

Утегенова Бибигуль Мазановна – педагогикалық ғылымдарының кандидаты, профессор, Ахмет Байтұрсынұлы атындағы Қостанай өңірлік университеті, Қазақстан Республикасы, 110000, Қостанай қ., Байтұрсынов көш. 47, тел.: +77054546165, e-mail: bibi1960@mail.ru.

Туякова Лиза Бериковна* – докторант, Евразийский национальный университет им. Л.Н. Гумилева, Республика Казахстан, 010000 г.Астана, ул. Сатбаева, 2, тел.: +77017878146, e-mail: tuyakova.liza89@gmail.com.

Исмагулова Гульнар Кульмухамбетовна – кандидат филологических наук, профессор, Евразийский национальный университет им. Л.Н. Гумилева, Республика Казахстан, 010000 г. Астана, ул. Сатбаева, 2, тел.: +77051671403, e-mail: gulnar.ism@mail.ru.

Утегенова Бибигуль Мазановна – кандидат педагогических наук, профессор кафедры педагогики, психологии и специального образования, Костанайский региональный университет имени Ахмет Байтұрсынұлы, Казахстан, 110000, г.Костанай, ул. Байтұрсынова 47, тел.: +77054546165, e-mail: bibi1960@mail.ru.

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PREPARING FUTURE PSYCHOLOGISTS: INSIGHTS FROM EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN SLOVAKIA AND KAZAKHSTAN

Urdabayeva L. Y.* – Candidate of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor, Head of the Department of psychology, Akhmet Baitursynuly Kostanay Regional University, Kostanay, Republic of Kazakhstan.

Andrea Letašiová – PhD, Psychologist, Doctor of Psychology, University of Trnava, Trnava, Slovakia.

Rakhmatulina A.R. – Master of Pedagogical Sciences, Senior Lecturer of the Department of psychology, Akhmet Baitursynuly Kostanay Regional University, Kostanay, Republic of Kazakhstan.

The relevance of this study lies in the growing global need to enhance the quality and compatibility of psychology education across different countries, particularly in light of the Bologna Process and increasing international academic mobility. The purpose of this research is to conduct a comparative analysis of psychology training programs at the Akhmet Baitursynuly Kostanay Regional University (Kazakhstan) and University of Trnava (Slovakia). The main objectives are to examine the historical development of psychology education, analyze the structure and content of undergraduate programs, identify differences in admission procedures, assess graduate employment pathways, and explore opportunities for further education. The research uses a qualitative comparative methodology, including document analysis, review of official university curricula, and national education policy sources. The study highlights fundamental differences in program structure: Kazakhstan follows a four-year bachelor model with early entry into the workforce, while Slovakia implements a two-tier system with a mandatory master's degree and subsequent supervised practice. The scientific significance lies in revealing how cultural, historical, and institutional contexts shape psychology education. Practically, the findings can inform curriculum reforms, international partnerships, and mutual recognition of qualifications. This research contributes to the field of comparative education and psychology by offering evidence-based recommendations for improving the training and professional readiness of psychology graduates in both countries.

Key words: psychology education, Kazakhstan, Slovakia, practice, admission, employment.

БОЛАШАҚ ПСИХОЛОГТАРДЫ ДАЯРЛАУ: СЛОВАКИЯ МЕН ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ БІЛІМ БЕРУ БАҒДАРЛАМАЛАРЫНЫҢ ТӘЖІРИБЕСІ

Урдабаева Л.Е.* – тарих ғылымдарының кандидаты, қауымдастырылған профессор (доцент), психология кафедрасының меңгерушісі, Ахмет Байтұрсынұлы атындағы Қостанай өңірлік университеті, Қостанай қ., Қазақстан Республикасы.

Летяшиова А. – PhD, психолог, Трнава университетінің психология ғылымдарының докторы, Трнава қ., Словакия.

Рахматулина А.Р. – педагогика ғылымдарының магистрі, психология кафедрасының аға оқытушысы, Ахмет Байтұрсынұлы атындағы Қостанай өңірлік университеті, Қостанай қ., Қазақстан Республикасы.

Зерттеудің өзектілігі Болон үдерісінің жүзеге асырылуы және академиялық ұтқырлықтың кеңеюі жағдайында әртүрлі елдердегі психологиялық білімнің сапасы мен өзара үйлесімділігін арттыру қажеттілігінің өсуімен айқындалады. Зерттеудің мақсаты – Ахмет Байтұрсынұлы

атындағы Қостанай өңірлік университетінде (Қазақстан) және Трнава университетінде (Словакия) психологтарды даярлау бағдарламаларына салыстырмалы талдау жүргізу. Негізгі міндеттері - психологиялық білім беруді дамытудың тарихи аспектілерін зерделеу, бакалавриаттың құрылымы мен мазмұнын талдау, қабылдау шарттарын салыстыру, түлектердің жұмысқа орналасу перспективалары мен білім беруді жалғастыру мүмкіндіктерін бағалау. Зерттеу әдістемесі жоғары білім беру саласындағы білім беру бағдарламаларын, университеттердің ресми құжаттарын және нормативтік актілерді зерделеуді қамтитын сапалы салыстырмалы талдауға негізделген. Талдау барысында негізгі айырмашылықтар анықталды: Қазақстанда түлектерге оқу бітіргеннен кейін бірден жұмысқа орналасуға мүмкіндік беретін төрт жылдық бакалавриат бағдарламасы жүзеге асырылады, ал Словакияда міндетті түрде магистратураны аяқтауды және кейінгі супервизиядан өтуді талап ететін екі деңгейлі жүйе қолданылады. Жұмыстың ғылыми жаңалығы-мәдени, тарихи және институционалдық факторлардың психологтарды даярлау жүйесіне әсерін анықтау. Зерттеудің практикалық маңыздылығы оқу бағдарламаларын жаңғырту және халықаралық академиялық ынтымақтастықты дамыту үшін алынған қорытындыларды қолдану мүмкіндігі болып табылады. Жұмыс салыстырмалы педагогика мен психологияның дамуына ықпал етеді.

Түйінді сөздер: психологиялық білім, Қазақстан, Словакия, практика, оқу, жұмыс.

ПОДГОТОВКА БУДУЩИХ ПСИХОЛОГОВ: ОПЫТ ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫХ ПРОГРАММ В СЛОВАКИИ И КАЗАХСТАНЕ

Урдабаева Л.Е.* – кандидат исторических наук, ассоциированный профессор (доцент), заведующая кафедрой психологии, Костанайский региональный университет имени Ахмет Байтұрсынұлы, г. Костанай, Республика Казахстан.

Летяшиова А. – PhD, психолог, доктор психологических наук, Трнавский университет, г. Трнава, Словакия.

Рахматулина А.Р. – магистр педагогических наук, старший преподаватель кафедры психологии, Костанайский региональный университет имени Ахмет Байтұрсынұлы, г. Костанай, Республика Казахстан.

Актуальность данного исследования обусловлена растущей необходимостью повышения качества и совместимости психологического образования в различных странах, особенно в условиях реализации Болонского процесса и расширения академической мобильности. Цель исследования – провести сравнительный анализ программ подготовки психологов в Костанайском региональном университете имени Ахмет Байтұрсынұлы (Казахстан) и Трнавском университете (Словакия). Основные задачи – изучить исторические аспекты развития психологического образования, проанализировать структуру и содержание бакалавриата, сравнить условия поступления, оценить перспективы трудоустройства выпускников и возможности продолжения образования. Методология исследования основана на качественном сравнительном анализе, включающем изучение образовательных программ, официальных документов университетов и нормативных актов в сфере высшего образования. В ходе анализа выявлены ключевые различия: в Казахстане реализуется четырёхлетняя программа бакалавриата с возможностью трудоустройства сразу после выпуска, тогда как в Словакии действует двухуровневая система с обязательным завершением магистратуры и последующей супервизией. Научная новизна работы заключается в выявлении влияния культурных, исторических и институциональных факторов на систему подготовки психологов. Практическая значимость исследования заключается в возможности применения полученных выводов для модернизации учебных программ и развития международного академического сотрудничества. Работа вносит вклад в развитие сравнительной педагогики и психологии.

Ключевые слова: психологическое образование, Казахстан, Словакия, практика, поступление, трудоустройство

Introduction. The preparation of professional psychologists is a critical component of national educational systems, reflecting broader cultural, social, and academic priorities. This article explores and compares the structure and delivery of psychology programs at two institutions: Akhmet Baitursynuly Kostanay Regional University in Kazakhstan and University of Trnava in Slovakia. Through a comparative lens, the study examines the length and organization of studies, graduate employment outcomes, admission procedures, entrance exams, academic schedules, and opportunities for further education. This analysis provides valuable insights into how future psychologists are trained within these two distinct contexts by identifying both commonalities and differences. The findings may serve as a foundation for educational reform, bilateral cooperation, and curriculum development in psychology education.

The development of psychology education in Kazakhstan began in 1947 with the establishment of the Department of Psychology and Logic at the Faculty of Philology of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University [1]. This initiative was led by academician Tolegen Tazhibayev (1910–1964), a prominent Kazakh psychology

and pedagogy figure. Under his leadership, the department became the first in the country to train national specialists in psychology. Tazhibayev's contributions laid the foundation for advancing psychological science in Kazakhstan [2]. Akhmet Baitursynuly Kostanay regional university was founded on August 21, 1939, as the Kostanay Teachers' Institute. Upon its foundation, the institute consisted of two faculties: Physics and Mathematics, and Natural Geography. Additionally, a preparatory department and a correspondence (distance learning) sector were introduced to expand access to teacher training. Nowadays, there are academic divisions such as the Pedagogical Institute, the Faculty of Economics and Law, the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Energy and Information Technology, the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, and the Research Institute of Applied Biotechnology [3]. The specialty "Psychology" has been open since 1992. Currently, the Department of Psychology graduates specialists in the educational program 6B03101 – "Psychology" in Russian and Kazakh. Graduates have the opportunity to work in all spheres: educational organizations of all types, regardless of their forms of ownership and departmental subordination; industrial enterprises and business organizations; law enforcement agencies and penitentiary institutions; rehabilitation and social adaptation centers; sports and creative organizations; healthcare organizations; city and republican social services, employment centers; centers for the study of public opinion and political technology. The department has the Center for Psychology and Inclusive Education, whose activities consist of psychological support for students and university staff, as well as psychological and pedagogical support for students with disabilities, the formation of psychological culture and tolerance among the population of Kostanay region. The strategic direction of the department's activity is educational and methodological work, during which new academic disciplines and forms of organization of the educational process are developed; textbooks and teaching aids are prepared; innovative technologies are developed and introduced into the educational process. Students and teachers of the department are actively engaged in volunteering. For more than 10 years, the department has been assigned to children who are brought up in the juvenile adaptation center, for whom students organize and conduct various events and holidays, as well as psychological correction in the form of games and trainings [4].

In Slovakia, the formal study of psychology commenced in the early 20th century. The first lectures in the Foundations of Psychology were delivered at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava in 1924. An independent school of psychology and self-contained courses were established in the academic year 1926-1927, led by Assoc. Prof. J. Tvrdý. The Institute of Psychology was founded in 1937, marking a significant step towards the independence of psychology from related disciplines. In 1957, the Institute of Psychology was re-established, and by the 1959-1960 academic year, an independent Department of Psychology was formed under the leadership of Prof. T. Pardel [5]. The historical University of Trnava represents one of the oldest universities in Slovakia. The University of Trnava was established by Cardinal Peter Pázmaň in 1635 and consisted of four faculties: faculty of theology, arts, law, and medicine. The University became well-known also thanks to an observatory founded by Maximilián Hell, a university library, gardens, and a theatre. The University existed for 142 years and in 1777 it was moved to Buda. The present University of Trnava was re-opened on July 1992. Psychology was part of Faculty of Fine Arts. University of Trnava is one of the most prestigious universities in Slovakia. The University Statute emphasises the compliance with the principles of Magna Charta of the European universities and Christian principles, preaching and teaching truth, freedom and humanitarian ideals of mankind, protecting moral and spiritual values and educating students in the spirit of ecumenism, tolerance and mutual respect. The University of Trnava is a public university and is divided into five faculties. Department of Psychology is one of the founding workplaces of the Faculty of Humanities (now the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts) of restored University of Trnava (1992). By its focus, it follows tradition, culture and values of the original University of Trnava (1635-1777), one of the oldest universities in Central Europe. The main tasks of this department are providing university-degree education in psychology at all three levels of university education, and developing psychology as science through research activities. In addition to these core activities, the Department of Psychology participates in the application of psychological knowledge in practice, especially in the context of the Student Support Centre of University of Trnava and in supporting students of Faculty of Arts with special needs. The department also participates in improving the work skills of psychologist in practice as well as professionals in related disciplines through training courses or seminars. These activities are carried out in cooperation with non-university institutions (e.g. civic association Victim support) [6, p.97].

Goal and objectives. The aim of this paper is to conduct a comprehensive comparative analysis of psychology educational programs offered at University of Trnava in Slovakia and Kostanay Regional University in Kazakhstan. The study seeks to identify the structural, pedagogical, cultural, and professional differences that shape the preparation of future psychologists within these two higher education systems. In pursuit of this aim, the research establishes several **objectives**. **First**, the study examines the historical evolution of psychology education in both countries to contextualize current program structures. **Second**, it analyzes the content, organization, and competency orientation of bachelor-level curricula, including mandatory, elective, and practice-based components. **Third**, it investigates admission policies, entrance examinations, and pathways for academic progression. **Fourth**, it evaluates employment trajectories and professional readiness of graduates within national labor markets. **Fifth**, the study explores socio-cultural, value-based, and socio-

political factors influencing psychology training in each context. **Sixth**, it identifies current challenges in modern psychological education, including digitalization, rising student mental-health demands, and the need for interdisciplinary integration. Finally, the paper formulates recommendations for improving program quality, enhancing international compatibility, and supporting innovation in psychology education across both countries.

Materials and methods. This study employs a qualitative comparative research design aimed at systematically analyzing two distinct educational programs within their national and institutional contexts. The methodological framework is grounded in comparative education theory, which enables the identification of similarities, differences, and context-specific developments across higher education systems. Data were collected through document analysis, including official university curricula, state educational standards, academic handbooks, departmental guidelines, and publicly available institutional reports. Additional sources consisted of policy documents from the ministries of education in Kazakhstan and Slovakia, as well as European Higher Education Area (EHEA) frameworks relevant to psychology training. The study also drew on secondary academic literature to incorporate theoretical interpretations of the cultural, socio-political, and historical influences on psychology education. Content analysis was applied to categorize and compare curricular components, including mandatory subjects, elective tracks, practice modules, and competency outcomes. A thematic analysis approach was employed to examine cross-cutting issues, including digitalization, mental health trends among students, and interdisciplinary demands. A comparative interpretation was conducted by examining structural, pedagogical, and cultural variables across both programs. The methodological approach allowed for the identification of broader patterns as well as context-specific features shaping professional training in psychology. This research design is particularly suitable for cross-national studies, as it accommodates variation in educational systems while maintaining analytical coherence. Overall, the methodological strategy provides a robust foundation for understanding how educational models in Slovakia and Kazakhstan prepare future psychology professionals and how these models reflect national priorities and global trends.

Discussion. In Kazakhstan, admission to undergraduate psychology programs is contingent upon the successful completion of the Unified National Testing (UNT), a standardized examination administered to secondary school graduates. The UNT comprises three mandatory subjects: History of Kazakhstan, Mathematics, and Literacy, alongside two elective subjects pertinent to the chosen field of study. For prospective psychology students, the core elective subjects are Biology and Geography.

The minimum passing scores for the UNT vary based on the type of institution and program:

- **Private Universities:** A minimum of 50 points is required.
- **State Universities:** Applicants must achieve at least 65 points.
- **Pedagogical Programs** (e.g., "Pedagogy and Psychology"): A higher threshold of 75 points is mandated.

These benchmarks ensure that candidates possess the foundational knowledge necessary for rigorous academic training in psychology.

In Slovakia, admission to psychology programs is structured to assess both academic preparedness and subject-specific knowledge [8]. The process differs between bachelor's and master's degree programs:

Bachelor's Degree Programs: Applicants must have completed secondary education, evidenced by a high school diploma. Admission often involves an entrance examination comprising two components:

- Academic Aptitude Test: Evaluates general cognitive abilities.
- Subject Knowledge Test: Assesses understanding in areas such as psychology, philosophy, and human biology.

Master's Degree Programs: Candidates are required to hold a bachelor's degree in psychology or a related field. Admission typically includes:

- Entrance Examination: Focused on core psychological disciplines, including general, developmental, social, and personality psychology, as well as methodology and statistics.
- Language Proficiency: For programs conducted in Slovak, non-native speakers must demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the language, often through a language test or completion of a preparatory course.

Additionally, foreign applicants must undergo a "nostrification" process to validate the equivalence of their previous education, ensuring compliance with Slovak academic standards.

In Slovakia, higher education is structured according to the European education and training framework, aligned with the European Skills Agenda and the European Research Area. This harmonization promotes student mobility, enhances the compatibility of diplomas within the European Union, and fosters international academic collaboration. Higher education follows a three-stage model:

Bachelor's Degree – First Level (BA/BSc)

In Slovakia, the psychology program typically lasts 3 years of full-time study and is designed to provide foundational theoretical and practical training. Students develop core methodological and professional competencies essential for psychological practice and further academic study. Courses are categorized into compulsory, compulsory elective, and elective modules, with learning outcomes measured through the

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Students must complete a minimum of 180 ECTS credits to graduate [9].

Further academic progression includes:

- Master's Degree (MA/MSc) – 2 years (120 ECTS)
- Doctoral Degree (PhD) – 3 to 4 years

Kazakhstan's higher education system has undergone significant transformation since joining the Bologna Process in 2010. The system now mirrors the three-tiered structure of European education: bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. Bachelor's Degree "6B03101 Psychology" spans 4 years of full-time or part-time study and leads to the qualification of Bachelor of Social Sciences. The curriculum is designed to equip students with the competencies needed for psychological support in both industrial and educational settings, promoting individual and social development through the application of contemporary psychological science and practice. **The curriculum includes:**

- General Education Disciplines (compulsory, university-specific, and electives)
- Basic and Major Disciplines, which cover core theoretical courses, practical training, and research activities.

Students are required to complete at least 176 academic credits, and their learning trajectory may include an additional Minor, chosen from other educational programs. A distinguishing feature of the program is its emphasis on practical training:

- **Learning Practice** (1 week in the first year)-
- **Apprenticeships** (during 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years)
- **Pre-diploma Practice** (final year), which integrates academic learning with real-world psychological work settings.

This practice-oriented model ensures that graduates are well-prepared for both professional roles and further academic pursuits. We present a comparative overview of key subject areas to better understand the academic focus and structure of psychology programs at Kostanay Regional University and University of Trnava. The table 1 below highlights the core, elective, and practice-oriented courses that form the foundation of psychological training at the bachelor's level in both institutions.

Table 1 – Psychology programs at Kostanay Regional University and University of Trnava

Slovakia	Kazakhstan
mandatory subjects – bachelor's degree	
General psychology I., II. History of psychology I., II., Social psychology I., II. Neurophysiology Psychorationalization of learning Developmental psychology I., II., III., Biological psychology Methodology of the psychological research and diagnostik I., II. Individual psychology I., II. Mental disorders of children and adolescents Statistic I., II. Organizational psychology Bachelor thesis seminar I., II. Educational psychology I., Introduction to psychopathology School psychology Clinical psychology I., Counseling psychology I.	Introduction to the specialty History of psychology General psychology Developmental psychology Workshop on developmental psychology Social psychology Personality psychology Differential psychology Law psychology Psychology of gender differences Workshop on general psychology Psychodiagnostics basis Basis of psychological counseling Basis of psychological training Workshop: psychological counseling techniques
mandatory elective subjects – bachelor's degree	
Helping victims of violence Montessori method and its use in psychology Aspects of applied ontogenetic psychology Social pathology Psychological aspects of emerging adulthood Introduction to logotherapy Psychological aspects in mediation Introduction to cyberpsychology Psychology of religion Interpersonal aspects in managerial psychology	Experimental psychology Theory and practice of psychological examination Ethnopsychology Psychology of management Work psychology Psychology of competitive personality Organizational psychology Psychological services in organizations Medical psychology

Continuation of Table 1

Intercultural psychology Introduction to psychosomatics Selected chapters from health psychology Family psychology Psychology of talent and creativity I., II. Integration of the mental and spiritual Intervention and prevention in the work of school psychology Fundamentals of the psychology of decision-making and problem solving Introduction to existential psychology Psychological foundations of unfounded beliefs Psychology of loss and grief Fundamentals of inclusive pedagogy	Pathopsychology Clinical psychology Special psychology Psychology of crisis conditions Psychology of deviant behavior Basics of psychotherapy and psychocorrection Psychology and psychotherapy of addiction Psychology and psychotherapy of the family Diagnosis and correction of child-parent relations Pedagogical psychology Statistical methods and mathematical modeling in psychology Psychological support of student's personality Psychological and pedagogical support of inclusive education
electives	
Scientific research practicum Basics of anatomy and physiology	Neuropsychology Neuro and pathopsychological diagnostics of mental disorders in children and adults Special psychocorrection

The bachelor's degree programs in psychology at University of Trnava and Kostanay Regional University demonstrate both structural alignment with the Bologna Process and key philosophical differences in training priorities. Both programs include foundational courses such as General Psychology, Developmental Psychology, and Social Psychology, reflecting a shared commitment to core disciplinary knowledge. However, Slovak programs emphasize a strong theoretical and research-based foundation. For instance, courses like Methodology of Psychological Research and Diagnostics I, II, Statistics I, II, and Bachelor Thesis Seminar I, II underscore rigorous academic and scientific training early in the curriculum. The range of electives in Slovakia reveals a broad academic spectrum aimed at deepening specialization and supporting student research interests. Electives such as Logotherapy, Cyberpsychology, Psychosomatics, Existential Psychology, and Health Psychology indicate a tendency toward integrating classical and emerging areas of psychological theory and therapy. There is also a notable philosophical and interdisciplinary orientation, including courses on Religion, Decision-Making, and Intercultural Psychology [10].

Results. Elective subjects of psychology at Kostanay regional university are strongly applied and oriented toward professional practice in diverse settings. Subjects like Work Psychology, Psychology of Crisis Conditions, Psychocorrection, Addiction Psychology, and Diagnosis and Correction of Child-Parent Relations prepare students for immediate fieldwork in clinical, educational, or organizational environments. This practical emphasis is reinforced by electives like Psychological Support of Students and Inclusive Education, which are directly tied to national education reform and social policy needs. Together, these models represent complementary approaches to psychologist education—one rooted in academic depth and gradual specialization, the other in workforce readiness and applied competence.

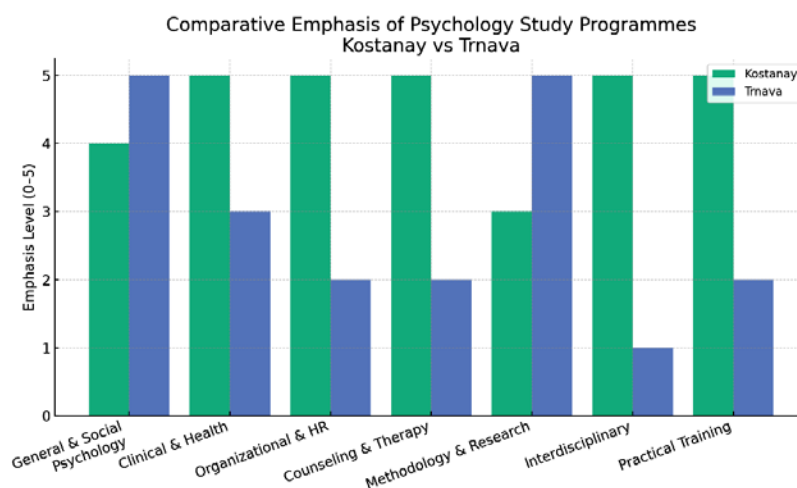
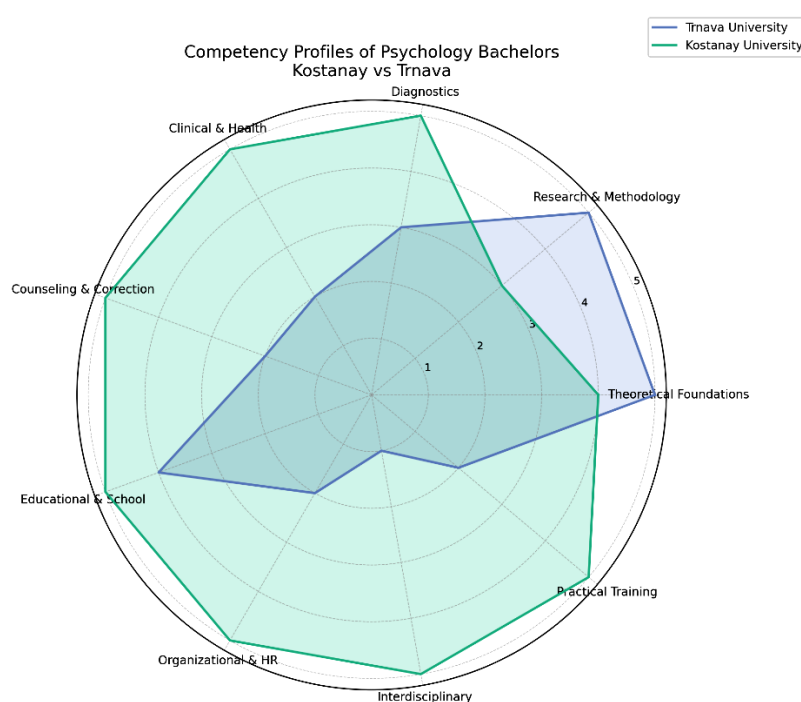


Figure 1 – Visual comparative chart

The comparative chart (*Figure 1*) provides a visual representation of the structural and thematic orientation of psychology programs at Kostanay Regional University and University of Trnava. As shown, the Kazakhstani program demonstrates a balanced but practice-centered approach, integrating clinical, counseling, and organizational psychology with interdisciplinary and applied components. This reflects the program's aim to prepare graduates for immediate professional activity upon completion of the bachelor's degree. Conversely, the Slovak program exhibits a stronger theoretical and research-oriented structure, emphasizing general, developmental, and social psychology, as well as advanced methodology. Applied and practice-based domains are introduced more extensively during the master's level, reflecting the European model of gradual professional specialization [11].

University of Trnava graduates are academically strong junior psychologists, skilled in research, critical analysis, and scientific communication. Their competencies are best suited for continuation to Master's or doctoral studies, where they can specialize in clinical, counseling, school, or organizational psychology [12]. They are aligned with European research standards but less immediately prepared for applied professional practice. Kostanay University graduates are applied practitioners, ready for direct employment. They master practical diagnostics, counseling, psychocorrection, organizational interventions, and inclusive education support. Their competencies are aligned with Kazakhstan's professional standards, enabling work in education, HR, clinical assistance, social services, and beyond [13].



Picture 1 – The competency radar chart comparing student profiles

As illustrated in Picture 1, the competency radar chart provides a visual comparison of the professional profiles of psychology students from Kostanay Regional University (Kazakhstan) and University of Trnava (Slovakia). The chart clearly reflects the differing emphases of the two educational systems. The Kostanay profile (green) demonstrates consistently high performance across a wide range of competencies, particularly in practical, clinical, organizational (HR), educational, and interdisciplinary domains. This pattern indicates the formation of an applied practitioner profile – a graduate prepared for immediate professional activity in diverse settings. In contrast, the Trnava profile (blue) displays distinct peaks in theoretical knowledge, research methodology, and foundational psychological disciplines, while showing lower values in applied and practice-oriented competencies at the bachelor's level. This configuration corresponds to a research-oriented academic profile, in which strong theoretical and analytical preparation provides the basis for specialization and professional practice at the master's stage. Thus, the radar chart visually reinforces the broader comparative findings of this study, highlighting the contrast between an application-driven educational model in Kazakhstan and a research-centered model in Slovakia.

The comparison of mandatory and elective subjects in the psychology bachelor's programs at University of Trnava and Kostanay Regional University demonstrates how each institution reflects distinct educational philosophies and professional priorities. While both curricula are grounded in core areas such as general, developmental, and social psychology, University of Trnava places greater emphasis on research methodology, statistics, and theoretical rigor, whereas Kostanay Regional University prioritizes applied, practice-oriented, and interdisciplinary training. These curricular differences naturally shape the competen-

cies and professional orientations of their respective students. The psychology program at University of Trnava (Slovakia) is built upon a strong academic and methodological foundation, where students engage deeply with theoretical disciplines supported by biology, neurophysiology, and psychometrics. Learning occurs primarily through lectures, seminars, and research workshops designed to develop analytical reasoning, critical thinking, and scientific writing skills. As a result, graduates demonstrate high proficiency in empirical research and diagnostics, and they are well-prepared for academic collaboration, European research initiatives, and postgraduate studies, although their exposure to applied interventions such as counseling or human resource management remains limited until the master's level. In contrast, the psychology program at Kostanay Regional University (Kazakhstan) integrates theoretical instruction with extensive professional practice and interdisciplinary coursework [14]. Students participate in internships within schools, clinics, rehabilitation centers, and enterprises, gaining substantial hands-on experience. This applied orientation equips graduates with strong competencies in psychodiagnostics, counseling, psychocorrection, and inclusive education, preparing them for immediate employment across educational, organizational, and clinical settings. However, research methodology and international mobility receive comparatively less emphasis. Overall, the Slovak program tends to cultivate a "future researcher or academic specialist," whereas the Kazakhstani program develops a "practitioner-psychologist," capable of addressing applied psychological challenges directly after graduation.

Table 2 – Comparative Competency Matrix – Psychology Bachelors

Competency Domain	University of Trnava (Slovakia)	Kostanay Regional University (Kazakhstan)
Theoretical Foundations	Strong focus on General, Social, Developmental, Personality Psychology ; supported by Neurophysiology, Biological Psychology .	Also covers General, Developmental, Social, Pedagogical Psychology , but quickly extends into Clinical & Applied fields.
Research & Methodology	Heavy emphasis: Statistics I-II, Research Methods I-II, Experimental Psychology, Psychometrics ; strong scientific writing.	Present: Basics of Research, Statistics & Modeling, Academic Writing ; less intensive, oriented toward application rather than deep theory .
Diagnostics	Introductory diagnostics in Bc.; deeper training at Mgr. level.	Training in psychodiagnostics, psychological expertise, pathopsychology , and applied diagnostic work throughout the programme.
Clinical & Health Psychology	Limited exposure at Bc. (e.g., Psychology of mental disorders in children). Major training deferred to Master's.	Strong early exposure: Clinical Psychology, Medical Psychology, Pathopsychology, Crisis Psychology, Addiction, Deviant Behavior, Special Psychology .
Counseling & Correction	Only basic preparation at Bc. level; major development at Master's.	Emphasis at Bc. level: Psychotherapy, Psychocorrection, Family Counseling, Child-Parent Diagnostics .
Educational & School Psychology	Includes Educational Psychology, Developmental/ontogenetic psychology .	Pedagogical Psychology, Inclusive Education support, Psychological support for students ; stronger school-practitioner orientation.
Organizational & HR	Limited to Work Psychology .	Extensive: Organizational Psychology, Psychology of Management, HR, Corporate Culture, Leadership, Competitiveness Psychology .
Interdisciplinary	Primarily psychology-focused; minor external overlap.	Significant interdisciplinary electives: Law, Anti-Corruption Culture, Economics, Financial Literacy, Ecology, Leadership .
Practical Training	Limited practice in Bc. studies; more research seminars and thesis writing.	Strong hands-on practice: internships in schools, clinics, enterprises, rehabilitation centers, law enforcement institutions .
Graduate Profile	- Academic & research-oriented .- Prepared for Master's/PhD .- Skilled in methodology, analysis, theory.- Employable at junior level in education, NGOs, HR, but not yet a licensed psychologist .	- Applied practitioner .- Immediately employable as psychologist, counselor, HR specialist, school psychologist .- Versatile skillset across clinical, educational, and organizational fields .- Aligned with Kazakhstan's professional standards.

As presented in Table 2 the comparative competency matrix illustrates the differing orientations of the psychology bachelor's programs at University of Trnava and Kostanay Regional University. The Trnava program cultivates a scientific researcher profile, emphasizing theoretical knowledge and methodological rigor while providing limited practical training at the bachelor's level, as students are primarily prepared for continuation into master's studies. In contrast, the Kostanay program develops a practitioner profile, characterized by broad applied competencies in clinical, educational, and organizational (HR) psychology, enabling graduates to enter the professional field immediately after completing their undergraduate education.

In Kazakhstan, graduates who have completed a bachelor's degree in psychology are qualified to enter the workforce directly as psychologists. The curriculum is designed to equip students with the necessary competencies to provide psychological support in various settings, including industrial and educational environments. A significant aspect of the program is its emphasis on practical training, which includes apprenticeships and pre-diploma practice. These experiences often lead to employment opportunities, as students may be offered positions at the organizations where they completed their practical training.

To facilitate the transition from education to employment, Kostanay Regional University organizes an annual event known as the "Market of Vacancies" each April or May. This event serves as a platform for various organizations to present employment opportunities and engage directly with upcoming graduates, thereby enhancing job placement prospects.

In Slovakia, the pathway to practicing as a psychologist is more structured and requires advanced qualifications. Graduates holding only a bachelor's degree in psychology are not authorized to practice as psychologists. They may, however, work in supportive roles or pursue further education [15]. To become a psychologist, individuals must complete a master's degree in psychology. This advanced program provides comprehensive training in various psychological disciplines, preparing graduates for professional practice in fields such as clinical, counseling, educational, and occupational psychology [16].

Upon obtaining a master's degree, graduates are qualified to practice as psychologists. While the master's program includes practical training components, such as internships and supervised practice, there is no mandatory requirement for an additional three-year associate psychologist period before full practice. However, certain specializations or roles may require further certification or supervised experience, depending on the specific requirements of employers or professional bodies.

Conclusion. The comparative analysis of psychology education at Kostanay Regional University in Kazakhstan and University of Trnava in Slovakia reveals both shared aspirations and distinct national approaches to preparing future psychologists. Rooted in unique historical, cultural, and institutional contexts, both countries have made significant strides in aligning their educational systems with international standards, particularly through the adoption of the Bologna Process. Both programmes align formally with the Bologna Process, but their emphases differ. Trnava prioritizes academic rigor and European integration, while Kostanay emphasizes applied practice and national relevance. Together, they illustrate the dual nature of psychology as both an academic science and an applied profession.

According to Table 3 below, students seek a hands-on, socially oriented Bachelor's degree focused on practical psychology—with strong support for inclusive education—then Kostanay Regional University offers a compelling environment. If they are interested in a broader academic trajectory, with robust research facilities and a foundation in neuroscience and theory, and options to continue into Master's and doctoral studies, then University of Trnava stands out. Language of instruction differs: Russian/Kazakh in Kostanay; Slovak/possibly English in Trnava. Geographic context also plays a role—Kostanay offers strong regional engagement, while Trnava provides access to European research networks and academic traditions [17].

Table 3 – Comparative Overview

Feature	Kostanay Regional University (Kazakhstan)	University of Trnava (Slovakia)
Degrees Offered	Bachelor's only (in Russian/Kazakh)	Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate
Approach	Practice-oriented, inclusive, community-based	Theory-rich, research-intensive, scientific + skills development
Research Resources	Strong local application, methodological tools via teaching innovations	Advanced neuroscience lab (EEG, eye-tracking, HRV, etc.)
Pedagogy Style	Innovative, applied, real-world classroom settings	Concept-driven, experimental, interdisciplinary
Special Focus Areas	Inclusive education, social adaptation, volunteer outreach	Cognitive/neurocognitive processes, psychometrics, moral and social topics
Institutional Strengths	Local practice, social inclusion, and modern teaching technology	International-level research, full academic trajectory, holistic psychology

University of Trnava produces graduates with academic and research-oriented profiles, well-prepared for continuation into advanced studies. It aligns closely with European academic standards and emphasizes methodology, theory, and critical analysis. Kostanay Regional University produces applied practitioner graduates with immediate employability in clinical, organizational, and educational contexts. The programme integrates interdisciplinary subjects and strong practice training, aligning with Kazakhstan's professional standards [18].

Table 4 – Competency Comparison

Competency Domain	University of Trnava	Kostanay University
Theoretical Foundations	Excellent	Strong
Research & Methodology	Excellent	Moderate
Diagnostics	Basic at Bc. level	Advanced, practice-based
Clinical & Health Psychology	Limited (until Master's)	Strong, broad
Counseling & Correction	Limited (until Master's)	Strong, practice-oriented
Educational & School Psychology	Good	Strong, with focus on inclusive education
Organizational & HR	Limited (Work Psychology)	Very strong (HR, Leadership, Corporate Culture)
Interdisciplinary	Minimal	Strong (Law, Finance, Ecology, Leadership)
Practical Training	Limited	Extensive, embedded internships

This comparative study of psychology education at Kostanay Regional University (Kazakhstan) and University of Trnava (Slovakia) demonstrates two distinct yet complementary paradigms for preparing future psychologists, each shaped by its cultural, socio-political, and educational environment. The Kazakhstani model emphasizes practice-oriented training and early professional engagement, cultivating graduates with broad applied competencies in clinical, counseling, educational, and organizational psychology who are ready for immediate entry into the labor market. The Slovak model, in contrast, prioritizes theoretical and methodological depth, producing graduates with strong foundations in research, analysis, and academic inquiry who typically continue their professional formation at the master's or doctoral level. These divergent orientations reflect the differing educational philosophies and societal needs of both countries—Kazakhstan's focus on applied social development and Slovakia's adherence to European academic and research traditions. Despite these distinctions, both systems encounter shared contemporary challenges, including the digital transformation of education, the increase in psycho-emotional difficulties among students, and the growing necessity for interdisciplinary integration within psychology curricula. Addressing these issues through curriculum renewal, stakeholder collaboration, and a balanced integration of theory and practice can enhance the quality and international compatibility of psychology education in both nations. Overall, this comparative analysis underscores the mutual potential for innovation and exchange between Kazakhstan and Slovakia in training psychologists who are professionally competent, adaptable, and responsive to the evolving demands of global society.

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Information about the authors:

Urdabayeva Lazat Yerganyssovna – Candidate of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor, Head of the Department of psychology, Akhmet Baitursynuly Kostanay Regional University, Republic of Kazakhstan, 110000, Kostanay, 1st May Str., bld. 86, tel.: +77478054645, fax.: 8(7142)511129, e-mail: lazer888@mail.ru.*

Letašiová Andrea – PhD, Psychologist, Doctor of Psychology, University of Trnava, Slovakia, 81105, Bratislava, 4 Palarikova Str., tel.: +421948290356, e-mail: lazer888@mail.ru.

Rakhmatulina Aina Ruslanovna – Master of Pedagogical Sciences, Senior Lecturer of the Department of psychology, Akhmet Baitursynuly Kostanay Regional University, Republic of Kazakhstan, 110000, Kostanay, 14 Volynov Str., tel.: +77769984584, e-mail: lazer888@mail.ru.

Урдабаева Лазат Ерганысовна – тарих ғылымдарының кандидаты, қаумдастырылған профессор (доцент), Ахмет Байтұрсынұлы атындағы психология кафедрасының меңгерушісі, Қазақстан Республикасы, 110000 Қостанай қ., 1 Май көш., 86, тел.: +77478054645, факс.: 8(7142)511129, e-mail: lazer888@mail.ru.*

Летяшиова Андреа – PhD, психолог, Трнава университетінің психология ғылымдарының докторы, Словакия, 81105 Братислава қ., Параликов 4, тел.: +421948290356, e-mail: lazer888@mail.ru.

Рахматулина Аина Руслановна – педагогика ғылымдарының магистрі, Ахмет Байтұрсынұлы атындағы психология кафедрасының аға оқытушысы, Қазақстан Республикасы, 110000, Қостанай қ., Волюнов көш., 14, тел.: +77769984584, e-mail: lazer888@mail.ru.

Урдабаева Лазат Ерганысовна – кандидат исторических наук, ассоциированный профессор (доцент), заведующая кафедрой психологии, Костанайский региональный университет имени Ахмет Байтұрсынұлы, Республика Казахстан, 110000, г. Костанай, ул. 1 мая 86, тел./факс: 8(7142)511129, +77478054645, e-mail: lazer888@mail.ru.*

Летяшиова Андреа – PhD, психолог, доктор психологических наук, Трнавский университет, Словакия, 81105, г. Братислава, ул. Параликова 4, тел.: +421948290356, e-mail: lazer888@mail.ru.

Рахматулина Аина Руслановна – магистр педагогических наук, старший преподаватель кафедры психологии, Костанайский региональный университет имени Ахмет Байтұрсынұлы, Республика Казахстан, 110000, г. Костанай, ул. Волюнова 14, тел.: +77769984584, e-mail: lazer888@mail.ru.