
8 Kazakhstan

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8.1 THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Republic of Kazakhstan is a land-locked country approximately twice the size of Western Europe but with only 18.8 million inhabitants (Bureau of National Statistics RK, 2021). It is one of the least geographically dense countries in the world. Its two main cities are Astana (briefly called Nur-Sultan) and Almaty, the current and former capitals respectively.

Kazakhstan is a demographically, ethnically, and linguistically diverse country. Its current population consists of over 100 different ethnic groups, including Kazakhs, ethnic Russians, as well as Uzbeks, Ukrainians, Uighurs, Tajiks, Tatars, and Koreans. The country has a tri-lingual education policy according to which students learn and are taught in Kazakh, Russian, and English. Following independence, the country faced a baby-bust and then a boom before leveling off that has impacted school and University enrollments. The decline in birth rates existed from the 1990s through 2005. However, between 2005 and 2010, the trend shifted to a baby boom. Birth rates leveled off in 2010, creating a demographic bubble that is moving through the school system. The World Bank predicts the Kazakhstani labor force will peak in 2030 (2018d), with a population at approximately 22.5 million by 2050 (OECD, 2017b).

As the World Bank bluntly states, “Kazakhstan has gone through massive political, economic, and structural changes in a short period.” (2018d, p. 3). Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan faced drastic economic downturns (OECD, 2017a). Between independence in 1991 and 1995, the economy contracted by a third, created by a turn away from the

Soviet centralized economy and complicated further by skilled workers leaving the country (World Bank, 2018d), often moving back to Russia and other post-Soviet States. Oil, gas, and mining sectors led the economic recovery, replacing the Soviet-era manufacturing sector (World Bank, 2018d). Oil and natural resources remain economically important to the country, but their market fluctuations suggest the need to further diversify the economy.

Since 2001, Kazakhstan has made significant economic gains in growing a middle class and reducing poverty (OECD, 2017a). Over the course of ten years the poverty rate fell from 55 percent of the population to 20 percent (2006 to 2015) (World Bank, 2018d). The middle class grew from 10 percent to 25 percent in this same time period. The poorest 20 percent of households saw earnings grow by 90 percent (World Bank, 2018d). However, there exist discrepancies between rural and urban areas, with the poverty rate at 25 percent in rural areas, compared to 8 percent in the largest cities of Astana and Almaty. Those two cities have middle classes of close to half (45 percent) the population compared to 18 percent in rural areas (World Bank, 2018d).

The economic challenges facing the country are focused on the regions away from the capital and rural areas. The January 2022 social conflict focused on the imbalance between urban and rural areas and the economic disparity between them.

An important contributor to the economic growth has been the addition of 1.1 million jobs for a labor force of 9 million. The sectors with the largest job growth were education, health, social services, construction, and transportation and storage (World Bank, 2018d). Given that Kazakhstan is an important hub on China's Belt and Road Initiative, some of these areas are likely to demand workers. That said, the employment growth in the past few years has been in the public sector, including in State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) with their large holdings in gas, transportation, mobile services and electricity, and in small businesses (independent enterprise), which is different from self-employment, along with the modest growth in the private sector (World Bank, 2018d). SOEs have been and continue to be important, comprising 30–40 percent of GDP and playing a stronger role in the country's economy compared to SOEs in the respective economies of neighboring China, Russia, and Turkey (World Bank, 2018d).

Since independence, the oil sector has been the largest and most important area of the economy. However, oil prices have been volatile since 2014. Therefore, the country has undertaken recent economic structural reforms. The government has identified four pillars for economic reform, which

include lessening state intervention and diversifying beyond oil, strengthening the private sector and developing nonbank financial institutions, enhancing trade, and building human capital and improving natural resource management.

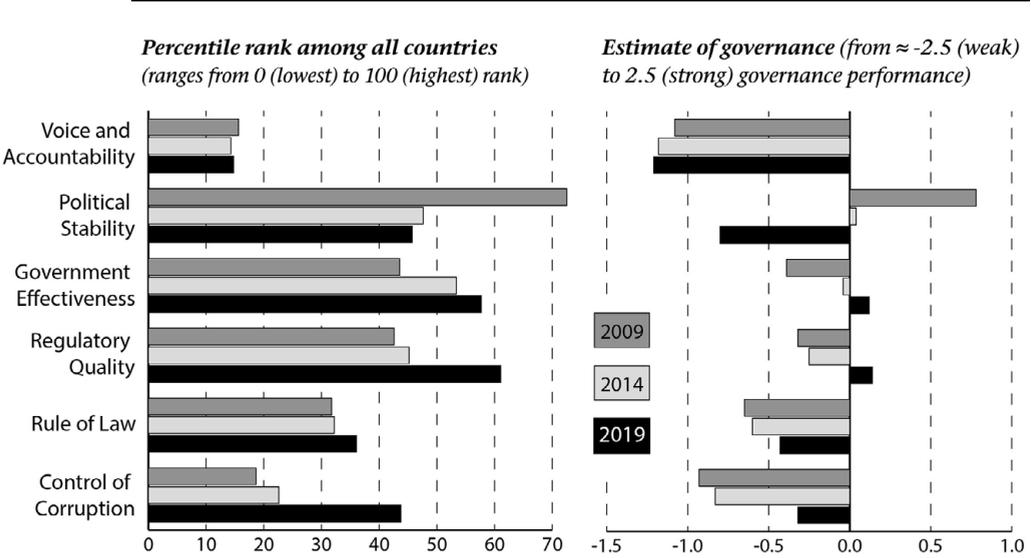
The Global Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranks Kazakhstan 36th out of 141 countries regarding public sector performance with a score of 61.3 out of 100 and the burden of regulations ranked 34th with a score of 49.4 for 2018–2019 (Schwab, 2019).¹ It scored the future orientation of the government at 55.1, ranked 73rd. For the Skills pillar, most closely related to higher education quality, WEF scored Kazakhstan 46 out of 100 for the skillset of graduates and a score of 51 on the ease of finding skilled employees indicators. This ranked the country 95th and 81st respectively on those indicators out of a total of 141. Regarding corporate governance, which arguably is different from public University governance, WEF ranked the country 12th with a score of 74.6. Therefore, the country is somewhat challenged in making policy choices for the future. Overall, it seems that the context should be supportive of higher education and the role that it can play and an effective governance context exists at least in the corporate setting. The country struggles on the quality and output of its education system per these indicators.

The national governing context according to the World Bank's Governance Indicators project is as follows: the control of corruption and regulatory quality across the country has declined. However, political stability increased through 2019. Most indicators hover around or below the 50th percentile rank (Figure 8.1).

Kazakhstan is a unique country in geographic terms. The country is the ninth largest in land mass but with a relatively small population. It has 6 people per square kilometer compared to a world average of 55 and an OECD average of 36 people per square kilometer (World Bank, 2018d). Its primary urban areas housing the political and economic hubs are separated by thousands of kilometers and its extreme continental climate make linkages and synergies between these economic and cultural centers challenging. These factors contribute to meaningful regional differences. In fact, the government is implementing the Serpin Program that provides University scholarships to students in population-rich southern regions to study in the

¹ The prior competitive framework included a higher education pillar and a quality score. These no longer are included in the 4.0 version of the WEF framework.

Figure 8.1 Worldwide governance indicators for Kazakhstan



universities in the less populated northern, eastern, and western regions of the country (Government of Kazakhstan, 2016).

For the most part, Kazakhstan has avoided the ethnic and economic strife common to some neighboring Central Asian states. However, the two-sided challenge of an economic downturn and restructuring that the country is facing has amplified social conflict among youth and in rural areas, creating additional social and political pressure (Bussolo, Davalos, Peragine & Sundaram, 2019). The result was the January 2022 unrest in the Almaty and western regions. The country also has seen an increase in radicalization in rural areas, particularly in the west where there are greater economic disparities; yet the extent of the threat is debated (Stronski, 2016). Furthermore, some citizens have showed increasing frustration with the government and what they perceived as economic and social stagnation out (Stronski, 2009). Protests are infrequent and highly monitored and controlled.

From independence in 1991 through March 2019, Kazakhstan has been led by Nursultan Nazarbayev, the longest-serving leader in Central Asia. Even though he stepped down from the presidency and was succeeded by his successor Kassymzhomart Tokayev (who won approximately 70 percent of the vote in presidential election). The long-serving first president prevented instability common to other post-Soviet States and allowed long-standing

policy frameworks to take root, the most recent being the “100 Concrete Steps.” However, this past election saw an increase in demonstrations and calls for more open and fair elections. To date, Tokayev’s presidency has been marked by the introduction and popularization of the idea of a “Listening state” to improve communication between the government and its citizens as well as by the creation of the civil National Council of Public Trust (Tokayev, 2019).

8.2 THE HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

Shape and Structure of Higher Education

The Kazakhstani higher education sector is large, diverse, and undergoing change, if not transformation, particularly compared to its Central Asian neighbors. With independence, the Republic inherited fifty-five universities from Soviet times. Only one of these would be considered classical with multiple faculties across a range of disciplines and fields; the majority were pedagogical or engineering focused (Ahn, Dixon & Chekmareva, 2018). In general, the post-independence period could be clustered into three distinctive periods: “1) the decade of massification and growth of private higher education (1995–2005), 2) the decade of enrollment decline and University closures (2006–2015), and 3) the decade of projected enrollment growth (2016–2026)” (Bilyalov, 2020, p. 9).

In 2018, the total number of students in Kazakhstan’s universities was 512,677 with 93 percent studying at the undergraduate level. Enrollment peaked in 2005–2006 with 775,762 students. Much of the downturn is tied to the declining birthrates as noted above. That said, the country has seen an increase in the share of youth with a general secondary education increasing from 32 percent in 2001 to 62 percent in 2015 (World Bank, 2018d). As the result, the enrollment rates are showing slow but gradual growth in the last two years to 604,000 students enrolled in 2019–2020 academic year (Bilyalov, 2020).

As of 2020, there are 129 higher education institutions (HEIs). Eight are classified as national universities, twenty-seven as state institutions, fourteen non-civic institutions (mainly law enforcement), one autonomous institution (Nazarbayev University, see below), one international (Kazakh-Turkish University), and seventeen institutions in the form of privately and publicly held joint stock companies (JSCs) (such as Kazakh-British Technical University and KIMEP). The seventeen JSCs created before 2019 are jointly owned and operate in limited ways like privately owned corporations in

certain areas such as finances, but the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) still maintains a strong hand in questions related to choosing institutional leaders and determining human resource policies. The remaining institutions are private.² The private sector has been highly volatile as most of the closures in the past decade have been private universities.

Higher Education Governing Context

Following the trajectory of other former Soviet states, higher education post-independence was strongly government controlled through the MoES and other ministries that oversaw the universities in their respective sectors, such as agriculture and medicine. The Law on Education and the Law of State Property centralized authority firmly in the hands of government and away from institutions, including private universities and those in the form of joint stock companies. Rectors and vice-rectors were appointed by the ministries, and the rectors of the nine national universities were appointed by the president of the country. MoES set 70 percent of the undergraduate curriculum. The range of programs they could offer as well as the number and types of students admitted was government dictated. Universities did not control their budgets and thus could not generate revenue or make investments. Their use of state-owned buildings and property was restricted.

In 2010, the Republic created a new University, Nazarbayev University (NU), in the capital, Astana. This University was created through a legal framework unique to it. The framework granted unprecedented levels of autonomy to NU and insulated it from direct MoES oversight. This status is something that differentiates NU from prior attempts to create internationally recognized Kazakhstani research universities (Ruby, 2018). In fact, Nazarbayev University has a separate law and the unique mission to spearhead higher education reform in the country and serve as a knowledge and innovation hub in the capital city of Nur-Sultan (Bilyalov, 2017). In addition to being a research-intensive University and educating the country's academically talented, one of its objectives is to build national higher education capacity by serving as a model for new ways of operating. The University receives at least 38 percent of the higher education budget (Canning, 2018), with other estimates even higher if research funding is included. The majority of students do not pay tuition or fees at either the undergraduate or graduate levels. Some programmatic exceptions exist in which students do pay fees.

² Data compiled from 2017–2018 AY dataset (Agency of Statistics RK)

In July 2018, a new pivotal law has been approved in Kazakhstan (namely the Law of July 8, 2018 “On amendments and additions to some legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the expansion of the academic and managerial autonomy of higher education institutions”). In October 2019, the public University sector completed the important final transition when the government changed the legal status of twenty-five additional public universities to noncommercial JSCs status. This final set completed the transition of all state and national universities being converted to this status. Meanwhile, the government is making provisions to reverse the privatization of thirty-seven public universities that already hold joint-stock company status, thus effectively converting their full ownership to the state (Informburo, 2021), under the management of the Ministry of Education and Science.

These regulations have changed the legal status of the public universities and transformed them into noncommercial joint stock companies completing the transition toward autonomy started by NU. HEIs were given increased autonomy in determining admissions criteria, establishing teacher-student ratio, determining the structure and content of educational programs, and establishing and operating endowment funds. Additionally, the universities through their boards were given authority over setting tuition levels of undergraduate and postgraduate programs, admissions requirements, establishment and dissolution of academic units, creating legal entities, issuing their own diplomas since 2021, determining qualification requirements and staffing procedures for faculty, creation and liquidation of academic structural units, and approving development plans.

While NU from its beginning has had the freedom to develop its own curriculum and degree programs, other public universities’ curricula and degree programs were traditionally controlled by the ministry. With autonomy, the degree of state control of the curriculum at other universities waned so that universities currently define 70 percent of what is taught at undergraduate and master’s level and 90 percent at the PhD level. While given such increased freedom, not many colleges take advantage of it and a few adhere to the traditionally run curriculum with minor alterations (Hartley, et al., 2018). Kazakhstan was also the first Central Asian country to sign on to the Bologna Process in 2010 and align its higher education system to European standards (Ahn, Dixon & Chekmareva, 2018).

The financing of Kazakhstani public universities is a mix of government support and student paid tuition fees. Approximately half of students at public universities are self-financed (OECD, 2017b). However, the majority of public University revenue comes from the government, which is a mix of

student state grants (vouchers) and direct funding. An important exception is NU in which most if not all domestic students are government supported along with an increasing number of international students.

With the move toward autonomy, public universities gained the independence to set and modify their budgets, generate revenue, and set up and manage investment accounts. The Law on State Property that used to govern the majority of public universities limited flexibility regarding how resources could be developed and used and ways that facilities could be leveraged for revenue generation such as through rentals. The Law also placed personal punishments on rectors for ineffective and invalid use of funds, leading to much conservatism related to University expenditures. Compliance not strategy drove the use of resources. The move toward making public universities noncommercial joint stock companies has been a helpful step in providing institutions financial flexibility.

Even with the changes in autonomy, most public universities remain under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). However, other ministries, such as the Ministry of Healthcare, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Defense oversee a group of universities with specific missions. This situation is not unusual among former Soviet countries (see Russia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan cases).

8.3 GOVERNING BODY PROFILE

The governance description that follows focuses on public universities in the Republic. It additionally gives special attention to NU given that it was created as a model for the rest of Kazakhstani higher education and given special autonomous status.

Body Structure

In addition to various governing bodies as discussed below, universities are led by the rector, and they have management Councils composed of University executives and academic Councils that are responsible for curriculum, teaching and learning, and other academic matters. The Academic Council (known as *Ucheniy Sovet* across the post-Soviet contexts) has traditionally been the main collective governing body of the University. The Academic Council consists of up to fifty-one members that meet at least monthly and include both faculty and students along with senior

management and administrators. Despite the Academic Council having the powers over academic matters, in many cases it is dominated by the rector and the senior leadership team when it comes to important decision-making, particularly in administrative and financial matters (Bilyalov, 2016).

As part of the autonomy efforts of the *2011 State Program for Education Development*, different types of governance bodies were created for different types of universities that fall under the jurisdiction of MoES. (Universities that are part of other ministries such as agriculture or health are following different paths.) The specific nomenclature below indicates a particular type of governing structure for a specific type of University with differing governing parameters and responsibilities, something that is not true across other countries, such as the United States.

- Board of Overseers. Originally created for the nine national universities and NU,³ these bodies are supreme supervisory bodies and have the most authority granted, including the power to select and dismiss the rector; approve budgets; define institutional strategy; and decide on admissions criteria, faculty hiring, and setting senior leadership salaries.
- Board of Trustees. Created originally for most regional public universities; they are advisory and do not have decision-making authority.
- Board of Directors of JSC. These governing bodies were for joint stock companies (JSCs), operate similarly to Boards of Overseers acting as the supreme governing board with the ability to appoint the rector, approve budget and initiatives, and sign off on the institution's strategic plan.
- Boards of Directors of noncommercial JSC. This is the new predominant form of governance that gradually replaced the Boards of Overseers as the converted public institutions establish their new governing structures following the 2018 law.

The Board of Directors now act as the main governing body of the public universities. The Board of Directors are constituted of not less than five members and 30 percent of those members must be independent directors. By law, the boards meet at least once a quarter.

The Board of Directors are external to the institution and are made up by the representatives of the ministry, industry representatives, public figures,

³ However, NU uses the term Board of Trustees, which is reflective of its international focus and aspirations.

politicians, and representatives of other educational institutions. Despite the boards having the main fiduciary responsibility for the institution, the regulations still posit that the rector “carries the personal responsibility for the operations of the University.” Meanwhile, the Academic Council (*Uchenyi Sovet*) continues to exist, but the bylaws suggest that the Academic Council is considered a collegial advisory body.

For most universities, the single shareholder is typically the Ministry of Education and Science, but it can be another ministry based on whether the University falls under the authority of another ministry such as the Ministry of Healthcare for medical academies. The ministry makes the final appointment of the rector, who is also the chair of the president’s office (*pravlenie*, which could literally be translated as governance). An interesting feature of Kazakhstan is the appointment process of the rector. The Board of Directors develops the program for development of the higher education institution and interviews the candidates based on the priorities of the document. This document acts as the proposal to highlight the vision for the potential University leader.

The Board of Directors sign off on the regulations on appointment and selection of the University rector, corporate secretary, internal audit, and the board committees. It also approves the strategic development plans, operational plans, organizational structure, the number of personnel, admissions criteria, tuition fees, education grant distribution of the University internal grant money, the plan of the board work, the tax policy, the auditing policies, risk management, and other aspects of University governance.

Because the boards of public universities as noncommercial joint stock companies are new, they are still developing their structures. There are only three committees that we found typical for the Board of Directors. These are the committee on personnel and remuneration, the committee on strategic planning, and the committee on audit. In fact, it appears that these committees are the required standing committees for all such boards. The number of board members in each committee varies. For example, each committee in the Eastern Kazakhstan Technical University consists of four members.

At the moment, it is difficult to estimate the average number of Board of Directors at public universities. Because they are at the early stage of creation, the numbers vary, with some universities (such as the Eastern Kazakhstan Technical University) having up to fifteen members, while other institutions, such as the Toraigyrov University (formerly Pavlodar State University), appointed its eight board members in fall of 2020.

From a survey conducted in 2017, before the final round of policy changes, the average size of public University boards is thirteen.⁴ The membership varies from a small board of three individuals to the largest board of thirty-five individuals. The size of the board at that time likely depended on whether the board was a one of overseers, directors, or trustees.

Because of the phased transitions, some boards have been operating longer than others. Thus, some of the national University boards have more robust committee structures. For example, Taraz State University named after Dulati, has eight committees – four standing and four temporary. Those standing committees are as follows: (1) executive, (2) finance and property management, (3) academic, and (4) strategic development. The temporary committees focus on the following areas: (1) employment of graduates and training at the request of employers, (2) financial support and the strength of the material and technical base of the University, (3) international cooperation, and (4) students from socially vulnerable groups of the population.

NU as a legislatively independent University was established with a unique two-tiered governance structure. The University has its own Board of Trustees and a Supreme Board of Trustees that governs three entities – NU, the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools, and the Nazarbayev Fund, an endowment that supports the other two entities.

The NU Supreme Board consists of nine members, including the president of the Republic. The NU Board has thirteen members and can range from seven to twenty-one members according to its by-laws. The bylaws of NU's Board of Trustees allow it to create committees as it sees fit, depending on the needs of the University. Its 2019 committees include: audit; strategy and operations; internationalization; and faculty, student life, and human resources.

Membership

The membership of governing boards of public universities is external to the University (non-staff) with the exception of the rector. The individuals serving tend to include representatives from government, such as local or regional governments, corporations and NGOs of local significance to the University, academics from other universities, and alumni.

⁴ Unless otherwise sited, the information presented was gathered through a national study of Kazakhstani rectors. Eckel, P. (2016). *Toward Increased Autonomy and Governance Reform: A survey of Rector and board members*. Working Paper: Penn GSE-NUGSE Project on University Autonomy. Astana, KZ.

For NU, its members, except for the rector, are external to the University. They are an intentional mix of Kazakhstani nationals as well as international participants. They come from ministries and other senior government positions, the private sector, and NGOs (Nazarbayev University, n.d.).

Member Appointment Processes

Board members for most universities are appointed by the responsible ministry. The candidates for board membership should have at least ten years of experience of working in education or healthcare.⁵ While nonprofit experience may be advantageous, it also limits participation of business and industry representatives. Board members serve for three- or four-year terms, which are renewable. There are no term limits for board members.

For NU, the Supreme Board of Trustees appoints and removes individuals to the NU Board. Board members serve for a three-year term, which is renewable.

Chair Appointment Processes

Board chairs mostly are elected by the board itself. In some cases, the rector or the ministry appoints the board chair. Typical board chair service is three to four years (58 percent) with 18 percent of board members serving single-year terms, and 11 percent serving either two-year or five- to seven-year terms.

At NU, the board elects its own board chair. However, according to the bylaws, “The Chair of the Board may be appointed or relieved from his/her office by the decision of the First Chairman of the Supreme Board of Trustees without complying with the provisions of the first part of this clause.”

Board Accountability

The board of public universities is accountable to the Ministry of Education and Science or to the ministries responsible for the University. Each board member is evaluated yearly by the commission created by the ministry.⁶

⁵ Appendix 2 to the Order of the Minister of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan #113 from February 20, 2015.

⁶ Order of the Minister of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated February 20, 2015 No. 115. On approval of the Rules for evaluating the activities of members of the supervisory board and determining the limit for the payment of remuneration to members of the supervisory board.

In some cases, high performing board members receive a modest honorarium. It is yet unknown how the independent directors in the newly created Boards of Directors are remunerated for their services.

The NU Board is accountable to the Supreme Board of Trustees, which is chaired by the first president of the Republic.

Scope of Work

For NU, the Supreme Board is responsible for the following: approval of the long-term development strategy and the charter of the University, intellectual schools, and the fund; approval of the procedure for asset management; composition of the Boards of Trustees of the University, intellectual Schools, and the fund; and decisions on reorganization or liquidation of the University, intellectual schools, and the fund.⁷

The NU Board of Trustees is responsible for the following activities: approving the strategic and development plans; electing and dismissing the president and setting the terms of employment; determining the members of the Managing Council (University's administrative body) with the president's consent and its bylaws; approving salary ranges of University executives; nominating members to the board (with approval of the Supreme body); approving budgets, budget rules, accounting policies, and approving financial statements, including audits; approving procurement rules; setting tuition; certifying degrees; approving major transactions; managing board and management conflicts of interest; making decisions related to creating other entities, liquidating or reorganizing University entities, and acquiring or liquidating shared in other legal entities; approving criteria for partnerships; and reviewing its own performance, that of its members, and its committees.

The responsibilities of Kazakhstani public University boards have varied with the type of body and institution until the most recent changes in the law. Boards of trustees were advisory. Whereas, Boards of Overseers and Boards of Directors (JSCs) have authority and oversight responsibilities. These boards are responsible for hiring the rector, approving the strategic direction and strategic plans of the University, approving budgets and overseeing investment strategies, and making linkages with local business and industry.

⁷ <https://nu.edu.kz/news/supreme-board-trustees-retains-composition>.

Commentary

The evolution of governing universities in Kazakhstan is interesting to note for three reasons. First, Kazakhstan is completing a transition if not outright transformation in its approach to governing universities through the creating and empowerment of independent governing boards as part of its autonomy reform efforts. This is no small change from the ministerial oversight approach that was carried over from Soviet times. Furthermore, NU is a grand experiment, not only in governance but in how internationally competitive research universities are structured, managed and led, funded and supported. Its approach to governance through an independent Board of Trustees is part of the larger innovative ecosystem surrounding the organizational structure of NU. In some ways, the approach is very international, if not Anglophone (UK, American, Australian, and Canadian) with an independent board with far-reaching authority and accountability. That said, the composition, responsibilities, and authority of NU's Supreme Board still retains government contact when wanted, given that the chairmanship of that body is the first president and the heavy participation of senior government officials. This seems like a mash-up of Kazak and Western ideals and structures rather than a full-scale turn to the West.

Second, the other public universities are facing two transitions related to the governance reform because, unlike NU, as a new University they have histories, policies, practices, and habits already established. The first transition is that they must develop new capacities and structures at the institutional board and administrative levels as well as within the ministry to support and benefit from independent governance (Eckel, 2019a). This is about doing new things. Second, they must overcome the past, both in terms of old structures and mechanisms (such as attestation and compliance-based performance) and develop new mindsets and ways of thinking. They must create the new and abandon the old and they must manage structures and cultures (Hartley, Gopaul, Sagintayeva & Apergenova, 2015) And all of this has to be done without the ample resources enjoyed by Nazarbayev University.

Moreover, the reform is ongoing, with all public universities recently converted into a new legal form of a noncommercial joint-stock company. The new boards, the Boards of Directors, are being established and populated. This poses multiple opportunities for autonomous governance of the institutions while the older corporate governance structures (Boards of Overseers) disappear. At the same time, there may be a lack of continuity

in board composition with the members of older boards who have gained experience in governance no longer being the members of the newly formed boards.

Relatedly, the role of the MoES must also change. The MoES is moving from direct to indirect steering and giving universities a great deal more freedom. They may lose some influence to market forces as universities set their own strategies and pursue mission-related revenue. They too must put in place new structures and processes and adopt new mindsets, which depart from operational involvement in institutional decision-making and arrives at establishing the mechanisms that allows good governance to happen at universities and simultaneously maintains the necessary level of accountability.

Finally, University and ministerial leaders will face forging a uniquely Kazakh approach to University governance. Independent boards like the ones being created in Kazakhstan are predominately found in countries such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia, but with a Kazakh approach. These are countries with long histories and traditions of democratic or citizen engagement. Such ways of thought and the values that support them are inconsistent with Kazakhstan's recent history. "Academic [University] leaders in Kazakhstan are being asked to implement reforms that emphasize institutional autonomy and shared governance that do not rest easily with existing norms and values" (Sagintayeva et al., 2018, p. 21). To ensure that this new structure works in this context and at this point in time, the Republic likely cannot simply transfer approaches from one cultural context into their own. Instead, they will have to forge their own way forward in a uniquely Kazakh way.