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THE ROLE OF GOVERNING BOARDS IN DEVELOPING HEIS: THE CASE OF KAZAKHSTAN

Abstract:

Kazakhstan, located in the heart of Asia between Russia and China, has a centuries-long history and rich culture. In 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed a new independent state appeared on the map. Nowadays, Kazakhstan is a young and fast-growing country. Having completed two decades of the post-Soviet period and responding to the challenges of the market in terms of globalization, Kazakhstan moves to a new stage of social and economic development and pays a special attention to education market. Institutional autonomy and shared governance system of higher education institutions are the mechanisms that Kazakhstan is implementing to enhance the development of higher education.

The proposed paper explores the role of Boards of Trustees and Boards of Overseers in Kazakhstani higher education institutions as elements of shared governance. These governing boards are a new phenomenon in Kazakhstani university governance system in the post-soviet era. In most countries governing boards were created historically. For example, in the USA the people (Trustees) gathered as a charity group who decided to create an institution. In other words, the Boards of Trustees were a base of establishing the University. In comparison with the USA approach, Kazakhstani Boards of Trustees or Overseers were established artificially in the mid of 2000 and later when the universities took the initials steps toward institutional autonomy assisted in enhancing shared governance system. Newly created Boards had to be developed at the point of two systems: the old one that is more centralized and the new one that differs from the previous one aiming at autonomous streaming. Establishing new Boards has caused a lot of challenges. Firstly, the system required additional policy changes to accept the innovation and it had to be aligned accordingly. Secondly, the people in academia needed to be ready for the system. People mindset and cultural peculiarities can be a strong factor that may resist the change or set back the clock. The role of governing boards of Kazakhstani higher education institutions differs from the systems the concept was borrowed from. However, the tailored version of the Boards in Kazakhstan serves as a considerable asset to higher education institutions, regardless the challenges of implementation.

Keywords:

Kazakhstan, higher education, governing boards, shared governance, autonomy

JEL Classification: I28, I23, I29