

Transportation and Architecture, which has a partnership with the German Westsächsische Hochschule Zwickau, has been accredited by the German agency ASIIN, and business programs in at least two universities in the capital, Bishkek, are preparing for ACBSP (Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs) accreditation. The NGO Ed-Net, through a TEMPUS grant, has formed an accreditation agency, and, with European colleagues present for the site visits, has performed three pilot accreditations.

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#### IMPLICATIONS

In the system carried over from the Soviet era, a program had to be licensed before it could begin operating, and it went through attestation when it had its first group of graduates and every five years thereafter. If a program has not passed attestation, its graduates cannot receive state diplomas. Programs that were last attested in the 2009–2010 academic year should have undergone attestation in 2014–2015. In addition, since every comprehensive university in the country started new four-year bachelor's programs in 2012, and the first graduates will complete those programs in 2017, hundreds of new programs need either attestation or accreditation next spring.

Despite the fact that thousands of students could be denied diplomas in 2017, little public concern is evident. One reason may be that Kyrgyzstan had parliamentary elections on October 4, 2015 and many decisions seem to be on hold until the results are known and a new government is formed. Another is that accreditation and attestation do not affect how current or incoming students pay for their educations. Those who score well on the National Scholarship Test, which is administered by the independent agency, the Center for Educational Assessment and Teaching Methods (CEATM), have their tuition paid by the state. Those who do not score well enough pay their own way. Additionally, state institutions are presumed to have the state behind them, and all institutions that award Kyrgyz diplomas have to follow the same curricula, so students (and parents) are not used to choosing universities based on curricular differences. Also, substantial consensus exists about the quality of the various newer and private universities, regardless of offi-

cial program attestation. Moreover, as Alan DeYoung points out in his book, *Lost in Transition* (Information Age, 2011), many stakeholders are interested in higher education's latent functions, rather than its manifest ones: the government wants to keep the burgeoning youth population out of the stagnant job market; parents see "dat' detyam obrazovaniye"—give children education—as the socially correct thing to do; students see the chance to move to the capital or another city as attractive. The actual quality of the education does not matter much for any of these latent functions. Furthermore, in a relationship-based society, people often are "invited" to positions, and family connections may be more important than program quality for finding employment. Also, given the importance of family connections, many students from the regions will stay there for their education, or will go to cities where they can live with relatives. Location, more than formal quality assessment, can determine institutional choice. Finally, corruption is widespread: degrees can be bought and the attestation system itself was perceived to be corrupt. Thus, then and now, families rely on word of mouth and nongovernmental evaluations to validate university quality.

#### CONCLUSION

Kyrgyzstan thus has specific circumstances that make the lack of formal assessment mechanisms at the national level less critical than might be the case elsewhere. Nevertheless, since among the reasons a national system seems unimportant, are that some of the stronger institutions have degrees recognized elsewhere and others are pursuing international accreditation, educators elsewhere might want to keep an eye on Kyrgyzstan. National systems of quality assessment may not be as relevant as they used to be. ■

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## University Governance Reforms in Kazakhstan

**DARKHAN BILYALOV**

*Darkhan Bilyalov is a researcher at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, Astana, Kazakhstan, and PhD candidate, Pennsylvania State University, US. E-mail: dyb5296@psu.edu.*

National governments worldwide are introducing western corporate governance in universities as a means to increase institutional autonomy and efficiency. Former Soviet Union countries are no exception to this global trend.

Among them, Kazakhstan is dramatically changing its educational landscape: from rigid ministerial control and of a command economy, to modern, market oriented corporate governance practices. It is doing so by decentralizing governance functions from the national ministry to individual institutions, by means of creating and empowering institutional governing boards. Policymakers argue that this will increase the autonomy of institutions in their academic, financial, and organizational decision-making. Numerous challenges of this governance reform are discussed below, with the goal to share its lessons with other post-Soviet countries attempting similar reforms.

#### TRADITIONAL GOVERNANCE

The prime actor in the education landscape in Kazakhstan is the Ministry of Education and Science. It has historically played a crucial role in institutional governance by defining policies, detailed procedures, curriculum, state-funded enrollments, personnel policies, and other key aspects of university life. The higher education system is highly centralized: public university rectors report directly to the Ministry that retains authority over their appointment, evaluation, and dismissal.

University rectors are the chief executive officers, legally responsible for the well-being of the institutions. This ultimate responsibility has in many cases resulted in their domination over major institutional decisions, with low levels of transparency and collegiality. Faculty participate in governance through the structure of *Uchenyi Sovet* (academic senate), chaired by the university rector. While nominally the supreme governance structure of higher education institutions, it often acts either as a formal “rubber stamp” or as an advisory body to the rector.

#### EMERGING GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

The State Program for Education Development for 2011–2020, the main strategic document for national education, stipulated that by 2020, 90 percent of all public universities would use “corporate governance mechanisms” and establish boards of trustees. Such boards would include representatives of the wider society: civic leaders, employers, authorities, business, NGOs, and mass media representatives.

Within several years after the State Program set the goal of establishing the Boards of Trustees, they were created at virtually all public institutions. However, such remarkable responsiveness in board creation was not accompanied by a clear definition of their powers and responsibilities. Board by-laws allow them merely to suggest, discuss, and advise, thus withholding any real formal authority. The Boards of Trustees now are mainly involved in institutional affairs serving as the voice of employers and regional community through curricular alignment, graduate employment, provi-

sion of internship opportunities and research collaboration.

There were legal controversies that did not allow the Boards of Trustees more institutional power. To avoid these controversies, new Boards of Overseers were recently created in nine universities. The legitimacy of these boards (unlike the initially created ones) is guaranteed under the Law on State Assets that regulates public universities. After piloting the Boards of Overseers in nine universities, the plan is to transform the existing Boards of Trustees into these new structures. These transformed boards will have powers comparable to governing boards of western institutions. In particular, they would be entitled to select the rector of the university; approve budgets; define strategy, admissions criteria, and faculty hiring policies; and even set the senior leadership team’s salaries.

So far, the new Boards of Overseers have achieved varying degrees of success. Some have approved strategic plans, changed personnel evaluation policies or even initiated new financial models for their respective institutions. Others are still struggling to fill in vacant board seats.

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#### RESPONSE TO THE REFORM

The national government has used a set of policy instruments from mandates to stimulate change and contribute to capacity building. It has placed special responsibilities on Nazarbayev University, the new highly internationalized research institution: to organize training for hundreds of board members and university administrators. Unlike state universities that cannot approve budgets, set tuition fees, appoint and dismiss rectors, determine hiring policies for faculty and administration, determine admissions requirements, or open new programs, Nazarbayev University is under a separate law that determines its full autonomy in these aspects. It has functioning shared governance structures and has been charged with the mission to share its experience with other institutions through training and communication.

While Nazarbayev University enjoys considerable autonomy, there is little clarity as to the extent of university autonomy that is to be granted to the rest of the system. While policymakers talk freely about academic freedom, management, and curricular autonomy, issues of financial

autonomy and of leadership appointment are rarely discussed. When such discussions appear, some raise concern that boards may not realize their full potential if the Ministry retains the power to appoint and dismiss university rectors. Others note that society does not have a strong cultural foundation for lay governance. The legislative barrier poses another challenge that requires amendments in a set of laws, rules, and regulations.

The academic community seems in principle to embrace the idea of autonomy and corporate governance, but is cautious about the realities and timeline of implementation. In particular, some anticipate a power struggle between traditional and new governance structures; others, a pushback from rectors unwilling to give up their powers.

#### CONCLUSION

The Kazakhstan government has significantly modernized and internationalized universities through centralized policymaking and governance since the country's independence. However, there is an agreement, both nationally and worldwide, that to succeed in the twenty-first century, universities need to be given more autonomy. Lessons learned from Kazakhstan's decentralization efforts might be useful for other countries sharing the legacy of the soviet governance system.

**Disclaimer:** This article is part of the "Advancing Models of Best Practice in Academic Governance and Management in Higher Education Institutions in Kazakhstan" research project. It was supported in part by Nazarbayev University with funds from the Republic of Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Science. The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not represent the views of the funder. ■

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## Private Higher Education: Even France, Even For-Profit

AURÉLIEN CASTA AND DANIEL C. LEVY

*Aurélien Casta is assistant professor at Université de Lille in France and a PROPHE Affiliate. E-mail: aureliencasta@wanadoo.fr. Daniel C. Levy is SUNY Distinguished Professor, State University of New York at Albany, and PROPHE director. E-mail: Dlevy@uamail.albany.edu.*

IHE devotes a column in each issue to a contribution from PROPHE, the Program for Research on Private Higher Education, headquartered at the University at Albany. See <http://www.albany.edu/~prophe>.

Many consider France as the "home" of a strong and centralized state, dominating society and imposing regulations on institutions, including the higher education sector. Seen from abroad, no country has been more associated with the historic "Continental Model" dominant in Europe, and partly transplanted in Latin America and elsewhere. Yet 200 years after the end of the Napoleonic era (1815), French higher education includes a significant non-state sector. Indeed, private higher education (PHE) enrolls 19 percent of all students. Furthermore, an increasing share of that PHE is legally for-profit, with a large international investor presence. At first sight, this contemporary reality may seem an abandonment of a glorious French state tradition. But in fact both the existence of PHE and even the recent for-profit surge within it have been consistent with accommodating state policy.

#### STUNNING NUMBERS AND CHARACTER

The 19 percent private share—representing some 436,000 of France's 2.3 million enrollments (2013)—is striking by its sheer size and also in comparative terms. Western Europe's PHE share is 12 percent (15 percent for Europe overall). In fact, the French private lead is larger than these figures alone suggest, for the great bulk of French PHE is "independent private"—an official European term indicating among other things that most funding is private, whereas PHE in several neighbor countries depends mostly on public funds. Moreover, French PHE is fast-growing, its present 19 percent significantly exceeding its 12 percent share in 2000; during the same time period, the PHE share has remained relatively stagnant in Western Europe overall.

There has been remarkable media attention on France's PHE growth generally, and in particular on the for-profit surge within it. True, in France as elsewhere outside the United States, anything private (and not religious) is often seen as for-profit, even if it is not officially for-profit. Yet, currently the dramatic emergence on the French higher education scene of private equity and multinational companies, and their quite visible acquisitions, make for "hot" news stories. Financial and educational media outlets stimulate public fascination. Of the five largest higher education "groups," only one is national (also family-owned); the four international groups include Laureate (easily the world's largest for-profit chain in higher education) and three French and British transnational private equity companies (Apax, Bregal, and Duke Street).

As is common in other countries, for-profits institutions are somewhat wary of the interest and coverage, lest they bring increased scrutiny and regulation. Nonetheless, for now at least, the French for-profit institutions have reason to welcome the attention, which helps "put them on the