что система академической карьеры в Китае отличается высокой степенью централизации и акцентом на количественные показатели научной продуктивности, такие как публикации и участие в государственных научных программах. В то же время, в Казахстане наблюдается большая гибкость в работе институтов, но всё ещё существуют проблемы, связанные с нехваткой ресурсов, высокой учебной нагрузкой и ограниченными возможностями для научного развития.

Ключевые слова: преподаватели, карьерный рост, условия труда, университет, образовательная политика, Китай, Казахстан

Information about the author(s).

Hui Xin – 3rd year Doctoral Student, DBA, Al Farabi business school, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

Автор туралы мәлімет:

Хуэй Синь – Әл Фараби бизнес мектебінің 3 курс докторанты, Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан

Информация об авторе:

Хуэй Синь – докторант 3 курса Бизнес школы Аль-фараби, Казахский национальный университет имени Аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан

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