

Shifts in Governance of Universities in Kazakhstan: the Case Study

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Abstract. During the last several decades shifts in university governance have affected universities throughout the world. The five dimensions which offer a perspective to provide an analytical description of shifts in governance are state regulation, academic self-governance, competition, managerial self-governance and stakeholder guidance. We used the five dimension model for the analysis of shifts in governance of higher education institutions in the Republic of Kazakhstan as the methodological background of our research. The main method used in the research was a case study of one of the Kazakhstani universities – the Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University. In our study we refer to a long-term strategy “Kazakhstan 2050”, Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Higher Education, the Development Strategy and SWOT analysis of the financial and economic sustainability of the Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University. Results indicate that shifts in governance of Kazakhstani universities follow the global trends observable in contemporary academic world.

Keywords: *internationalization, higher education rankings, university governance and management, development plan, SWOT analysis.*

Introduction

During the several last decades there have been significant shifts in governance of higher education institutions. Processes of globalization evoked educational reforms in different fields of public services, including higher education area (Carnoy, 1999; Spring, 2009). Traditional state-centered management in a public sector is being continuously criticized for its low effectiveness and gradually replaced by a variety of alternative models. Under the influence of neoliberal ideology, which has undoubtedly affected the domain of education throughout the world (Wayne Ross and Gibson, 2006), and introduction of new public management in order to increase the effectiveness of the public sector (Derhardt, 2001), a series of new approaches towards university governance and management emerged. Leišytė (2007) points out five dimensions that provide an analytical tool for the study of governance in higher education. These dimensions can be present in governance of each and every higher education system, but their importance differs across time and location. The five dimensions which offer a perspective to provide an analytical description of shifts in governance are:

1. State regulation concerns the traditional notion of top-down authority vested in the state. Regulation refers to the promulgation of an authoritative set of rules.
2. Academic self-governance concerns the role of professional communities in determining the course and outcomes of the game.
3. Order in a system can also be achieved through the competition which influences the quality and allocation of goods and services. Competition in higher education refers to a competition between and within universities for strategic resources and for customers of their services.
4. Managerial self-governance concerns hierarchical steering. Here the role of university leadership and management in goal setting and decision-making is at stake.
5. Stakeholder guidance concerns activities directed through goal setting and advice. It concerns the provision of general objectives and procedural rules setting the framework within which actors have room to maneuver (Leišytė, 2007, p. 33).

The first three dimensions refer to the classical triangle of state authority, academic oligarchy, and market forces. The fourth and the fifth dimensions extend the list of forces under the influence of ideas about result-oriented management and stakeholder involvement. We used the five-dimension model for the analysis of shifts in governance of higher education institutions in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The research problem was to highlight the peculiarities of changing models of governance in post-socialist higher education area as a part of the global world culture movement, and the Republic of Kazakhstan in this respect could stand out as a typical example of the country experiencing post-socialist transformations. The research subject was the change in governance of one of the Kazakhstani universities – the Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University, which is a higher education institution, specializing in training women teachers for schools in rural areas.

The aim of the research was to analyze whether higher educational institutions in Kazakhstan undertake steps towards introducing new models of governance as a response to global trend prevailing in international higher education.

The five-dimension analysis model determined the **structure** of the paper. After the short description of the object of study we considered and assessed manifestations of each dimension: state regulation, academic self-governance, competition, managerial self-governance and stakeholder guidance, and, finally, discussed other issues and presented main conclusions of our research.

Research Methodology and Methods

The methodological basis of our research is the world culture theory which claims that due to the pressure of globalization the processes of institutional convergence in education are taking place. Convergence of educational systems has become one of the central topics of the world culture debate in contemporary comparative education (Carney, Rappleye and Silova, 2012). The research is based on case study analysis. Case study observes the characteristics of an individual unit with a view to establishing generalizations about the wider field to which that unit belongs (Cohen and Manion, 1989). We chose a case study for our research as due to formal requirements of confidentiality possibilities of investigation of governance in Kazakhstani universities are limited. The administration of Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University kindly agreed to provide the researchers with relevant information. We applied a triangulation technique, which is defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of the same object (Cohen & Manion, 1989). In particular, we used document analysis (a long-term strategy "Kazakhstan 2050", Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Higher Education, the Development Strategy), SWOT analysis of the financial and economic sustainability of the Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University (Table 1), and information provided by the administrative staff of the University as multiple data sources for our analysis.

The case study

The description of the Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University. The Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University was opened as an institute by the Resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the Kazakh SSR No. 457 dated August 15, 1944 "On the preparation of the qualified teaching staff from among Kazakh women's youth". The purpose of the institute was to attract girls from remote areas for receiving a higher education and upbringing through the training of spiritual and moral qualified staff. During the years of independence the institute was granted a university status. Nowadays

the Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University trains the specialists in the field of education who are highly competitive in educating the contemporary Kazakh society. One can judge about this by the fact that on the basis of the order No. 802 dated April 23, 2008, the Control Committee in the field of Science and Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan granted a permission to defend dissertation works at the D 14.61.09 dissertation council, created at the Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical Institute, in the following specialties: "13.00.01 – General Pedagogy, Pedagogy and History of Education, Ethno-pedagogy", "13.00.02 – Theory and Methods of Training and Education". Dissertation works covered different fields of educational research. In the year 2010 sixteen candidate and three doctoral dissertations were defended at the university dissertation defense council.

State regulation. The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan has set a task for the country to join the 30 most competitive countries of the world. The improvement of the system of education plays an important role in achieving this goal. Education is recognized as one of the most important priorities of the long-term strategy "Kazakhstan-2050" (Online media, 2016). Legal, economic and social bases of the organization and activity of higher education institutions are defined in the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Higher Education. Therefore the long-term strategy and the Law on Higher Education are the key instruments of state regulation for higher education institutions of Kazakhstan, as well as other relevant legislation. The state continues to regulate key important areas of the academic life, such as institutional accreditation as well as the accreditation of the study programs, qualification requirements for the academic staff, procedure of defense of the Ph. D. dissertations, etc. According to our understanding, the current active involvement of the state in the process of regulating higher education area reflects the global tendency of seeking to make higher education institutions more accountable and result-oriented in order to increase the effectiveness of the public services.

Academic self-governance. The Development Strategy of the university is the main document, which should serve as the basis for taking appropriate decisions and internal regulations aimed at the development of the university (Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University, 2013). The adoption of the Strategy is conditioned by the contemporary global trends taking place in the sphere of education and science, changing conditions in the labor market and, in particular, the socio-economic situation of the country. The implementation of the Strategy is supposed to provide an adequate response of the university to external and internal requests and the establishment of the university as a leading world-class higher education institution. The realization of the Strategy is planned in two phases. At the first stage, in the period from 2013 to 2016, through the completion of structural changes, the university will focus on the implementation of preparatory measures aimed at the transition to autonomy, the improvement of the quality of educational services and learning technology. At this stage, by improving the material and technical base, the necessary conditions should be created for entering into the

global educational space. During the second stage, in the period from 2017 to 2020, the principles of academic autonomy and self-governance will be realized in all the spheres of activities of higher educational institution.

Competition. Nowadays higher education institutions of Kazakhstan operate in a very competitive academic environment. Kazakhstani universities are urged to compete in order to lead in national and world university rankings. High position in international rankings is considered as one of the key indicators of the academic quality, therefore Kazakhstani universities strive hard to achieve as high position as possible and apparently manage to succeed. For example, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University is ranked as the best among the universities of Kazakhstan, and the third among CIS universities represented in the ranking of the top universities in the world according to the QS ranking. The current position of the university in the QS ranking is 236th place (QS, 2017). Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University can't boast of achieving similar highlights, however, one of the goals of its development strategy is the "improvement of the status and competitiveness of the university" (Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University, 2013). Competition on the part of other national universities on the selection of human resources is indicated as one of the threats in SWOT analysis of the financial and economic sustainability of the university (Table 1). We can judge from this indication that Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University is highly aware of the importance of competitive capacities in governance of higher education institutions. Competition and rankings are typical manifestations of a neoliberal ideology in contemporary higher education.

Table 1

SWOT analysis of the financial and economic sustainability of the university

| S – strengths (potentially positive internal factors) | W – weaknesses (potentially negative internal factors) |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of the required educational and methodological base, a supportive social infrastructure of the university; - Availability of strong scientific schools; - A permanent system of the internal control over the quality of teaching and administrative management; - A high level of international cooperation of the university with various scientific schools, foreign universities and scientists; - A high level of informatization of the academic process; - Introduction of the trajectory of learning in the English language; - Availability of the required material and technical base of the university; - Wide geography of international cooperation; - An increase in academic mobility of the teaching staff and students; - Sufficient supply of the highly qualified staff; - An increase in the number of teachers who speak foreign languages; - Sufficient supply of the highly qualified managers; - Compliance of the university management system with the principles of corporate management; - Availability of the policy attracting young specialists-managers possessing management skills to the university management. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of the close connection between the research work and the service staff within the framework of research projects; - Aging of human resource capacity in a number of scientific directions; - Lack of the executive discipline of employees; - Insufficient academic degree holders rate of human resources in certain specialties; - Insufficient level of the diversification of financial flows; - A low cost of training; - Insufficient logistical support to the educational process; - Lack of knowledge of the English language of the academic staff and students. - Depreciation of equipment; - Lack of commercialization and implementation of research results; - Insufficiently developed relations with business structures; - Poor state of the material and technical base; - Lack of effective mechanisms to combat plagiarism. - An insufficient number of textbooks in the Kazakh and Russian languages; - Availability of international treaties unrealizable in practice; - Inertia of faculties and departments in the development of international cooperation; - A large percentage of extramural students; - Shortage of qualified medium-level managers; - A high degree of bureaucracy and complexity of certain procedures; - Insufficient autonomy of structural divisions. |

| O – opportunities (potentially positive external factors) | T – threats (potentially negative external factors) |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial support from the public authorities; - Regular funding for the advanced training of teaching employees; - Opportunity for the introduction of various technical means of corporate management; - Opportunity to attract foreign specialists to the university's top management. - Opportunity to allocate funds for the advanced training of the academic staff in foreign centers; - Opportunity to obtain financial autonomy; - An increase in the development of international scientific and educational mobility of the academic staff; - Opportunity to improve the quality of research and development with access to the international level results; - Support from the public authorities. - An increase in the level of protection of intellectual and industrial property objects; - Obtainment of grants of international organizations and funds for research activities; - Availability of public financial support for academic mobility of master's degree students; - International accreditation of educational programs; - An increase in scholarships for pedagogical specialties. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Change of the university's top management which in the long term will have a negative impact on the degree of continuity in the development of the university policy; - Financial inability of the contingent of students; - Poor funding of the material base of the academic process; - Competition on the part of other universities in the country; - Insufficient training of high school graduates (particularly, in the field of English learning); - Student enrollment in the university on the „leftover“ principle; - A high cost of equipment. - Insufficient funding for research activities of the academic staff; - A low level of wages; - Competition on the part of national universities on the selection of human resources; - Turnover of the highly qualified staff; - Lack of interest on the part of foreign colleagues in the cooperation in scientific work on pedagogical sciences; - Unrecognized nature of the university in foreign countries. |

Managerial self-governance. Managerial self-governance is listed among the most important aspects of university management in SWOT analysis of the financial and economic sustainability of the Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University (Table 1). Sufficient supply of the highly qualified managers and compliance of the university management system with the principles of corporate management is considered among the most important strengths of the university. Availability of the policy attracting young specialists-managers possessing management skills to the university management is also considered as strength, though, according to our judgment, it could better fit in the list of opportunities. Opportunity of the introduction of various technical means of corporate management is also seen as one of the potentially positive external factors. On the other

hand, university identifies shortage of qualified medium-level managers as one of the weaknesses of the institution. SWOT analysis also indicates the threat of change of the university's top management which in the long term will have a negative impact on the degree of continuity in the development of the university policy. We may assume that as a reflection of understanding of the importance of continuity and purposefulness of managerial practices within the inner structure of the university. Managerial approach indicates sustainable leadership as one of the necessary conditions of the successful implementation of long-term institutional goals.

Stakeholder guidance. The topic of the stakeholder guidance is not widely reflected in the SWOT analysis of the Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University (Table 1). There is just one line in SWOT analysis indicating the insufficiently developed relations with business structures as one of the weaknesses. Support of the public authorities is pointed out as one of the opportunities for the institution, however, it's not clear how the university foresees their participation in the internal system of management and guidance. According to our understanding, it doesn't mean that the university doesn't pay much attention to stakeholder involvement. We may just assume that stakeholders in this case are not considered as forces, which may secure the financial and economic sustainability of the university. The history of post-socialist transformations in higher education shows that stakeholder involvement is a long-term goal, which is not always easy to achieve. Employers, financial and business institutions, NGOs and other stakeholder representatives were not incorporated into the university governance structures during the socialist era. Universities need some time in order to realize that they are not just "ebony towers" which can limit themselves solely to their own study and research interests. They should first and foremost serve the needs of the wider society, and these needs are represented by different groups of stakeholders.

Other issues. Besides the above mentioned aspects of governance, the SWOT analysis focuses on the issues of quality of research and shortage of highly qualified staff, insufficient funding and low level of wages, international cooperation and knowledge of the English language. Issues of quality, internationalization and funding are universal and are matters of concern for many universities throughout the world. In this respect higher education institutions in Kazakhstan follow the global trend which is widely analyzed and reflected in research studies of many other authors (Rasmussen, 2003; Sahlberg, 2004; Ritzen, 2010, etc.).

Conclusions

The long-term strategy "Kazakhstan-2050" and the Law on Higher Education remain the key instruments of state regulation for higher education institutions of Kazakhstan. However, the implementation of the Development Strategy of the university indicates

the growing role of academic self-governance and striving for further implementation of principles of university autonomy. Competition, both local and international, is perhaps the most dynamic driving force, and university rankings become one of the main criteria for judging about the institutional quality of the universities. Managerial self-governance is an emerging issue and the need for highly qualified professional managers is high on the agenda. Stakeholder guidance attracts slightly less attention and is not widely reflected in SWOT analysis, but a need to develop relations with business structures is recognized. Other issues, like financial management, internationalization of higher education and quality management are also reflected in SWOT analysis. A case analysis shows that shifts in governance of Kazakhstani universities follow the global trends observable in contemporary academic world.

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Pokyčiai Kazachijos universitetų valdyme: atvejo analizė

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Santrauka

Per paskutinius kelis dešimtmečius aukštojo mokslo valdymo sampratos pokyčiai padarė poveikį viso pasaulio universitetams. Kaip nurodo L. Leišytė (2007), universitetinio valdymo pokyčių analizę galima atlikti penkiais lygmenimis: valstybinio reguliavimo, akademinės savivaldos, konkurencijos tarp universitetų, institucinės vadybos ir socialinių partnerių dalyvavimo. Ši teorinį penkių valdymo lygmenų modelį panaudojome kaip tyrimo metodologinį pagrindą, analizuodami valdymo pokyčius Kazachijos aukštojo mokslo institucijose. Buvo atlikta vieno šalies universiteto – Kazachijos valstybinio moterų pedagoginio universiteto – atvejo analizė. Ją atlikdami rėmėmės ilgalaikę strategiją „Kazachija 2050“, Kazachijos Respublikos aukštojo mokslo įstatymu, Kazachijos valstybinio moterų pedagoginio universiteto plėtros strategija ir finansinio bei ekonominio tvarumo SSGG analize. Tyrimo rezultatai parodė, kad pokyčiai Kazachijos universitetų valdyme atspindi globalias tendencijas, pastebimas šiuolaikiniame akademiniam pasaulyje. Išliekiant tradiciniam valstybiniam reguliavimui ir akademiniai savivaldai, universitetai vis daugiau dėmesio skiria konkurenciniam valdymo aspektui, gerinant mokslinės produkcijos kokybę ir siekiant aukštesnės vietos tarptautiniuose aukštųjų mokyklų reitinguose. Taip pat stengiamasi plėtoti institucinės vadybos kompetencijas. Socialinių partnerių įtraukimas strateginiuose dokumentuose atspindi šiek tiek mažiau, tačiau pabrėžiamas siekis labiau bendradarbiauti su verslo struktūromis.

Esminiai žodžiai: *internacionalizacija, aukštojo mokslo įstaigų reitingavimas, universiteto valdymas ir vadyba, plėtros planas, SSGG analizė.*

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