

ABSTRACT

of the dissertation “Innovation management of quality in higher education of Republic of Kazakhstan”

submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

specialty «66D051700 - Innovation management»

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Description of research thesis. The dissertation has been carried out to propose an innovative quality management practice in universities from perspectives of application of a business excellence model.

Relevance of the research thesis. The concept of ‘quality’ is not a new concept in the academic field. However, there is no single common definition of quality in higher education, since it is a multidimensional and dynamic concept. We can conclude that to define the concept of ‘quality’ it is important to understand the needs of potential stakeholders, as well as the context of university it works and its mission.

Classic scholars Meyer and Rowan claimed that if quality management is introduced because of external pressures and requirements, like governmental regulations, the outcome will be no efficient and there will be nothing to do with internal organizational changes.

One of the major topics investigated in this research thesis is the way higher education institutions respond to external forces in the context of increasing competition for students, funding, market shares and rising accountability of universities for quality in the framework of autonomy. Apart from strategic planning and decision-making procedures, the more necessary condition for the survival of an organization is innovation in university management through introduction of effective quality management.

During the national Address to the people of Kazakhstan in 2019, President Kasymzhomart Tokayev declared that "Constructive public dialogue is the basis of stability and prosperity in Kazakhstan". In his Address to the people, the President highlighted the importance of improvement of quality in higher education and emphasized the need to develop the mechanism of preparing quality graduates competitive at the labour market. In light of the state resolution on transformation of national universities to non-profit organizations according to the 78 Step of the Plan of the Nation “100 Concrete Steps to implement Five Institutional Reforms of Elbasy Nazarbayev” and State programme on Development of education and science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016-2019 years, as well as the State programme on Development of education and science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2025 years (amended in 27 December 2019), the universities are expected to gain academic, financial and managerial freedom, which in turn increases the competition among universities at the education and labour markets. In this regard, it is significantly important for university management to reconsider their organizational behavior and to sustain the capability of maintaining competitive at the market through focusing on quality management practices. Thus, the logic of adapting business quality management approaches in higher education stems from the fact

that after the transformation of governance type to the business one, the behavior of universities will be alike business organizations.

Following the issue of quality management in higher education, it has been on the agenda of various national and international discussions worldwide. For national universities of Kazakhstan, the issue of quality management and quality assurance has been one of the key strategic tasks of university management after higher education system of Kazakhstan joined the Bologna process in 2010. The development of economy, transformation of higher education institutions into non-profit organizations, reforms in management of universities, the increasing competition at the labour market, as well as the changing demands of the external environment have led the issue of quality and quality management as the most important topic of current university administrators' agenda. Although higher education institutions in Kazakhstan implement external quality assurance procedures and promote quality management through quality policies, there is still a lack of quality management procedures described internally. Despite the existence of quality departments and offices in universities, the structure still is not decentralized.

Equally important, over the past decades, universities in Kazakhstan have faced external pressures and intense competition in terms of market policies, management, outcome-oriented assessment and responsibility for quality. The increasing pressure from various external stakeholders (employers, society, government, students) and recent governmental reforms on granting more autonomy to higher education institutions have challenged university administration to reconsider the way they govern and respond to the external requirements and changes. Therefore, research about quality management in higher education remains relevant and highly significant.

One of the major topics investigated in this research thesis is the way higher education institutions respond to external forces in the context of increasing competition for students, funding, market shares and rising accountability of universities for quality in the framework of autonomy. Apart from strategic planning and decision-making procedures, the more necessary condition for the survival of an organization is innovation in university management through introduction of effective quality management.

While a number of studies deal with technological innovation, as reported by Hollen, van den Bosch, the recent studies are dedicated to the importance of management innovation, which mainly deals with organizational, administrative and managerial innovations.

Li and Atuahene-Gima claimed that any management strategy or practice that an organization implements for the first time represents an innovation, regardless of whether it has been implemented before in other organizations based on Leiblein and Madsen's assumption on innovation.

Admittedly, management of innovation deals mainly with the introduction of management practices. The present research thesis reveals that organizational innovation is a key tool to enhance performance of an organization in a dynamic environment.

Today, knowledge and innovation driven society, demands of modern economy as well as emergence of market-oriented approaches in higher education sector enforce universities to reconsider their current existing quality management practices and to enhance their competitive potential at labour and education markets. Dynamic state of external environment, high level of competitiveness in the field of higher education and academic freedom of higher education institutions have triggered the need for implementation of multi-level quality management approaches.

The research thesis highlights the importance of introduction of excellence model EFQM to improve performance and competitiveness of universities in Kazakhstan. The originality of the research is that it emphasizes the applicability of the adopted excellence model as an effective quality management tool adopted from industry solely to higher education. Since the model is a holistic approach and does not follow the concept of 'one-size-fit', we claim that the adopted version of the excellence model can be a useful tool for university leaders and quality managers to design their quality management processes based on key criteria of the EFQM model.

Purpose and object of the research study. The purpose of the research thesis is to develop an innovative approach for quality management of higher education in Kazakhstan.

The objectives of the dissertation is:

1. To conceptualize theoretically and methodologically the notions of quality in higher education;
2. To validate and define main features and central indicators of university governance in Kazakhstani HEIs;
3. To study the concept of internal governance and to propose the conceptual model of effective internal governance for quality management in light of university transition to non-commercial organizations;
4. To justify the applicability of business alike quality management approaches in the context of higher education based on foreign practice;
5. To investigate the applicability of the business excellence model EFQM in higher education based on foreign practice;
6. To propose the adapted version of the business excellence model as an innovative approach in quality management applicable in higher education and its implementation mechanism.

The object of the research is national universities in Kazakhstan subject to transformation of governance type into non-commercial types of organizations.

The subject of the research is development of a new innovative quality management model in higher education in the context of applicability of business quality tools.

Theoretical and methodological base of the research. The theoretical base of the research has been the studies and materials of foreign and domestic literature. The methodological aspect of the research work has applied qualitative and quantitative methods. To illustrate, the findings of the research work have been obtained using quantitative research methods such as survey, literature review, systematization and content analysis. The qualitative research has been carried out

through field observation, focus-groups and interview. In addition, supplementary methods as adoption method and the mathematical analysis SPSS factor analysis, regression analysis, variance analysis have been applied to proceed the obtained data. The peculiarity of the research work is that it applied synoptic method and employed polymathic approach to receive more interdisciplinary analysis of the issue 'quality management'.

The information sources of the research. As the source for the information base has been the Official Site of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the National Register of Recognized Accreditation Bodies, the National Register of Accredited educational organizations, the National Register of accredited educational programmes, Information statistics of the Bologna process and Academic Mobility Center Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, QS World University Rankings 2020, Database of External Quality Assurance Reports (DEQAR). In addition, research sources such as well-known database Web of Science Core Collection, Springer, a global information analytics provider Elsevier, abstract and citation database Scopus, the digital library of Saxon State and University Library Dresden SLUB, the digital library of the Dresden University of Applied University, Taylor & Francis, National Resources of Dissertations.

The scientific novelty. The scientific novelty of the dissertation research lies in the development of an innovative tool for quality management in higher education based on the business model of excellence and practical recommendations for the implementation of the developed quality management model in the field of higher education. The key point of the research work is to study the applicability of business models in public organizations as an innovative quality management tool.

During the research study, the **following scientific results** were obtained:

1. The author's own conceptualization of the term 'quality in higher education' from perspectives of stakeholders' perceptions;
2. The research has validated and identified fundamental indicators of university governance in Kazakhstani HEIs;
3. The author has developed a new innovative approach to quality management in higher education from perspectives of internal governance applicable solely in the context of higher education;
4. Justification of the applicability of business alike quality management tools in the context of higher education based on foreign practice;
5. The applicability of the business model in the context of higher education has been studied based on foreign practice;
6. The author has justified theoretically the applicability of the EFQM excellence model in higher education by highlighting the importance of adoption approach in implementing a quality improvement tool.

The main provisions for the defense:

1. The author's own conceptualization of the term 'quality in higher education' from perspectives of stakeholders' perceptions;
2. Justification of applicability of business quality management techniques in higher education through the study of university governance types;

3. Development of the adapted version of the EFQM excellence model as an innovative quality management tool in higher education;
4. Recommendation on improvement of quality management practices in Kazakhstani HEIs based on adopted version of the EFQM model.

Theoretical and practical significance. The theoretical value of the research is the issue of quality management in higher education has been studied in the context of application of business quality management tools. Secondly, the findings of the theoretical analysis have shown almost a lack of domestic research studies focused on investigation of internal organization of the university in light of university governance type transformation.

The findings and recommendations of the research thesis can serve as a valuable guideline for university administrators, experts and quality managers in the field of quality to improve the current quality management practices and methods for quality assurance of education and promotion of university competitiveness at labour market.

The findings, scientific and practical recommendations enable to develop quality management processes for effective meeting of requirements of external environment and development of new practices based on adopted business excellence model EFQM, redesigned solely for higher education context.

Approbation of the main findings of the research thesis. The main results of the dissertation thesis have been presented in proceedings of foreign and regional international scientific-practical conferences. To illustrate, international scientific-practical conference “Inclusive, economic development: Directions, priorities, drivers – 2017 (Kazakhstan), VI International Farabi Readings, international scientific-practical conference “Kazakhstan in a multipolar world: Economicscenarios” – 2019 (Kazakhstan), 33rd International Business Information Management Association Conference IBIMA 2019 indexed by Web of Science, Scopus (Spain), E3S Web of Conferences, BTSES-2020.

Publication of research findings. The findings of dissertation thesis have been reflected in four regional journals recommended by the CCSES Ministry of Education and Science RK, as well as one - in peer-reviewed journals indexed by Web of Science and Scopus. Four – in proceedings of regional and foreign international conferences.

The structure of the dissertation. The research work consists of content, notation and abbreviations, introduction, three chapters, conclusion, references and appendixes.