

## Becoming a Teacher in Kazakhstan

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**Abstract :** Becoming a teacher is a journey with significant learning experiences. Exploring teachers' lives and experiences can provide much-needed insights into the multiple realities of teaching. Teachers' stories through qualitative narrative studies help understand and appreciate the complexities of the socio-political, economic and practical realities facing teachers. Events and experiences, both past and present, that take place at home, school, and in the broader social sphere help to shape these teachers' lives and careers. Researchers and educators share the responsibility of listening to these teachers' stories and life experiences and being sensitive to their voices in order to develop effective models for teacher development. A better understanding of how teachers learn to become teachers can help teacher educators prepare more effective teacher education programs. This paper is based on qualitative research which includes individual and focus group interviews, as well as autobiography stories of Master of Science in School Leadership students at Graduate School of Education of Nazarbayev University. Twenty five MSc students from across Kazakhstan reflected on their professional journey and wrote their professional autobiographies as teachers. Their autobiographies capture the richness of their experiences and beliefs as a teacher, but also serve as window to understand broader socio-economic and political contexts where these teachers live and work. The study also provides an understanding of the systemic and socio-economic challenges of teachers in the context of post-Soviet Kazakhstan. It helps the reader better understand how wider societal forces interact and frame the development of teachers. The paper presents the findings from these stories of MSc students and offers some practical and policy implications for teacher preparation and teacher development.

**Keywords :** becoming a teacher, Kazakhstan, teacher stories, teacher development

**Conference Title :** ICES 2015 : International Conference on Education Systems

**Conference Location :** Sydney, Australia

**Conference Dates :** December 10-11, 2015