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2 The road to autonomy: Governance reforms in Kazakhstan's system of higher education since independence

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education has become widely seen as a key to economic prosperity and social reform. The establishment of high-quality universities (and ideally ones recognised in international rankings) has become a marker of national development and prestige (Pusser & Marginson 2013). Many countries are engaging in postsecondary reforms aimed at expanding access, improving educational quality, and ensuring financial responsibility and sustainability. Often these efforts have been informed by experiences in other countries. But transferring education policies from one national context to another is a challenging and uncertain business. A number of post-Soviet countries have sought to adopt educational practices from the West (Silova 2010). Kazakhstan offers a particularly interesting example of this practice (Merrill 2010).

Kazakhstan has sought to improve its system of higher education through reforms in academic governance. Governance touches on a range of institutional issues, including the balance of autonomy (Christensen 2011), decision-making processes (Bray 2010), and the pressures of globalisation and internationalisation on institutional life (Dobbins, Knill, & Vogtle 2011; Jones & Oleksiyenko 2011). In Kazakhstan, reforms have sought to move away from a system rigidly controlled by the Ministry of Education and Science toward one that allows for greater institutional flexibility and autonomy. The reforms have also begun to establish a new system of accountability, which includes accreditation and the development of boards of trustees. Kazakhstan's circumstances

are promising because although governance reform has proved challenging for many post-Soviet countries (Luong 2002), Kazakhstan is relatively resource-rich, and its political leadership has shown a keen desire to invest in education. The research that informs this chapter sought to understand how the educational leaders of 25 institutions of higher learning in Kazakhstan have responded to these complex reforms.¹

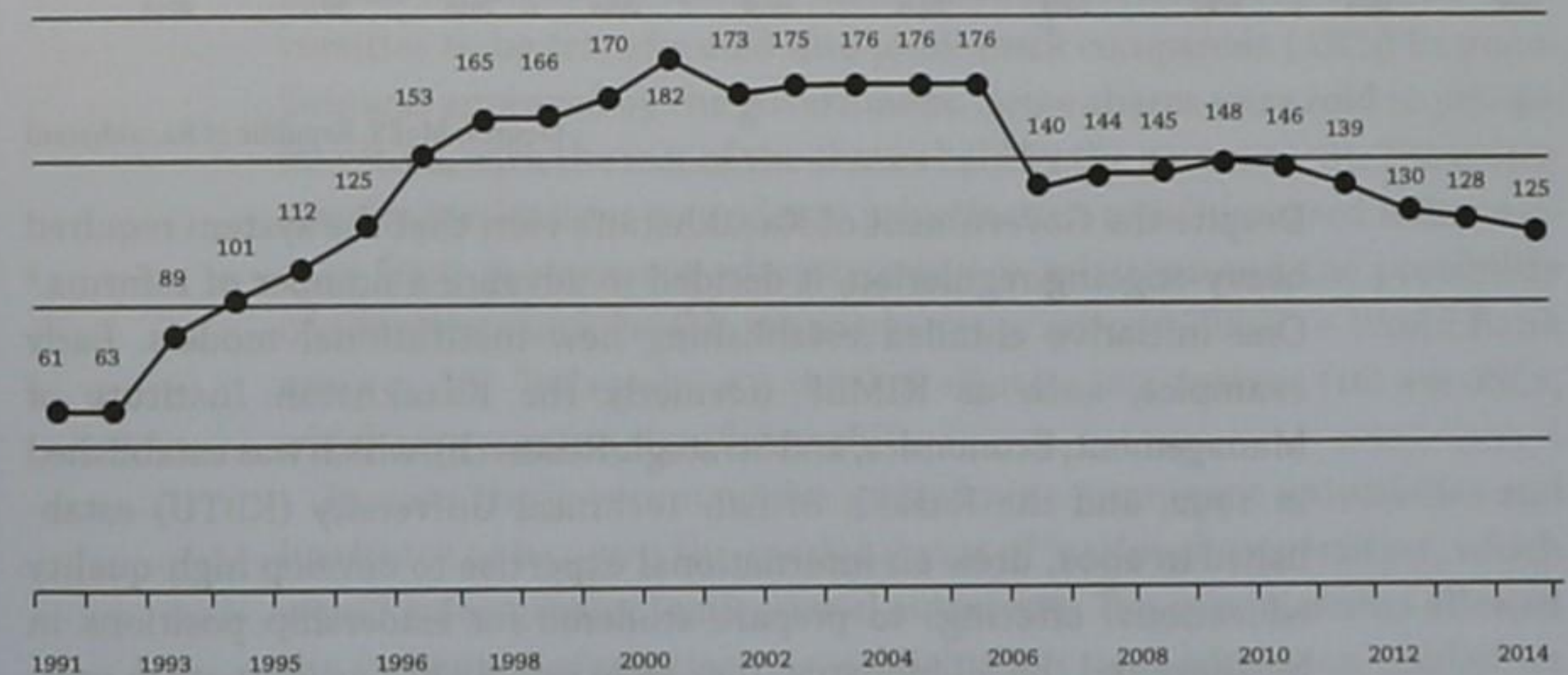
HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS IN KAZAKHSTAN: A BRIEF HISTORY

In order to understand Kazakhstan's reform efforts it will be helpful to revisit the evolution of Kazakhstan's economic and political system over the past two decades. Kazakhstan's independence in 1991 gave rise to both great possibilities and significant challenges (Olcott 2010). Previously, Moscow had set all educational policy (Gerber and Schaefer 2004). Despite a desire to transition into a market economy, there were 'blank areas' in the university curriculum in the fields of business management, market economics, and in social science disciplines such as sociology and political science (Heyneman 2010). No private institutions of higher education existed prior to independence (Johnson 2008). Further, the end of Soviet control meant that people who had been moved to Kazakhstan through the dictates of a planned economy (or for political reasons) were now free to return to their original homes. Many did. This outmigration produced a shortfall in specialists needed for ongoing economic growth.

As Brunner and Tillett (2007) put it, 'the initial stage in the reform process was to develop and implement measures adapting the educational system to the new social, economic, and political conditions' (p. 75). Major legal reforms articulated in 'On Education' in 1992 and 'On Higher Education' in 1993 – were passed that 'established general rules for how [institutions of higher education] are to operate irrespective of their status, type of ownership, size (number of students) or specialization' (Brunner and Tillett 2007, p. 83). During this period, the Ministry of Education and Science (hereafter the Ministry) emerged as the key governmental organisation responsible for higher education reforms, including those focused on higher education. Although the lack of regulation immediately after independence enabled for-profit institutions of higher learning (some of dubious quality) to flourish, by 1996, the

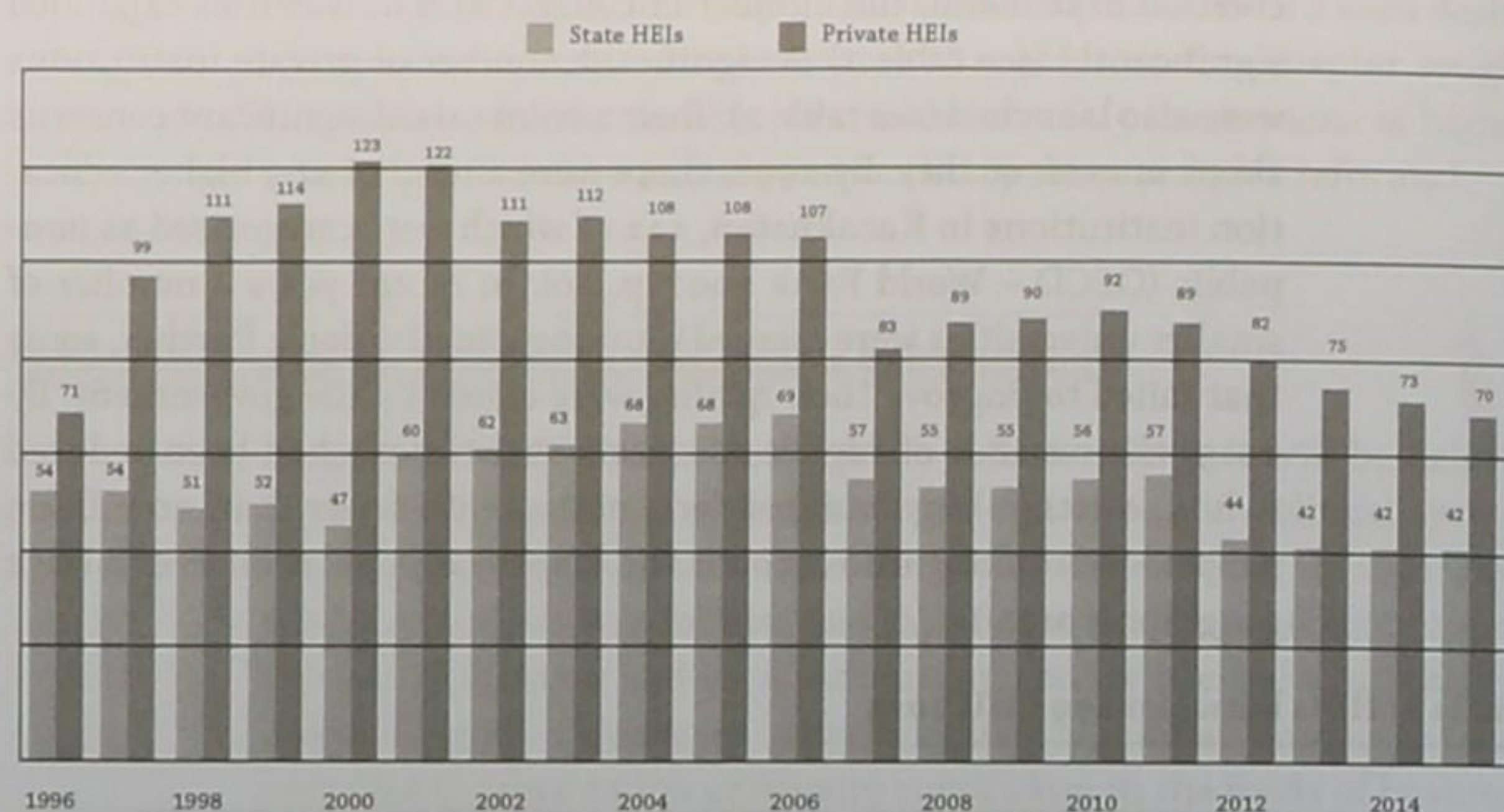
vast majority of higher education institutions – both public and private – were under the control of the Ministry (McLendon 2004). Due to the creation of demand, the number of colleges and universities expanded significantly (see table 1). A significant number of private institutions were also launched (see table 2). Their advent raised significant concerns about uneven quality. By 1998, there were a total of 165 higher education institutions in Kazakhstan, 111 of which were categorised as non-public (OECD – World Bank 2007, p. 40). In recent years a number of smaller universities were merged into single institutions. Further, some that failed to improve their quality were closed by the government. By 2015, the number of higher education institutions had been reduced to 125, a rather large number for a nation with fewer than 20 million people, even taking into account the dispersed population over a large geographic area.

Table 1: HEIs between 1991 till 2015



(Source: MoES, Republic of Kazakhstan)

The Ministry established a system of attestation, which required institutions to document compliance with Ministry guidelines. The Ministry controlled 60% of the undergraduate curriculum and maintained a list of acceptable academic majors. While intense regulation by the Ministry no doubt curbed corruption, it also imposed a bureaucratic burden on institutions and hindered innovation.

Table 2: Numbers of private and state HEIs between 1996 and 2015

(Source: MoES, Republic of Kazakhstan)

Despite the Government of Kazakhstan's view that the system required heavy ongoing regulation, it decided to advance a number of reforms.² One initiative entailed establishing new institutional models. Early examples, such as KIMEP (formerly the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics, and Strategic Research), which was established in 1992, and the Kazakh British Technical University (KBTU) established in 2001, drew on international expertise to develop high-quality educational offerings to prepare students for leadership positions in business and the oil industry. They were established as joint-stock companies, with the same legal status as privately owned businesses. While the Ministry approves the budgets of all public institutions, joint-stock companies have boards of directors that make final budgetary decisions, giving the institutions a measure of autonomy in this realm. However, the Ministry continued to provide oversight over the curriculum (for example, approved majors that could be offered) and regulations constraining the issue of multi-year visas for foreign faculty members continued to place significant constraints on these institutions. The senior leadership of KIMEP noted the bureaucratic hurdles of hiring faculty with Doctorates from universities from abroad during its foundational years.

It eventually became clear to the government that a flexible, innovative, and high-quality system of higher education could not be established under the weight of such bureaucratic regulation.

A second wave of reforms focused on higher education finance. The new policies placed a greater financial burden on students and their families. In 1999, the Ministry replaced direct recurrent budget transfers to higher education institutions with a merit-based, voucher-like student grant system. During this period, the level of governmental spending on higher education began to decline. Education as a share of the overall government budget fell from 19% in 1998 to 14% in 2004, and the share of the higher education budget within the overall education budget declined from 10% to 8% over the same period (OECD – World Bank 2007, p. 82). The government also began to experiment with privatisation in all sectors in the 1990s in the hope of securing other forms of investment and as a 'key to the success of transformation efforts' (OECD, 2016, p. 58). The Ministry also proposed a privatisation process for higher education, which allowed a select group of public universities to be transformed into joint-stock companies (JSCs) in 2000. This was approved by the government. Some shares were sold to private investors, with the rest of the shares held by the government. The incentive for institutions to undergo privatisation was 'increased independence from government administrative regulations and the possibility of adopting more flexible management practices' (OECD – World Bank 2007, p. 86). Today, about a third of all state institutions (16) are JSCs, which represents a significant shift.

In 2001 the government designated nine prominent universities and institutes to be given the special status of 'national universities', which would enjoy greater institutional autonomy. The special status allowed the national universities to establish their own admission guidelines and design their curricula in ways that did not precisely conform to state standards. Beginning in 2007, national universities were allowed to issue their own diplomas rather than a standard one sanctioned by the state. The value of a state scholarship for a student at a national university is twice what a student with a state scholarship attending another institution would receive. Further, faculty at these universities receive higher salaries, based on a 'special coefficient' of 0.75.

Other reforms were granted on an individual institutional basis. For example in 2012 Kazakh National University was allowed to partially emulate Nazarbayev University's endowment by establishing an alumni

fund, a bank account where the Alumni Association could put donations and transfer funds to the university for specific needs.

Despite these reforms, institutional autonomy remained limited for institutions of higher education. For example, even though the boards of directors of joint-stock companies could set their institutions' budgets, the Ministry continued to set 60% of the undergraduate curriculum. In 2009, right before a significant wave of higher education reforms, Raza observed: 'The management structure of the tertiary sector [in Kazakhstan] has not changed significantly from the Soviet era despite the expansion of the private sector ... The MoES remains the central body responsible for both the broader management of the sector as well as being the primary body for regulation' (2009, p. 30).

In an effort to make further progress, another wave of higher education reforms was advanced, tied to President Nazarbayev's ambition to make Kazakhstan one of the world's 50 most competitive countries by 2015 (OECD – World Bank 2007). Although Kazakhstan has economic and political ties with Russia, the Republic has also sought to develop extensive economic ties with Europe. In March 2010, the nation became a signatory of the Bologna Declaration in a desire to align its system of higher education with European standards. Subsequent reforms have led to the adoption of credit units and to a three-tiered system of degrees (Baccalaureate, Master's and PhD) replacing the Soviet degree system. The Bologna Process also encouraged the use of independent accreditation as a means of ensuring quality, a goal that some of the stronger institutions have begun to pursue. Although the Bologna Declaration (1999) does not speak to the governance of universities, it does make reference to the Magna Charta Universitatum (1988), which underscores the principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. The Bologna Process has been significantly informed by conversations in Europe (for example, by the Confederation of European Union Rectors and Association of European Universities), which view greater autonomy coupled with accountability as a dominant trend in higher education.

Kazakhstan has recently been recognised as a market economy by both the European Union and the US Department of Commerce (Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs 2012) and as one of 21 countries transitioning from an 'efficiency-driven' to an 'innovation-driven' economy (Schwab 2012). These changes in economic orientation spur innovation and feed reforms aimed at creating more autonomous institutions that can be responsive to their locality and their regions. The reforms also

seek to establish a system of oversight based on accreditation (both national and international) and at the institutional level by creating boards of trustees who can hold institutions accountable.

Another experiment in autonomy has been the creation of Nazarbayev University in the new national capital, Astana, which is described in detail in Chapter 3. The stated purpose of Nazarbayev University is threefold:

- a) to become a world-class research university;
- b) to serve as a model of higher education reform, including shared governance and institutional autonomy with an alternative system of accountability through its board of trustees; and
- c) to contribute to the development of Astana as a hub of international innovation.

The university has partnered with universities in other countries to establish undergraduate and graduate programs.³ At its founding, a new law was passed exempting Nazarbayev University from all oversight by the Ministry. Instead, its governance structure mirrors that of universities in the United States, with a board of trustees that has final authority, a president and senior managing council, and an academic council – all of whom work collaboratively to manage the university. In addition, an endowment was established that has the potential to be the foundation of greater fiscal independence in the longer term. For now, the government covers the cost of all undergraduate students admitted.

In 2010, a sweeping reform effort was set forth in the 'State Program of Education Development for 2011–2020', a set of reforms produced by the Ministry and approved by the government. The programme outlined goals that would improve the quality of higher education, enhance its ability to produce graduates for the workforce, expand the research capabilities of the professoriate and demonstrate through international rankings Kazakhstan's ability to foster examples of institutional excellence. A significant emphasis of these new policies was an increase in institutional autonomy. This included provisions that increased the percentage of the undergraduate curriculum controlled by institutions from 40% to 70%. This would give institutions the flexibility to launch new curricular initiatives. One of the most sweeping changes, echoing similar strategies for secondary schools and public hospitals, was the goal to establish boards of trustees at all higher education institutions by 2020. In March 2016 the government released a revised strategic

document, the State Program for Education and Science Development 2016–2019, which seeks to increase the number of institutions with governing boards and to strengthen universities by attracting experienced managers from abroad and by providing continuous professional development to the top management universities. Further, rectors will now be expected to report to the public on key performance indicators in order to enhance accountability and transparency. National and state universities will be transformed into non-commercial Joint Stock Companies wholly owned by the state, while private universities will be registered as non-commercial organisations of education. The intent has been to create a system of governance like the one that exists in the US and in many European nations, where institutions are autonomous and responsible for competing in the academic marketplace for students, faculty and research grants on the basis of quality and innovation. Such a system is also predicated on a system of shared governance, with the primary oversight of an institution resting with a board of trustees rather than a central ministry.

EXAMINING HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS

Kazakhstan policy makers have concluded that a system based on decentralised control with greater institutional autonomy (and accountability), similar to those in some European countries and in the US, offers the most promising strategy for improving the overall quality of its higher education system. But these countries' policies were developed in particular historical and social contexts. For example, in the US, early colleges and universities were established and maintained by particular communities of support, and boards of trustees were established to provide oversight for that support (Taylor, Chait & Holland 1999). Further, the system of shared governance in the US mirrors the practices of participatory democracy where multiple constituents play a role in decision-making (Hartley 2003). Kazakhstan has a very different history. The Soviet legacy is one based on centralised state control. At public universities the academic council serves as the key deliberative body that engages in collegial discussion about important academic and institutional issues. However, these bodies tend to be dominated by senior administrators while the voice of faculty remains limited. Until 2016, the Ministry alone had the power to hire and fire rectors. In June

2016 that system was amended. Now, governing boards put forward finalists for rector positions. The finalists are reviewed by a Republican Selection Committee (RSC), which is chaired by a member of parliament and whose members are drawn from staff of the presidential administration, the prime minister's office, NGOs, and from the Ministry. The RSC makes the final selection.

Transplanting policies from one context to another can prove problematic. Academic leaders in Kazakhstan are being asked to implement reforms that emphasise institutional autonomy and shared governance that do not rest easily with existing norms and values. Further, the legal and policy environment continues to pose significant constraints on meaningful autonomy. The current Kazakhstan experience suggests that institutional autonomy can only be achieved when a new set of policies and cultural norms are established that support the legitimacy of the new system. Until recently, the legitimacy of the higher education system in Kazakhstan was validated through strong ministerial oversight with clear rules and guidelines. Institutions documented their compliance with regulations through the process of attestation. A system based on institutional autonomy requires the development of an alternative system of legitimacy (Hartley et al. 2015).

ANALYSING THE RESPONSES OF HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERS TO REFORMS IN KAZAKHSTAN

Higher education reforms in Kazakhstan have focused on several key strategies. First, there have been attempts to experiment with new institutional models that allow for autonomy and flexibility. Early on this involved the creation of joint-stock companies. Although boards of directors were given final say over these institutions' budgets, state curricular standards continued to limit the flexibility of these institutions. The establishment of national universities was another attempt to create a class of institutions with a greater degree of autonomy. Nazarbayev University became the first institution with special legal status allowing total freedom from ministerial control.

A second type of reform sought to change academic policies. This included giving institutions greater control of their curriculum. It has also involved shifting to a three-tiered degree system (away from the old Soviet degree system) and implementing a credit system to align the practices of Kazakhstan with other countries participating in the

Bologna Process. Third, there are the beginnings of a new system of oversight and accountability through mechanisms such as national accreditation, the pursuit of international accreditation by some institutions and the establishment of boards of trustees.

Overall, the reforms efforts have been influenced by three key factors. First, Kazakhstan has preexisting structures that are a legacy of its Soviet past. These structures were established under a system of planned, central control. For example, until 2016, rectors were appointed by the Ministry (or in the case of national universities, the president of the country). The reporting requirements are often onerous. As the academic leader of one joint-stock company that we interviewed put it, 'the supervision that comes from the Ministry is very bureaucratic and sometimes that "support" comes in the form of red-tape.' While the Ministry has reduced its control of the curriculum, it still maintains a list of acceptable majors. For example, an institution may offer a major in 'design' but cannot develop a special major in clothing design, even if the market calls for such expertise (which was the circumstance identified by one institution we visited).

The financial structure of the system gives tight control to the Ministry at a line-item level. A university that finds efficiencies and spends less money than it requested in a particular area cannot re-allocate funds strategically. These structures significantly shaped the work of all 25 institutions in the study. One university asked for, and received, permission from the Ministry to shift its curriculum away from state standards in order to pursue international accreditation, which it then achieved. However, when the time period of the 'experiment' ended, the institution indicated that it was asked to return to its previous practices. Institutions other than national universities (and especially two regional universities we visited) felt as though they had little flexibility in developing programmes. In reflecting on what it means to lead in this environment, a vice rector at one institution explained, 'I wouldn't say that universities have their own "style" of management, rather we are all subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Science.'

One new structure that has been created in order to move toward an alternative system of accountability is the board of trustees. Although boards have great power in many other countries, in Kazakhstan rectors are not accountable to boards. Further, boards have no say over budgetary matters and therefore are limited in their ability to meaningfully influence long-term strategy.

The second key factor influencing reforms are the prevailing cultural norms and beliefs. Many of these have been influenced by Kazakhstan's history as a part of the Soviet Union. As Yergebekov and Temirbekova conclude in their analysis of Kazakhstan's challenges complying with the Bologna Process, 'the leading hindrance is the fact that Kazakhstan's higher education system is still in continuity with the Soviet frame of mind' (2012, p. 1476). In Kazakhstan many academic leaders understand that a centrally planned system is one approach for ensuring fairness, efficiency and uniform quality, and eliminating corruption (which has been a significant issue since independence; Heyneman 2010). A prevailing assumption is that expertise resides at the top – whether at the level of the central system in the form of the Ministry or at the institutional level in the person of the rector. Many academic leaders spoke of the important role the Ministry has played. They see it playing a key coordinating function that ensures the system operates harmoniously and fairly. One participant invoked the image of a conductor, with the Ministry signaling to the overall system to ensure it works in concert. There is an assumption by many academic leaders that the Ministry is best positioned to set policy for the entire system based on an understanding of best practice abroad.

Many senior administrators we spoke with in the course of our research expressed scepticism about whether sufficient management expertise exists across the system to warrant greater autonomy. There are fears of corruption and fears that quality will suffer without the firm hand of the Ministry. A number of individuals we spoke with also felt that the current cadre of leaders would need support and training in order to move to a model where they are asked to lead discussions of strategy and institutional policy. For decades, the success of leaders has been measured by documenting compliance with Ministry directives. This is a very different means of establishing legitimacy than holding leaders accountable for the results of strategies they formulate and implement with key institutional stakeholders. The prevailing cultural norms constitute a belief system that is quite distinct from one underpinning a decentralised system.

The centralised system is undergirded by such assumptions as the idea that individuals at the top of the hierarchy must have the most information and therefore they should be the ones setting institutional strategy. Another norm is the notion that standardisation of practice across institutions is fair. These norms create a system where the legitimacy of an

institution (and its academic leaders) is linked to the degree to which activities conform to Ministry regulations. The result is a culture of compliance. This contrasts sharply with an autonomous, market-based system which operate with quite different norms. Here the assumption is that an understanding of local context is necessary for formulating meaningful long-term institutional strategy. Quality should be determined not by demonstrating compliance with regulations but through periodic reviews of progress towards goals through activities like strategic planning or accreditation. The system also presupposes that institutional flexibility allows institutions to try new things and to innovate, which in turn allows institutions to distinguish themselves from their peers and to compete for students, faculty and other resources.

These cultural norms also have important implications for the longer-term success of the reform efforts. A centralised system, while perceived as overly bureaucratic and inflexible, also is one where the Ministry must shoulder the responsibility for failed strategy. Some leaders are uncertain whether their institutions are prepared to operate in a more market-based system even if they are granted more autonomy. Attempting to create a board of trustees with expertise in various areas (e.g. government, business) as a body responsible for shaping the long-term strategy of an institution is not only infeasible given current structures and policies, but it runs against current understandings and beliefs regarding the efficacy of a central system. As a result, rectors continue to make major decisions in consultation with the academic councils (largely populated by administrators). While regulations require boards to meet at least twice yearly, in their early years some managed to only convene once. In other cases, boards met more frequently, but not all board members were in attendance. Further, the meeting times tended to be rather limited. This situation limits the ability of board members to develop a deep understanding of the issues facing their institutions. It also tends to lead to considerable deference on the part of boards to the rectors, an arrangement that fits with the predominant belief system.

The third factor is the environment. The Government of Kazakhstan has sought the advice of the World Bank, which produced a major report on the nation's system of higher education in 2007 (OECD – World Bank 2007). That report underscored the importance of reforming higher education, raised questions about quality, critiqued the inflexibility of the highly bureaucratic and highly centralised system and encouraged a movement toward greater autonomy, and discussed the implications of adopting the Bologna Framework. Many of these recommendations

reflect practices being embraced in other parts of the world. For example, New Public Management has advocated a movement toward a system based on greater participation in decision making, autonomy and market principles, and guided by the expertise of management (Christensen and Lægveid 2001; Christensen 2011).

A major feature of higher education reforms has been a focus on internationalisation and fostering international partnerships. These activities have introduced Kazakhstan to a host of new ideas regarding best practices. The decision to join the Bologna Process in 2010 led to specific policy recommendations in the 'State Program of Education Development for 2011–2020', including the implementation of the credit system. On many campuses, when asked about their involvement with Bologna, many academic leaders equated it with 'implementing credit technologies'. Relatively few were able to articulate in detail the wider purpose of the Bologna Process.

People at institutions recognise the need to change, and they are anxious to adopt best practices from other countries in order to achieve change. But so far they found making significant change a struggle. In their 2012 analysis of the higher education system, Yergebekov and Temirbekova concluded, 'the Bologna Process is another area which has turned [out] to be nothing but a dysfunctional formality in Kazakhstan' (Yergebekov & Temirbekova 2012, p. 1475). We see at work the sorts of isomorphic tendencies described by institutional theorists (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Meyer & Rowan 1977): the system has sought positive changes by mimicking the practices of developed systems elsewhere.

That said, there were important exceptions to these isomorphic tendencies at several institutions where research activities and specific academic programmes involved close collaborations with international partners. One of the best examples of this was Nazarbayev University, since its model is predicated on each academic unit having an international partner. The partnerships provide a countervailing set of norms and practices to those commonly found in Kazakhstan. Also, leaders at several of the institutions in this study were able to clearly articulate the benefits of promoting academic mobility of faculty and students as a way to enhance educational quality through the exchange of ideas with other countries. Although many of these efforts were limited in scope in 2016 when this research was conducted, even modest efforts had advanced organisational learning about how ideas like academic mobility or seeking international accreditation for specific programmes might be a lever for positive change.

CONCLUSION

If Kazakhstan wants to move further down the road to institutional autonomy and reform, its policy makers and institutional leaders will need to be attentive to multiple factors. First, the system's structure needs to be further altered. The tight regulation that governs the curriculum or the ability of institutions to develop novel and innovative academic programmes needs to be loosened, perhaps with a small subset of institutions and then with a wider circle of universities whose accomplishments suggest they have earned the right for greater autonomy. Second, creating new governance structures such as boards of trustees will not produce change if the underlying assumptions about how universities should be governed are unchanged. The norms and values – that is, the culture – of institutions have to be purposefully shifted. The training programmes introducing concepts about academic management and shared government sponsored by the Ministry over the past few years are an important step forward. Even more promising is the possibility of establishing a small cadre of universities that will be given more autonomy, similar to that enjoyed by Nazarbayev University. These institutions could become living case studies that would allow other institutions to see the possibilities of greater autonomy. Similarly, although the wider environment is influencing Kazakhstan's policy decisions, implementing best practices is unlikely to produce meaningful change if people do not understand the purpose of these changes. In this regard, international partnerships seem to be a promising mechanism. Individuals at institutions with such partnerships were better able to articulate the benefits of greater academic mobility than those who did not have substantive partnerships. In sum, Kazakhstan will need to create an overarching effort aimed at helping institutional leaders learn autonomy. The building blocks of such a system are already in place.

NOTES

- 1 The findings presented here are drawn from a collaborative study conducted between 2012 and 2015 by a team of researchers from the University of Pennsylvania and Nazarbayev University. The study involved visits to 25 institutions of higher learning in seven cities across Kazakhstan. In total, 404 individuals were interviewed, including rectors and other senior administrative leaders, faculty members, members of boards of trustees, students and local employers. Seventeen members of the Ministries of Health and Social Protection, Finance, and Education and Science were also interviewed.
- 2 Changes to the law are first proposed by a relevant Ministry. Other ministries are invited to comment and changes to the proposed law are then made through a process of internal negotiation

between the ministries. The proposed law must then be submitted to parliament, which must vote to approve it, and the President of the country may sign off on the proposed legislation or turn it back.

- 3 The current university partners are Colorado School of Mines; Duke University; National University of Singapore; University College London; University of Cambridge; University of Wisconsin, Madison; University of Pennsylvania; University of Pittsburgh; and University of Warwick.

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3 Kazakhstan's quest for a world-class university: The story so far

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INTRODUCTION

Like policy makers and government officials elsewhere the political leaders in Kazakhstan have been grappling with how to create, develop and maintain at least one national university that is recognised as one of the best in the world (as discussed in Chapter 2 and in Hartley et al. 2016). Their motivations are like those expressed by other nations such as setting a standard that will lift other national universities, becoming a more active part of the global scientific community, fostering national prestige or pride, creating and retaining talent, and ultimately increasing economic competitiveness. And like leaders elsewhere they look to global ranking schemes as a seemingly objective measure to judge progress towards a goal, usually having a national institution in the top 100 or 200 universities by a certain year (Hazelkorn 2014, 248–9).

This idea of emulating elite institutions in more economically advanced nations is not new. India based the development of its Institutes of Technology (IITs) in the late 1950s and 1960s on four different national models – Britain, West Germany, the Soviet Union and the USA (Leslie & Kargon 2006; Bassett 2009). IITs were partly a product of Nehru's enthusiasm for science and technology (Nautiyal 2010, 387), but they also addressed the aspirations of a largely urban middle class who wanted educational opportunities for their children. In the last 20 years there has been a growing interest among developed and developing nations in the creation of one or more national world-class universities (see Liu