

ADVANCING MODELS OF BEST PRACTICE IN ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN KAZAKHSTAN

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Introduction. This is a collaborative research project of Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education (NUGSE) in partnership with the Graduate School of Education of University of Pennsylvania (PennGSE). The Project aims at studying how academic leaders at public and private institutions in Kazakhstan are preparing for greater institutional autonomy and encouraging innovation [1].

Methods. The study draws on the contextual analysis of higher education institutions based on a case study approach. The data is mainly based on in-depth interviews with key constituent groups involved in university governance at six universities in Kazakhstan, focus groups with faculty and administrators, documentary analysis. The findings are based on the qualitative analysis of existing data and data collected through interviews. The data collection and analysis were iterative to allow comparison. Standard research procedures comply with the AERA Code of Ethics and Nazarbayev University Research Ethics Standards (IREC NU).

Results and discussion. The study has led to conceptualisation of theoretical understanding of governance, especially as it relates to the issues of leadership and greater institutional autonomy [2]. The results introduce pragmatic examples of best practices for other administrative leaders to learn from. Analysis of assumptions of academic leaders, faculty and students toward the proposed innovations in university governance has been developed. The study led to completion of six case studies, describing governance practices at the six higher education institutions. Part of the study has been the development of training materials based on the cases for capacity building seminars for university leaders and trustees. A number of publications have been published during the first stage of the study [3-6].

Conclusions. This research identified four clusters of insights essential to leverage institutional autonomy for institutional improvement and innovation. The themes include the importance of university autonomy, the challenges implementing such autonomy, the role of context in promoting autonomy, and how the system can build on its current foundations.

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