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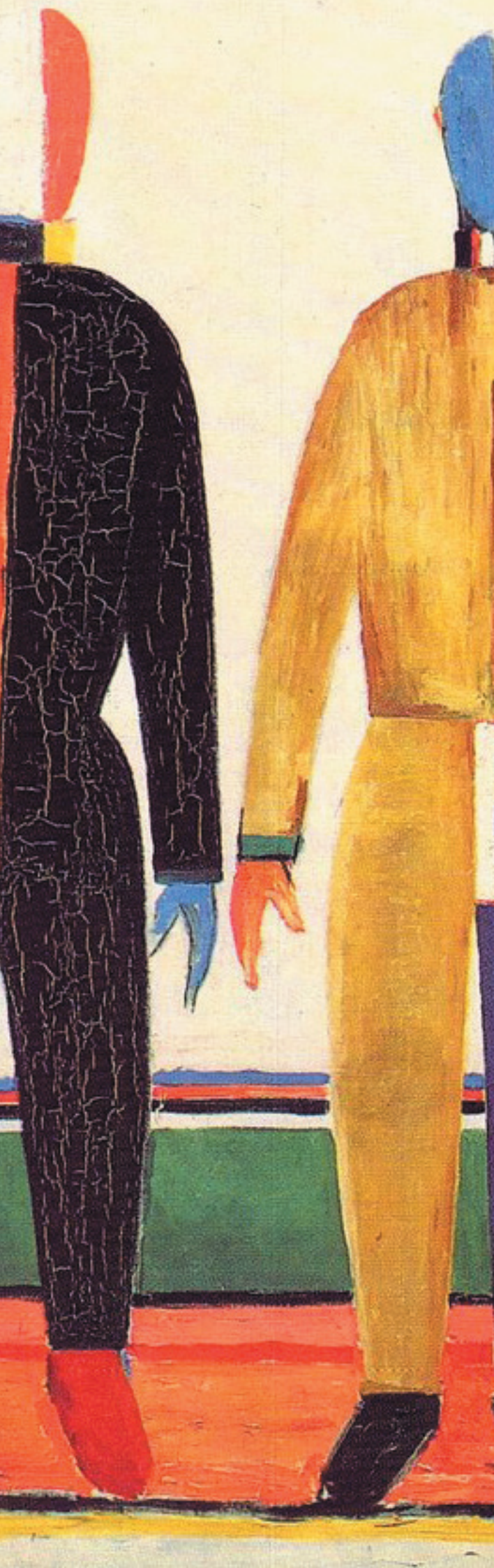
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Higher Education Landscape in Post-Soviet Countries:  
25 Years of Changes

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## Dear colleagues,

We are happy to present the new issue of *Higher Education in Russia and Beyond*, a journal that is aimed at bringing current Russian, Central Asian and Eastern European educational trends to the attention of the international higher education research community.

This issue covers the transformations of higher education in the former Soviet republics. This issue's particular focus is the changes of the institutional landscape in the post-Soviet countries with regard to national trends of higher education expansion. The issue comes along with the final stage of the international project *Higher Education System Dynamics and Institutional Diversity in Post-Soviet Countries* (<https://ioe.hse.ru/postsovedu/>), which is coordinated by HSE Institute of Education. The papers of the issue include key empirical findings of the project.

The countries of the former Soviet Union share a common past. They have different pathways since 1991 and diverse models of higher education expansion. Unequal starting conditions and unique socio-economic, cultural and political contexts have shaped various ways of higher education development: from rapid massification to de-massification. The changes in participation rates are certainly reflected in the number and types of higher education institutions. The papers of the issue review these changes of higher education landscape, including transformations of traditional Soviet institutions and establishment of new ones (e.g., private, newly born legal entities, international or foreign universities, etc.). Other structural reforms also contributed to the development of the landscapes: for instance, new accreditation systems and selection of leading universities. This issue is aimed to reflect on the results of the changes and shed light on the variety national trajectories of higher education development in the post-Soviet countries. The authors describe the peculiarities of national reforms and state policies on higher education. They also consider the environment of higher education systemic fluctuations: e.g., labor market transformations, demographic trends, economic and political agenda.

We hope that this collection will enhance the interest in higher education studies of the post-Soviet area, both among researchers and policy-makers.

*Higher Education in Russia  
and Beyond* editorial team  
and guest editor Dmitry Semyonov

*Dmitry Semyonov expresses his gratitude to  
the project team: Anna Smolentseva, Daria  
Platonova, Isak Froumin.*





We are pleased to announce the 7th International Conference on higher education research that will be held in Moscow on October 20-22, 2016. This annual conference, organized by the Russian Association of Higher Education Researchers at the National Research University Higher School of Economics, has become an important platform for discussing the issues of modern higher education systems and the actual research agenda in the field of higher education.

The conferences of the last several years were dedicated to young and successful universities, to the universities' history, to differentiation and institutional diversity, and to modern theoretical approaches in students experience. This year's special topic is University between Global Challenges and Local Commitments. Today the globalization process, changing structure of the world economy, development of digital technology lead to the transformation of the higher education landscape. Contemporary universities faced with global challenges have to change organizational structure, staffing, management model, etc. At the same time they have to improve the indicators that allow them to advance in global rankings. In addition, universities acting on national and regional higher education markets must comply with the local needs. Moreover, universities

that cannot participate in the global competition also need to adapt to new conditions. They need to find their niches in national or regional markets of knowledge and innovation. Otherwise they risk being absorbed by more successful universities or simply closed.

The major objective of the 2016 conference is to try to find balance between global and local foci of universities and to discuss higher education internationalization, organizational transformation of universities, mergers and acquisitions, as well as new educational formats and changes in educational programs in response to the requirements of current and future labor market. Among the participants of the conference are distinguished Russian and foreign researchers and practitioners of higher education.

Submission of proposals for individual paper presentations is already open and will be closed on June 20, 2016. For more information please visit the conference website: <http://educonf.hse.ru/en/2016>

We look forward to meeting you at the conference! We appreciate your contribution to this event and hope that you will find it interesting and productive!

**Best regards,  
Conference Program Committee**

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# The Expansion of Higher Education and the Transformation of the Institutional Landscape in Post-Soviet Counties

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*This paper and other special issue papers are written as a part of the international research project "Higher Education System Dynamics and Institutional Diversity in Post-Soviet countries" supported by the Basic Research program at the National Research University – Higher School of Economics. The project is led by Jeroen Huisman, Isak Froumin, and the author. The conceptual framework for the project was suggested and elaborated by Prof. Jeroen Huisman (Director of the Centre for Higher Education Governance Ghent, Ghent University) on the basis of a project on structural reforms in higher education commissioned by the European Commission, DG Education and Culture. The author also gratefully acknowledges the contribution of Daria Platonova and Dmitry Semyonov to the project's conceptual framework, the design of this special issue and enormous efforts to launch and coordinate the work of the big international team. The author would also like to express her gratitude to Jeroen Huisman for the comments on this paper. More information about the project available at <https://ioe.hse.ru/postsovedu/>.*

In the last two decades there has been a worldwide expansion of higher education, although the pace of change may differ considerable from country to country. The general trend has been that national systems of higher education, which used to educate only a small share of the population, now confer higher education credentials on a much greater number of individuals in the relevant age cohort. The same has been the case in most of the post-Soviet countries, but not all of them.

## Higher Education Expansion and Stratification

As early as the 1970s, American sociologist Martin Trow (1973) outlined three aspects of the growth of the modern higher education systems: (1) the rate of growth, which in turn affects (2) the absolute size of the systems and institutions, and (3) changes in the proportion of the relevant age cohort enrolled in higher education. He identified three stages in the development of higher education: elite (where

less than 15 per cent of the relevant age cohort attend higher educational institutions), mass (15-50 per cent) and universal, where the majority of the age group gets access to higher education (over 50 per cent). According to Trow, the transition of higher education from elite to mass to universal stage reflects the transformation of the role of higher education in a society, from being only a privilege of the ruling class at the elite stage to a social right while training a broad range of professionals at the mass stage, and then becomes a social norm at the universal stage, serving as a social institution for the adaptation of a wider population to rapid social and technological changes.

Trow's work has important implications for the transformation of the institutional landscape: (1) driven by social aspirations of families, the system will continuously grow; (2) the institutional landscape will be stratified as institutions that emerged at earlier phases will continue to maintain their higher status throughout the expansion, and new forms of stratification will develop. Although Trow based his analysis on the developments in the USA and Western Europe, his insights illuminate some important dimensions of the expansion of higher education around the world, including the post-Soviet area.

## Higher Education Expansion in the USSR and Post-Soviet Countries

The USSR put a lot of effort into the development of education and was one of the first countries in the world which reached the mass stage of higher education in the 1960-1970s, although participation rates differed significantly across the Soviet republics. The European part of the country, including Russia, was characterized by a higher concentration of higher education and research institutions and had a higher level of massification than the Caucasian and Central Asian parts. The centralized sectoral model of the organization of higher education ensured that the same institutional types were developed throughout the country's vast territory. The most important institutional types included universities (comprehensive institutions with a wide range of fields of study), institutes and academies (specialized institutions, such as polytechnics, medical and agricultural, pedagogical institutions).

After 1991, the former Soviet republics started fifteen independent journeys, which resulted in different patterns of higher education development. Despite some similarities of the reforms implemented in many countries of the region (introduction of the private sector, tuition fees in the public sector, national standardized admission tests, joining Bologna, etc.), unequal starting conditions and unique socio-economic, political, cultural, demographic contexts have shaped the further expansion of higher education systems in various ways, or in some countries, affected their de-massification and contraction.

Using the combination of absolute and relative indicators of higher education participation, which are the number of students and gross enrollment ratio respectively, we can identify three major and different patterns in the develop-



ment of higher education in those countries over the last 25 years: fast growth towards near-universal higher education; maintaining the mass stage; and system contraction preserving the elite phase of massification.

## **The Transformation of the Institutional Landscape in Post-Soviet Countries**

The changes in the participation rates are reflected in the number and types of higher educational institutions. Mass participation and its fluctuations were accommodated through various types of higher educational institutions. The region has seen the transformation of the traditional Soviet types and the establishment of new ones (private institutions, new forms of legal entities, international/foreign institutions, etc.).

Being part of a larger project, the papers in this special issue focus on the transformations of the institutional landscape through the post-Soviet period in relation to the three different expansion patterns. The concepts of horizontal and vertical higher education system differentiation (Teichler 1988), as well as organizational interrelationships allow the authors to analyze various dimensions of the institutional landscapes as well as the instruments of their transformations (Huisman 2015).

Horizontal differentiation pertains to mostly nominal distinctions between institutional types. The relevant instruments of changes are the establishment of new institutional types, relabeling or upgrading of existing types, enlargement of certain sectors, development of new organizational structures such as branch campuses of foreign institutions and distance learning.

Vertical differentiation relates to the implicit or explicit stratification of higher educational institutions. This can be promoted by governments through the introduction of competition that “identifies” “stronger” and “weaker” institutions, and also through the implementation of excellence and profiling initiatives.

The organizational interrelationships dimension refers to either static or dynamic connections between institutions, including an extreme form: merger.

The findings presented in the special issue suggest that the institutional landscape has transformed horizontally, vertically, and in terms of organizational interrelationships. The most common change was the introduction of a private sector and the relabeling of the traditional Soviet types of higher education institutions, which were transformed from institutes and academies into universities, comprehensive (classical) or specialized, by increasing the number of fields of study. The establishment of new public institutions catering for the new needs of emerging independent states also contributed to the changes in the institutional landscapes. Other transformations involved the upgrading and inclusion of secondary vocational sectors into higher education, the differentiation of institutions by the level of degrees they can confer (accreditation reform), and the establishment of branches of foreign institutions. In terms of vertical differentiation, in most countries flag-

ship comprehensive universities established in the pre-Soviet or Soviet time maintain their advanced positions, as Trow suggested that elite universities tend to do. Governmental policy aimed at the marketization of the system also contributed to the stratification of higher education.

In this special issue, the first group of papers addresses two countries which experienced a unique trend: decrease in participation rates due to political constraints and demographic rise. Kobil Ruziev and Umar Burkhanov show how state control over the expansion of public and private sectors, widening access to secondary education and significant increase of the birth rates create a bottleneck at the access to higher education in Uzbekistan. The paper on Turkmenistan by Victoria Clement provides with a historical perspective identifying two periods in educational reforms which impeded modernization of education but lately started to open the country up.

The second group of papers focuses on the countries where participation has grown maintaining the mass level but slipped in the recent years due to the combination of various structural reforms and demographic trends. In their paper on Moldova, a country in the European part of the region, Lukas Bischof and Alina Tofan suggest that there were two trends in higher education development: expansion and government-led consolidation, with a big effect of demographic decline, which contributed to the diversification of institutional landscape while keeping the core of the Soviet institutions. Susanna Karakhanyan points out that in Armenia participation and expansion were driven by market economy, restoration of national identity and internationalization agenda and were accommodated by a diverse body of institutions. In Azerbaijan, participation rates have not changed much, although at first the number of institutions had increased; the expansion was impeded by limited resources and tight governmental control, as Aytaj Pashayeva Hamlet Isakhanli note. In case of Georgia, Lela Chakhaia and Tamar Bregvadze show that the public governance reform implemented in the mid-2000s slowed down the expansion and participation but led to further increase of the private costs of higher education.

Three countries in Central Asia can also be referred to the second group. In Kazakhstan, as the paper by Elise S. Ahn demonstrates, the expansion was slowed down by the governmental policy on quality assurance; but the level of privatization was remarkably high, which includes the cases of the privatization of public institutions. Jarkyn Shadymanova and Sarah Amsler point out that in the Kyrgyz Republic higher education development was driven not by predominant state regulation but by a combination of actors: government, higher educational institutions, international organizations. In case of Tajikistan, Zumrad Kataeva, Alan J. DeYoung, and Dilrabo Jonbekova write that the system has grown in the recent years in terms of number of students and institutions, while the country maintains a mostly public system of higher education, but participation rates have not increased much.

The third group of papers illuminate how some systems

have dramatically grown despite economic crises, driven by the social aspirations of the population, and have been able to accommodate a large share of the age cohort (the Baltic countries, Belarus, Russia, Ukraine [1]). Those systems also had to face a demographic decline in the recent years which lead to the system contraction. Analyzing the case of Estonia, Ellu Saar and Triin Roosalu provide a historical perspective on the development of the institutional landscape (through private sector, expansion of public sector, branches of foreign institutions and upgrade of secondary vocational schools) and highlight the continuous role of the state. Rita Kaša, Ali Ait Si Mhamed, Indra Dedze and Zane Cunska discuss two trends in the Latvian system: liberalization of governance (enabling private sector, which now enrolls one third of students – more than in the other Baltic states, and tuition fees in public sector) and growing demand for higher education, mostly in social sciences – as driving forces of the massification. Larissa Titarenko and Olga Gille-Belova analyze how massification of higher education in Belarus was accommodated by the growth of public and private institutions and caused some tensions with the labor market. In the paper on Russia Daria Platonova and Dmitry Semyonov show how the system has grown in absolute and relative terms and how massification and government reforms shaped higher education institutional landscape.

This project and this special issue are only the beginning of in-depth analysis of the transformations of the Soviet model of higher education, which, despite many changes, still maintains many Soviet legacies. The topic is large and important, and needs further research.

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## Notes

[1] The project also involves the cases of Lithuania and Ukraine, which are not presented in this special issue.

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# Moving Toward Bologna: Internationalization and Institutional Convergence in Kazakhstani Higher Education

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Fundamental to becoming an independent nation-state, President Nursultan Nazarbayev and the Kazakhstani government articulated that education was the key to becoming a globally competitive market economy. Consequently, the government has pursued rapid education reform in the last 25 years.

## Background

Higher education emerged in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic as part of the Soviet apparatus' overall massification of education project in the 1920s and its emphasis on developing local specialists. The initial establishment of five institutions was followed by a period of steady growth. Higher education reflected the ideological and industrial aims of the Soviet regime and functioned to meet its socio-economic needs. By the 1991–1992 academic year, there were 55 higher education institutions operating in the newly independent country, with the majority of higher education institutions focused on education or applied sciences—engineering, agriculture, and healthcare.

However, the transition to a higher education system with new ideological and economic goals has been challenging. Broadly, the 1990s were marked both by economic collapse and an overall population downturn due to declining birth rates and emigration. In the higher education sector, a number of laws were passed, creating a regulatory structure for higher education reform—Law “On Education” (1992, 1997) and “On Higher Education” (1993). The Law “On Higher Education” (1993) was particularly significant because it allowed the establishment of private higher education institutions, thus beginning the process of horizontal diversification of Kazakhstani higher education institutions. As previously mentioned, the higher education system in 1991 consisted of one national university along with regional and specialized institutes (totaling 55). After the new law came into effect, the number



of higher education institutions increased exponentially, peaking at 182 in 2001–2002. The total number of higher education institutions has decreased since then due to the Kazakhstani Ministry of Education and Science's (MoES) crack down on for-profit diploma mills and a greater emphasis on quality assurance. It should be noted, however, that the majority of the 126 higher education institutions (2014–2015) remain private or semi-private (Joint Stock Companies (JSCs)—whereby a private entity and the Kazakhstani government have joint share in an enterprise). The 1990s' education laws were then followed by the Law "On the List of the Republican State Enterprises and Institutions to be Privatized in 2000–2001," which began the process of privatizing public universities by making them JSCs. The late 1990s and 2000s also saw a diversification in how individuals could fund their education, i.e., the emergence of school-related bank loans, different types of grants and scholarships, as well as institution-level financial aid. The privatization of higher education institutions was and continues to be an attempt to diversify higher education financing by introducing new revenue streams and, by extension, greater institutional autonomy.

## The Road to Bologna

The 2000s were marked by increased institutional privatization but also greater international cooperation and harmonization as Kazakhstan became the 47th signatory of the Bologna Process (2010). The impetus for becoming a part of the European Higher Education Area was informed by a wider shift toward establishing broader regional cooperation through promoting greater student and faculty mobility, and developing institutional partnerships. As a result of joining Bologna, the MoES focused its reform efforts on establishing structures that would facilitate these objectives. Relatedly, in order to become a competitive destination for potential students, faculty, and institutional partners and also enhance its higher education institutional stature, quality education (legitimated by international accreditation agencies) and the production of internationally-recognized research outputs have also become key MoES higher education priorities.

In terms of student enrollment, the establishment of private higher education institutions helped absorb the increased demand after 1991. There was an upward trend in student enrollment which peaked around 2004–2007. Since then, student enrollment setback has been affected by the declining birth rate from the 1990s with 477,387 students enrolled in higher education institutions in 2014–2015 in comparison to 768,442 in 2006–2007 (MoES, 2015; Brunner and Tillett, n.d.). Another factor affecting student enrollment was the establishment of the Unified National Test (UNT), a multiple choice exam which functions as both the secondary school exit exam and university entrance exam. Consisting of five sections, UNT was introduced in 2003–2004 in order to combat the perceived corruption linked to university

admissions and subsequently facilitate greater systemic transparency. Although there has been discussion about replacing the exam with one that has international transferability and reliability, no alternative policy has been passed.

However, the opportunities and benefits of joining Bologna were and are not equally available for all higher education institutions; the MoES determines which institutions are considered research-focused, teaching-focused, international, national, state, and regional. So, while there is vertical differentiation in terms of institutional mandates, scale, and outputs, this is currently determined by the MoES as opposed to being set by higher education institutions themselves. To date, there is no clear formal mechanism for institutions to apply to receive such designations. Moreover, in general it is notable that despite the expansion of the number of higher education institutions, geographic access to higher education has become more limited. The greatest concentration of higher education institutions was and remains in Almaty, the country's largest city. However, limited physical access to higher education in other parts of the country raises concerns regarding education equity and equality, as well as in-country brain drain and a subsequent increase in socio-economic disparities between major urban centers and rural peripheries.

## Conclusion

Kazakhstan's higher education sector has witnessed a number of significant systemic departures from the Soviet higher education apparatus, particularly after the move toward privatizing the higher education sector and joining the Bologna Process. However, the continued challenge for the MoES will be harmonizing its higher education agenda with Bologna standards in order to better prepare graduates for the labor market. Further complicating this process are the vestiges of Soviet administration and operational policies, which become more evident when looking at intra-institutional operational policies and reforms. Thus, future research might examine institution-level lived experiences in order to examine the particular legacy of Soviet higher education in Kazakhstan while navigating systemic education reforms.

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# Market-driven, State-managed Diversification of Higher Education in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan

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## Higher Education System in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan

Beginning in the early 1990s, a confluence of factors led to the diversification of higher education institutions in Kyrgyzstan: national independence, far-reaching policy reforms, the introduction of market competition into education and the emergence of new higher education institutions across the country. New branches, departments, and educational centers with legal status were created, and vocational institutions were reorganized into places of higher education. In 1992, a new law “On Education” set out principles for managing this new type of educational system, principally establishing institutions’ financial autonomy as a tool for further higher education reform.

Yet while post-Soviet state policy favored governmental deregulation and increased market rule in higher education, in practice the patterns of differentiation and diversification in this system were shaped by multiple factors: legal and political frameworks for reform, government regulations on the licensing and administration of universities, international policy agendas for higher education reform, the historical development and geographical distribution of higher education institutions and infrastructure, variations in demand for labor market specializations, the introduction of national university entrance examinations, and the influence of the Bologna Process on curricula and academic credentialing. Thus, the processes of educational diversification, differentiation and homogenization in Kyrgyzstan are not driven exclusively by state regulation or forces of market competition but also by educators’

administrators’ and policy makers’ strategic negotiations of these constraints.

One significant mechanism of higher educational diversification in post-independence Kyrgyzstan was the reorganization of educational management and the decentralization of higher education institutions. New forms of higher education institutions – public, private international and specialized – have thrived since independence, with the sector growing from 12 institutions in 1991 to 53 in 2014. This includes historical and newly established public and private universities, as well as higher education institutions that have been transformed from training institutes into universities. It also includes a number of institutions with ‘joint’ governance, such as those regulated by both the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education and Sciences (MoES) and other government ministries, and joint international universities such as the Kyrgyz–Russian (Slavic) and Kyrgyz–Turkish “Manas” universities, which are governed under agreement by two countries. Most offer market-oriented educational programs which are in demand, expensive for students, and thus profitable for institutions seeking to finance themselves: law, management, economics, banking, psychology, and foreign languages.

## Diversification of Higher Education Institutions in Kyrgyzstan

This differentiated landscape of higher education institutions is classified by the state into three categories: seven institutions offer traditional ‘two-tier’ (5-year) programs combining academic and specialist study, seven offer ‘three-tiers’ of degree (bachelor’s, master’s and doctor of philosophy), and 39 offer bachelor’s degrees only. By establishing these as different ‘levels’ of institution in 2015, Kyrgyz Ministry of Education and Sciences has constructed an explicit system of horizontal diversification and vertical differentiation, which influences the nature of universities’ academic profiles, infrastructures and research focus. Furthermore, after independence it became necessary for higher education institutions to finance themselves within a marketized educational economy, and funding became increasingly dependent on student enrolments in a consumerized environment where students are encouraged to ‘choose the best services.’ This exacerbates vertical differentiation between higher education institutions as those with large numbers of students (particularly those obtaining university places through the National Scholarship Test, introduced in 2002) can accumulate greater resources for improving facilities, hiring strong academics and instructors, and investing in research.

For two-and-a-half decades, therefore, higher education institutions in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan have been subjected to a range of reforms which aim to radically alter the economic basis, political organization, institutional structure and intellectual content of higher education itself. These reforms have created multiple processes of systemic differentiation, diversification and homogenization. The expansion of the system, for example, was not entirely diversifying



as the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education and Sciences still regulates the functions of each higher education institution through state licensing and accreditation mechanisms. Market regulations influence diversification by enabling the creation of on-demand educational programs, but in practice new programs do not always accord with market logics. While vertical differentiation among institutions in a system of higher education is typically understood as a response to the labor market need for greater diversity in types and levels of training, in Kyrgyzstan diversification has been driven more by economic and political agendas to shift from public to private funding of higher education institutions and construct political mechanisms requiring and facilitating their competitive marketization. These agendas, however, have led to unintended consequences, which are now pressing concerns for educators and policy makers, including a rapid growth in the number of higher education institutions with new subdivisions and branches, an outflow of qualified teachers from the profession and country, a decrease in necessary public financial resources, and an increasing interest among higher education institutions to promote private fee-paying education, which threatens the quality of educational services.

## Conclusion

In short, the differentiation and diversification of higher education institutions in Kyrgyzstan has not been a simple result of reductions in state regulation. It is rather the outcome of an active transformation of the system and its institutions (by the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education and Sciences, higher education institutions, international organizations, and students) which requires them to function through and for capitalist logics while maintaining select commitments to governmental oversight and control, nation and state-building programs, and globalizing agendas.

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# The Massification of Higher Education and Diversification of the Institutional Landscape in the Republic of Tajikistan

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## Introduction

Higher education in Tajikistan has undergone substantial changes over the past 25 years. After the breakup of the Soviet Union – which led to further decline of financial subsidies from Moscow and a protracted civil war – a severe educational degradation occurred in the early 1990s. This was followed by a long period of educational reforms aiming to dismantle the previous Soviet model, which simultaneously tried to reconcile a new system of education based on national values, traditions and culture – while at the same time responding to the challenges of globalization and transitioning towards a world education space. These processes, however, took longer to unfold in Tajikistan compared to most of the Newly Independent States (NIS). Although the number of higher education institutions grew rapidly in the 1990s, dramatic enrollments only came after the unstable political and economic situation, in the country, which also brought poverty, began to improve. By the end of 1991 there were 10 higher education institutions and 65,586 students; but by 2014/15, there were 38 institutions enrolling 167,660 students

(around 13 % of youth aged 18-24), with 10,675 faculty members. Of these students, 69% were enrolled in full-time programs and 31% – in part-time correspondence programs; 62% of the 2013/2014 full-time programs' graduates received a specialist diploma, and 38% – a bachelor's degree (Ministry of Education, 2014; World Bank, 2014).

## Changes in the Institutional Landscape

Formation of the Tajik higher education system only began during Soviet times. When independence came in 1991, Tajikistan was a country with almost 100% literacy and ten years of compulsory secondary education. Sectoral expansion of the higher education system had previously been specifically tied to the needs of the socialist economy. Until 1990 there had only been one institute per sector in agrarian, medical, and polytechnic fields. The rest of the system was overwhelmingly pedagogical: not only were there four pedagogical institutes in Dushanbe and one branch of pedagogical institute in Kurghon-Teppa, but the graduates of the Physical Culture Institute and (most) graduates of the Tajik State University were assigned to work as secondary school teachers.

After the events of 1991, the higher education landscape significantly changed. Its growth and diversification was also challenged during the time of the Civil War (1992-1997). Since then the government has attempted to modernize the existing curriculum to better meet labor market demand for higher education institutions' graduates. The transition from planned economy to free market has led to a number of key policy decisions – such as new Law on Education (1993) and Law of Higher and Professional Education – which coincided with a quadrupling of the number of higher education institutions since 1990. A list of the previous Soviet institutes quickly became a list of universities, as all the institutes were transformed. Four pedagogical institutes were reorganized into state universities (three regional and one pedagogical in Dushanbe) and became the country's largest higher education institutions, currently enrolling from eight to fifteen thousand students.

## Disciplinary Diversity, Regional Expansion, and Internationalization

Like in other countries of the former Soviet Union, the demand for economics and law majors has substantially increased in the past two decades. State universities in the capital as well as in the outlying regions have opened economics and law programs to draw financial resources to their institutions. Pedagogical and medical universities have also experienced growth compared to Soviet times. For instance, currently about 40 percent of higher education students are enrolled in the education field, which actually ends up as problematic, since few graduates want or expect to actually teach. Enrollments in engineering and other majors related to industrial development, however, do not attract enough students despite the establishment of two regional institutions focusing on energy, electrical and mining engineering. Because of geopolitical and re-

ligious tensions, the Tajik Islamic Institute (established in the 2000s) is expected to be transformed into a university which will prepare specialists in Islamic studies: Quran studies, history of Islam, and Arabic language. Moderate regional higher education institutions' expansion has also been observed. Out of 38 higher education institutions, 13 are located in regional centers, while 25 are still located in the capital.

There are also four international institutions established by bilateral agreements with the Russian Federation including Russian-Tajik Slavic University, branches of Moscow State University, Moscow Institute of Energy, and The National University of Science and Technology "MISiS". They are considered highly prestigious due to the continuing belief in the higher education quality provided by Russian higher education institutions and delivered throughout the former Soviet Union through their branches. Finally, there is a number of post-secondary military schools, such as the Academy under the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Higher School of the Committee of the National Security.

Higher education in Tajikistan has undergone substantial transformation over the past 25 years as a result of social and economic transition challenges of the nation. Transforming the former Soviet institutes into universities and establishing new ones has changed the higher education landscape. The numbers of higher education institutions and student enrollment have significantly increased, as well as the number of new programs, which reflects the needs of an emerging market economy; however, there is still a long way to building high quality education in the country.

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# Higher Education in Post-Soviet Turkmenistan

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## Introduction

Turkmenistan is a country where legislation regarding general education has not translated to dramatic variation in its institutional landscape. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the number of higher education institutions has increased markedly from four (plus the Academy of Sciences) to twenty-one. However, the style of instruction, the types of institutions and the way higher education institutions are organized did not change much at all. The participation rate in higher education is stable but low, with higher education institutions accommodating only around seven percent of the 100,000 annual graduates. Each year the number of first-year students increases modestly and new higher education institutions are being built to meet requirements. Nevertheless, at this time the country is not meeting the needs in the area of higher education. This paper will discuss the salient characteristics of reform since the onset of independence, taking note of the two presidential regimes that have ruled.

## Niyazov's Golden Era: Early Post-Independence Reform

In the early 1990s, the policy on education was laid out with Niyazov's 1993 program "Bilim" (Education). Legal framework around it expanded with the law "About Education in Turkmenistan," adopted in October 1993, and the President's 18 November 1993 Decree "On approval of state programs to implement the new education policy of the President of Turkmenistan Saparmyrat Turkmenbashi in 1993-1997." It was based upon these legal documents that in 1995, general education in Turkmenistan was reduced from ten to nine years.

## Ruhnama

President Niyazov's *Ruhnama* was a two-volume work combining history, philosophy and ideology to create a text that aimed to instruct Turkmen in their moral, spiritual, and political lives. The books contained President Niyazov's personal version of Turkmen folk-history, spiritual guidance, as well as his own autobiography. Volume one was introduced into the academic curriculum in 2002 where it became foundational to all learning in Turkmenistan, shattering an already fragile curriculum (Horak, 2005: 314). Designed to indoctrinate students into Niyazov's self-serving ideology, *Ruhnama* replaced such

courses as History, Social Studies, Philosophy, Algebra, Physical Education and Physics.

## Two Plus Two Program

On July 4, 2003, the Cabinet of Ministers announced that in order to gain practical experience high-school graduates would be required to have two-year's work experience in their selected area of study before they could graduate from higher education institutions. Thus, children who wished to pursue higher education were expected to find an internship or paid position in a country where unemployment was estimated to be between 30 percent in urban areas and 60 percent in rural areas. Locals dubbed this the "two-plus-two program," referring to the fact that the two years of internship left students of four-year programs with only two years of formal learning.

## Berdymuhammedov: The Epoch of the Great Revival

Under Turkmenistan's second President, Gurbanguly Berdymuhammedov, the education sector has been a focus for reorganization and development. The president has repeatedly declared education reform to be one of his top priorities. After his election to the presidency in February 2007, Berdymuhammedov launched a major reform of Turkmenistan's education system starting with his 15 February 2007 decree "On improvement of the education system in Turkmenistan." With that decree the school system was re-structured from nine to ten years, higher educational institutions to five years, and medical and some art institutes to six years. [1]

## Early Promises

Between 2008 and 2011, schools and universities phased out lessons based on *Ruhnama*. Entrance exams based on *Ruhnama* were ended in August 2014 by declaration of the president. However, the new president's books have replaced the writings of President Niyazov, and Berdymuhammedov's ideology now fills the public sphere. [2]

## Important Initiatives

Perhaps President Berdymuhammedov's most important initiative in education was his 1 March 2013 extension of secondary schooling to twelve years. This law has had ramifications for higher education as well since it means that there are a greater number of students graduating with the credentials that will allow them to pursue higher education both domestically and abroad.

## Study Abroad

Another influential reform was the 2014 recognition of foreign diplomas earned after 1993, which Niyazov had declared invalid in 2004. Citizens of Turkmenistan holding a foreign degree may have their diploma recognized with a certificate after successful completion of two exams: one in Social Studies and one in the applicant's field of specialization. These exams, offered in the Turkmen language only, are held twice a year in January and July. [3]

## Bologna Process?

On September 1, 2014, a new university was opened that is somewhat experimental for Turkmenistan: the International University of Humanitarian Sciences and Development. The experimental aspects are that it is organized according to the Bologna model and the language of instruction is English. The philosophy behind the university's founding was to create a Turkmen higher education institution that would meet international standards and compete with the internationally recognized Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan.

Turkmenistan is not a signatory to the Bologna Process. However, there are long term plans to bring higher education institutions in line with the Bologna model. This is significant as officially neutral Turkmenistan does not often join coalitions or unions. It signals that the government is growing more comfortable with the importation of outside ideas.

## Conclusion

Turkmenistan has undergone two definitive periods of post-Soviet educational reform. The first period coincided with the presidency of Niyazov (1990-2006), the second with the rule of president Berdymuhammedov (2007-present). While the number of universities and institutes has increased overall, the number of students attending higher education institutions is still lower than it could be.

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- [1] See the article "Turkmenistan secondary schools graduate first-in-many-years 10th form pupils" (May 24, 2008) [retrived from http://www.turkmenistan.ru/](http://www.turkmenistan.ru/)
- [2] See the article "The King's Book Is Dead, Long Live The King's Book" (January 21, 2014) [retrived from http://rferl.org/articleprintview/25237344.html](http://rferl.org/articleprintview/25237344.html)
- [3] See the article "Turkmenistan to impose severe restrictionsonforeigndiplomas"(March06,2014)[retrivedfrom http://www.chrono-tm.org/en/2014/03/turkmenistan-to-impose-severe-restrictions-on-foreign-diplomas/](http://www.chrono-tm.org/en/2014/03/turkmenistan-to-impose-severe-restrictions-on-foreign-diplomas/)
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# Higher Education Reforms in Uzbekistan: Expanding Vocational Education at the Expense of Higher Education?

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## Higher Education Before Independence

Upon independence in 1991, Uzbekistan inherited a higher education system that was organisationally and structurally similar to those found in other members of the former Soviet Union. In 1989, there were 43 higher education institutions in Uzbekistan, including 40 specialised institutes and 3 comprehensive universities. Around 310,000 students were enrolled in five-year degree programs, of which around 45% in programs offered in the evenings or by correspondence (Brunner and Tillett 2007, p. 158). With approximately 15% of the relevant age cohort studying at higher education institutions in 1991, access to higher education in the country was one of the lowest in the former Soviet Union (UNDP 2009).

## Ad Hoc Reforms of the Early 1990s

Uzbekistan's higher education sector has experienced important changes since 1991. Several new higher education institutions were created in quick succession in the early 1990s, taking the total number to 58 by 1996. The rationale for setting these institutes up was dictated by both the demands of the new economic system and the new statehood which necessitated strengthening and expanding of state institutions. A few private higher education institutions also emerged in the early 1990s. Generally, these had low entry requirements, and most were not adequately resourced in terms of personnel and physical infrastructure. Fearing sub-standardization, the government soon decided not to allow any private sector involvement in higher education, resulting in the demise of this newly emerging market segment.



Higher education institutions can be classified into six types under the new system. These include comprehensive universities, specialised universities, institutes, academies, regional branches of specialised higher education institutes, and branches of foreign universities. There were 78 higher education institutions in 2015, comprising 11 comprehensive universities, 10 specialised universities, 35 institutes, 2 academies, 13 regional branches of higher education institutions, and 7 branches of foreign universities. With the exception of the latter, all higher education institutions are state-owned. Foreign university branches, which come from Italy (1), Korea (1), Russia (3), Singapore (1) and the United Kingdom (1), are a relatively new phenomenon and their share in higher education provision is only marginal (around 2%).

The reorganization of higher education admissions rules, which attempted to remove abusive discretionality from the entrance examination process, was arguably one of the most significant reforms of the early 1990s. The new system of testing candidates, which was based on multiple-choice questions and administered externally by the State Test Centre, was formally adopted in 1994. In 1994, the authorities also introduced a mixed funding formula under which higher education places became increasingly privately funded.

## Fundamental Reforms:

### National Program for Personnel Training

The authorities' overall vision for the education system reforms was formulated in the National Program for Personnel Training, which reorganized the existing five-year degree courses, and aspirantura (first post-graduate education level, equivalent to PhD programs) and doktorantura (highest-level post-graduate program, equivalent to habilitation that exists in a number of countries) programs into the Bologna process style bachelor's degrees (four-years), master's degrees (two years), and PhD (Majidov et al. 2010). The Program, which became law in 1997, clearly reflected the authorities' conscious choice to expand vocational education rather than higher education, which also explains why access to higher education stagnated at the 'elite' stage of expansion (Trow 1974) in the post-independence period. The implicit argument behind this decision was that, given the relatively unsophisticated state of the national economy, which relied largely on commodity production, services, and small-scale manufacturing, the economy would be best served by the expansion and modernization of the vocational education sector.

### Higher Education Access: Stagnation at the 'Elite' Stage of Expansion

Although the number of full-time higher education students increased from around 180,000 in 1989 to around 250,000 in 2015, the mismatch between the demand and supply widened during the post-independence period. This can be explained by several key factors, including the gradual phasing out of the courses offered in the evenings

or by correspondence by the late 1990s, the dynamics of demand, e.g., population growth from around 21 million in 1991 to around 31 million in 2015, and the rigidity of higher education supply. For example, gross enrolment rates, calculated as the number of students in higher education divided by the number of 19-24 year-olds, fell from 15 in 1991 to 9 in 2012 (World Bank 2014 p.23), and the number of higher education applicants increased from 106,000 in 1996 to more than 540,000 in 2014 – a more than fivefold increase in demand. In contrast, available full-time higher education enrolment places, which measure the higher education supply, increased only modestly, going up from around 49,000 in 1996 to 58,000 in 2014. The expansion of the vocational education sector also played a role: by lowering return on vocational education, it subsequently made a greater number of vocational education graduates seek entry into higher education, creating bottleneck effect as ambitious applicants attempt entry into higher education more than once. As a result, in 2014, the overall number of applicants for higher education places (around 540,000) was around 40,000 more than the number of secondary education graduates.

## Concluding Remarks

The demands of the new market-based economic system and the requirements of building and strengthening state institutions to support the transition process were the key drivers for higher education reforms in Uzbekistan. But the state was and remains the main initiator and implementer of reforms in the higher education sector. This strictly top-down approach to reforms, however, has not been successful in improving access to higher education. It stagnated at the 'elite' stage of expansion mainly as a result of the state's conscious strategic choice to expand the vocational education sector instead.

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# Higher Education Landscape in Post-Soviet Armenia: Diversification in Response to Convergence

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## Abstract

The article provides a brief overview of the transformations in the Armenian higher education that have led to mainly horizontal and, to some extent, vertical differentiation of the system. The main drivers behind the diversification are market economy, national identity resurrection, and internationalization agenda at the government level leading to better visibility of qualifications and research. Although it is still early to speak about the level of convergence in actual implementation practices, at policy debate level higher education institutions in Armenia are becoming more convergent with those at the European level.

## Post-Soviet Transformations

With the collapse of the Soviet regime, higher education in Armenia underwent major transformations driven by ideological and political factors resulting in system differentiation at horizontal and, to a lesser extent, vertical levels. The contextual factors affecting the alteration of the institutional landscape are mainly related to the shift to a market economy, national identity resurrection, and internationalization agenda promoted by the government.

Prior to the 1990s, the higher education system was uniform with centralized approach to higher education institution governance. The only directives that were eligible for implementation came from a higher strata — the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Moscow, and were imposed on higher education institutions without any right to deviate. In 1988, the number of higher education institutions in Soviet Armenia was 13 (all public), of which only Yerevan State University qualified as a full university. The rest consisted of 11 professionally-oriented institutes and 1 conservatory. The schools of higher learning had a student body of 55,700, specializing in 103 professions leading to a five-year specialist diploma. Just before the fall of the Soviet Union, Armenia enjoyed

a strong body of professionals advancing research in the fields of hydro-energy, nuclear energy, radio-electronics, machinery production, precision engineering, laser technology, biochemistry, microbiology, light textile and heavy industry. Enrolment per 10,000 inhabitants in Armenia was 161 against the USSR average of 177 (UNESCO 1990). Per every thousand of the employed population, 192 and 222 had higher and secondary professional education respectively (UNESCO 2000).

Major changes in the system were registered as of academic year 1999-2000, when a move from “elite” higher education to mass production became vivid. Massification in higher education is explained by several factors: demand for a more qualified work force, growing prestige of higher education, the country’s strategic priority of a knowledge-economy to name but a few. As opposed to the higher education system of the 1990s, the new Law on Education (1999) allowed for a diversity of higher education providers to enter the market. Thus, starting from 1999 up to 2008 new types of higher education institutions mushroomed. The initiators were mainly private entrepreneurs and former leaders of public higher education institutions.

However, having set no boundaries to private initiatives, the system found itself with abundance of private providers whose quality was and still is largely questioned. Because of the lack of capacity to satisfy market demand for certain qualifications, the new private providers went on offering the same curricula offered by public higher education institutions with much more limited resources. To solve the issue, the number of higher education institutions has been reduced from 98 in 1999 to 63 in 2013 and 57 in 2015 with persistent efforts of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). The decline in the number was due to: (1) toughening licensure criteria; (2) university mergers (applied in very few cases); (3) imposing state unified entrance exams on private higher education institutions, and (4) a steady drop in enrolments due to the decreased birth rates throughout the 1990s and early 2000s.

## Diversification of Higher Education

Driven by internationalization vision and the demands of the market economy, higher education landscape is gradually becoming diverse with full universities [1], specialized universities, institutes, academies, conservatory, and research institutes. The system evolved to host higher education institutions with a diversity of legal statuses: public, intergovernmental, transnational, and private, which could further be differentiated between for-profit and non-for profit providers. Overall, there are 53 local (20 public and 33 private), 4 intergovernmental [2], 9 transnational [3] higher education institutions and 35 research institutes (the latter offer master and doctoral programs) in Armenia. Some public higher education institutions operate under relevant ministries but most of them are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science. In average, about 120,000 students are enrolled in higher education as opposed to 10,000 before the 1990s.

As for the vertical differentiation, it is increasingly becoming a major concern for the government, higher education institutions and stakeholders at large. Higher education institutions are joining international/national rankings and classifications to enable measurement of the achievements and comparative analysis across time and systems. Among the steps leading to vertical differentiation was the attempt of the government to invite highly ranked higher education institutions to establish their branch campuses in Armenia (e.g., Moscow State University).

Major transformations were also caused by Armenia's joining the Bologna Declaration in 2005. As a result, new buffer bodies were established to manage accountability (the Armenian National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance) and qualification recognition (the ArmNaric). The Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF) was adopted in 2011 to promote alignment of the qualifications with those at the European level (EQF). Next, a move to a two-tier education with 4+2 model was completed. As of 2007 all the higher education institutions began implementing the European Credit Transfer System. Diploma Supplements were subsequently introduced to promote transparency and recognition of the qualifications awarded.

## Conclusion

In sum, the transformations in the Armenian higher education system in the form of differentiation at diverse levels is an apparent trend. Considering the fact that the drivers behind this differentiation are predominantly market requirements and political strategies at the government level leading to international visibility with regard to qualifications and research, Armenia's higher education system is governed by a balance of national and global forces leading to convergence. Although it is still early to talk about the actual practical results, at policy debate level Armenia's higher education system is becoming more convergent with European ones. It is primarily done through the introduction of such major tools as the ANQF, independent quality assurance and accountability system, operationalization of credit transfer and accumulation system, a move towards two-tier education (BA and MA) and others.

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## Notes

- [1] Offer higher, postgraduate and supplementary education in a wide variety of branches of natural and sociological fields, science, technology, and culture, as well as providing opportunities for scientific research.
- [2] Intergovernmental are the higher education institutions that are established through an agreement between two countries, e.g., American University of Armenia, French University of Armenia.
- [3] Transnational are the higher education institutions that offer home qualifications in a host setting, e.g., Moscow State University in Armenia
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## Higher Education Snapshot of Azerbaijan

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## Drivers of Change in Higher Education

During the Soviet times, Azerbaijan's higher education system resembled that of other Soviet republics. Higher education institutions catered industry and public institutions with specialized labor to serve the system. Education was tightly controlled by the government and shaped by the needs of the economy. Since the independence, higher education system has changed and developed under the influence of internal (demographic, political, social, and economic) and external factors (international relations, involvement of international development organizations, etc.). Increased interest in privatization and private institutions, emerging need for meeting the demand for skilled labor in the new open market economy, and the goal of upgrading the system in accordance with international standards to better integrate into the world were amongst the major drivers of change.



## Institutional Diversity and Differentiation

Changes following the independence were reflected in numbers and diversity of institutions. In 1990, right before the collapse of the Soviet Union, there were 17 higher education institutions providing education to 105,000 students in Azerbaijan. During the academic year 2013-14, about 151,000 students studied in 53 institutions. The establishment of new public universities was carried out through merging and splitting previously existing universities as well as non-university institutions. For instance, eleven teacher technicums (technical vocational schools) in different regions of Azerbaijan were upgraded to branches of Azerbaijan Teachers Institute and later, united under Azerbaijan Pedagogical University. "Institutes" are slowly phasing out in the system as they are relabeled as "universities."

The upgrade of former Soviet institutes into universities was also followed by program expansion and system developments. Major increase was observed in the number of comprehensive higher education institutions due to the government's regional development policy. During the Soviet time, there was only one comprehensive university in the country – Azerbaijan State University. There are five state and eleven private comprehensive universities now.

Unlike during the Soviet period, most of the regional institutions nowadays provide not specialized but rather comprehensive education. However, when universities are compared, there is an apparent difference in relation to research and internationalization policies between regional institutions and those in the capital. State universities in the capital city and some private universities focus more on research and attracting international students, while regional universities perform low on these two dimensions.

## Expansion of Private Universities

The increase in the number of higher education institutions was partially due to degraded quality of vocational education and its decreased value in the country, as well as to the expansion of private and cross border universities. Within the first fifteen years after the independence (1990-2005) gross enrolment ratio in vocational education fell from 38.9% in 1990 to 14.2% (AEU & UNESCO 2008). Therefore, more than 100 private post-secondary (vocational colleges) and higher education institutions were established during the first five years of independence. The key factor that propelled the increase was the society's awakening interest in privatization and private enterprise. Corruption issues and low educational quality in public institutions also contributed towards the appeal to the private institutions; instead of embarking upon studies with uncertain cost due to bribery at a public university, parents and students started viewing private universities as a better alternative (Catterall & McGhee 1996). Growing demand in graduates with English language skills trained in important fields such as business, management and administration and public universities' failure to meet this demand created fertile conditions for the private sector.

## Higher Education Enrolment

However, the increase in the number of higher education institutions and interest in higher education was not followed by a rapid and prominent growth in student enrolment. On the contrary, gross enrolment ratio declined in the first years of independence and reached the 1980s level only in 1998. Decrease in enrolment was caused by the introduction of tuition fees and new admission system. Due to economic decline, poverty and war after the independence, families could afford neither tuition fees nor the costs of tutoring for admission exams.

The expansion of the private sector ceased too with the introduction of new quality assurance mechanisms. While some private universities established themselves as institutions providing fair and quality education, others were notorious for corruption and low quality. Therefore, only 10 out of 100 newly established private institutions acquired formal legal status after being evaluated by an expert commission by the Ministry of Education and obtained permission for functioning from the Cabinet of Ministers in 1995 (Catterall & McGhee 1996).

Not only the decline in numbers but also limited resources, centralized admission process, tightly controlled higher education market and educational quality resulted in low participation rates in tertiary education (Aliyev 2011). In 2012, 20.2% of the five-year-after-secondary-school cohort were enrolled in vocational (4.2%) and higher education (16%).

## Conclusion

Currently, higher education system in Azerbaijan encompasses diverse public and private institutions, which are ranked yearly based on their reputation and attractiveness to students. Institutions also demonstrate horizontal diversity with various foci of study and research. Yet, the diversity and differentiation of higher education does not make it more accessible for students. Azerbaijan still remains a country with an elitist higher education system with one of the lowest enrolment rates among the former Soviet countries.

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# Higher Education Development in Independent Georgia: Key Aspects

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## 1990s: Expansion and Privatization

The 1990s and early 2000s saw a spectacular expansion of higher education in Georgia with enrolment rates relative to the appropriate age group surging from just above 25 percent in 1990 to about 50 percent in 2004. Such an expansion — a trend observed in some other post-soviet countries as well — happened mostly through the privatization of costs, namely through the introduction of tuition fees at public higher education institutions, and the emergence of privately-owned ones (Sharvashidze 2005). The latter, which started to appear in 1991, were at times of dubious quality, to say the least, and were often used to simply absorb the demand for higher education that seemed to be growing amidst unemployment and sharp economic decline.

The increasing demand could, as some theorists argue, have been a result of potentially growing returns to education during the market transition (Nee 1989). However, as overall unemployment grew, it is questionable whether decisions to enter higher education were made based on the calculations about future returns. Another potential reason for the growing inflow of the youth to higher education could be diminishing vocational education sector. Designed with the purpose to provide elementary and mid-level workforce for various sectors of the Soviet economy, primary and secondary vocational education systems were no longer essential as these sectors shrank. Therefore their potential students redirected themselves elsewhere.

Perhaps, in addition to these reasons, demand for more higher education was already there but only a certain number of students could be admitted through tough and often corrupt procedures due to the centrally imposed limits on enrolments. As soon as private forms of ownership were authorized and public universities were allowed to charge

tuition fees, the demand materialized into growing access. If we consider the financial burden imposed on families through the privatization of costs, enrolment expansion becomes even more striking. Demand for higher education throughout the 1990s and until present day seems to be very inflexible to the price imposed by providers, both public and private. Tuition fees were quite steep and they became the major source of income not only for private but for public universities too. In some cases, revenues received from tuition fees by certain higher education institutions were more than double in volume compared to the funding provided by the state (Gvishiani and Chapman 2002).

Another noteworthy trend in the changing landscape of Georgian higher education in the 1990s was disciplinary diversification. While by the end of 1980s only Tbilisi State University was providing education in a wide range of disciplines with other 19 institutions specializing in narrow fields or sectors, all old and new higher education institutions quickly adapted to changing realities and diversified the range of programs offered. Accordingly, almost all former institutes both in the capital and the regions rebranded themselves as universities.

Though extensive, these developments were largely ad-hoc in their nature and were not a part of the bigger consortied transformation plan. Management and governance of higher education institutions was very Soviet in style, research remained largely outside universities and confined to the academy of sciences. Introduction of the two-tier system of bachelor and master level studies was simply a mechanical transformation of the previously existing five-year course of study.

## Institutionalization of Changes

Starting in 2004, changes in higher education were carried out in a centralized and largely top-down manner in parallel with the bigger public governance reform agenda in the country. This, among other things, was reflected in the introduction and actual enforcement of strict accreditation procedures, which resulted in closing down many private higher education institutions and imposing limits on the number of students universities could admit based on their technical capacity. As a result, the number of newly admitted students in 2005 almost halved from its 2004 level.

The introduction of national standardized admission examinations the same year coincided with a fundamental change in the funding of higher education. The change, in line with the liberal economic ideology of the governing team, was carried out in two major ways. First, the mode of funding shifted from lump sum payments to universities to per student allocation; second, the overall share of private (household) costs in funding higher education increased even further (Chakhaia 2013).

One of the most significant breaks in the system created according to the Soviet tradition was stripping the Academy of Sciences of a large portion of funding and intro-

ducing a system of competitive research funding through a semi-independent agency. This way higher education institutions became eligible for receiving direct funding from the state for conducting research. Institutional differentiation between universities, teaching universities, and colleges was introduced based on the eligibility to conduct research and the level of degrees offered.

Comparing the current institutional landscape in Georgia with that of 1990, it is easy to note that the system has transformed substantively. There seems to be much more diversity in terms of disciplinary profile, form of ownership, integration of research and instruction, prestige and location.

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# Three Dimensions of Institutional Landscape Changes and Trends in Belarusian Higher Education

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## Three Types of Changes in Higher Education

We are going to analyze the changes in the Belarusian system of higher education during the post-soviet period with a focus on three aspects: horizontal diversification, vertical differentiation, and organizational interrelationship.

### Vertical Changes

In the process of highlighting the main features of this system in Belarus some typical characteristics have been selected. On the **vertical level** they include a hierarchy of higher education institutions resulting from government policies. This hierarchy consists of national, regional, and international rankings that made the existing vertical diversity more visible. According to this hierarchy, several types of higher education establishments can be identified: academy, university, institution, and college. In 1991, there were only 3 universities in Soviet Belarus, 17 big regional and 13 narrowly specialized institutions, and no colleges (thus 33 higher education institutions in total). In 2015, the Ministry of Education comprised 4 academies, 6 national-level and 10 regional-level comprehensive universities (mainly former pedagogical institutions), 8 institutions (mainly private), while other ministries supervised another 26 academies, universities, institutions, and colleges. There are no such categories as research or national universities in Belarus, though Belarusian State University, founded in 1921 (the first in the country), is considered to be the leader. It is the most prestigious university in Belarus, and it occupies the third position among post-soviet universities (after Moscow and Saint Petersburg State Universities) according to Webometrics Ranking of World Universities (2016).

### Horizontal Changes

**Horizontal diversification** increased with the creation of new private and public establishments and changes in the functioning of the former Soviet system of higher education. New private schools started to appear in 1994, and the total number of higher education institutions grew up to 59 in 1995/1996, largely because of the growth of the private sector that consisted of 20 institutions by 1996/1997. Later some of them were closed, so that in 2014/2015 there were only 9 private institutions with fewer than 35 thousand students.

### Changes in the Interrelationship between Institutions

**Organizational interrelationship** between higher education institutions has also changed from the logic of complementarity under the Soviet period to the logic of the competition for students and for resources. Public resources are very limited. In the current crisis the Ministry of Education did not have any particular "master plan" to guide institutional changes. The role of the Ministry was limited to general supervision of the diversification process, mainly financed by Belarusian students and their



families. In fact, not only the students of private institutions paid fees but almost two-thirds of the students in public institutions too. Only one-third of the students in public institutions enjoyed financial support provided by the Belarusian Ministry of Education (a limited number of state-financed student places mainly in "old, traditional" fields of study were fixed). In contrast, very few diplomas in new fields (humanities, social sciences or management) are financed from the public budget, therefore most of the students in these fields pay for their education. Thus, within the 20 years, the Belarusian Ministry of Education managed to reduce its expenditures from 1% to 0.7% of GDP despite the fact that until 2011/2012 the number of higher education institutions and students was growing.

In 2015, due to the demographic decrease the number of students declined, and therefore the state declared the need of reducing the total number of higher education institutions from 54 to 20 in the coming years. This decision is aimed to optimize their structure and further reduce public investment in the sector. However, the Ministry referred its decision to global practices: one institution of higher education is enough for one-million population.

### **Massification, Marketization, and Commercialization Trends in Higher Education**

#### **Changes Referred to the Labor Market Demands**

Belarusian state policy in higher education is currently more oriented to the labor market needs than it was before. It means that the system has to react to new demands of the labor market. The main mechanisms of realization of this goal include opening of new fields of studies, new specializations, and updating the content of educational programs. These changes have already occurred in many institutions of higher education.

#### **Mixed Results of Massification Policy**

Since the 1990s the growth of mass demand for higher education has caused the introduction of private institutions, while the lack of public resources has led to the introduction of tuition fees for more than half of all students at public institutions. Therefore the whole system of higher education became massified and commercialized. These trends have led to mixed results. So, student number grew fast: in the 2011/2012 academic year Belarus had 453 students per 10,000 population – more than any other post-Soviet state (Belarussian Education... 2013). Almost two-thirds of them studied in humanities, economics, and social sciences, while the labor market could not absorb them. Graduates with a bachelor's degree were not in demand on the labor market either, so this degree was not introduced in the new Code on Education (2011).

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## **Institutional Diversity of Moldovan Higher Education: 1991-2015 Developments and Future Trends**

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### **Higher Education in Soviet Moldova**

The Republic of Moldova has a long history of shifting borders, and a short history as an independent state. Higher education only expanded during the Soviet era, which saw 9 public higher education institutions come into existence between 1926 and 1988. On the one hand, ample state funding for higher education allowed an unprecedented growth in access to higher education, a well-developed technical and material base, and internationally comparable educational standards. On the other hand, high level of centralization of the Soviet educational system made it static and unable to adequately respond to the changing needs of a dynamic labor market. Strict educational centralization led to bureaucratization of management,

authoritarianism, excessive uniformity, lack of understanding of local conditions, stifling of 'bottom-up' initiative, and lack of academic mobility. At the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, participation in higher education was still the third lowest among all Soviet republics. [1]

## **The Development of Higher Education in the Republic of Moldova**

Higher education development in independent Moldova can be described as a process of expansion and consolidation. The 1990s were a time when tremendous changes (mostly decline) of the economy coincided with a sudden disappearance of governance structures (and, indeed, of the government itself) that regulated and assured the quality of the higher education system. Higher education institutions faced strong demand for new types of knowledge, while at the same time their ideological and economic foundations were in a state of rapid deterioration. Education entrepreneurs and (a little later) public higher education institutions took advantage of this situation by setting up new programs and establishing new higher education institutions, which led to a five-fold increase in the number of higher education institutions between 1989 and 1999, from 9 public higher education institutions to a total of 47, of which 32 were private and 15 public.

Private higher education institutions pioneered importing Western curricula, while new public higher education institutions were primarily established to train civil servants for the young state. All of the early new higher education institutions were initially conceived as an alternative to the existing higher education system. Of the ten higher education institutions founded between 1990 and 1995, seven were focused on economics, business administration, law or political science. Not only newly founded higher education institutions but also established ones set up such 'trendy' faculties. Because of the speed of this expansion and the resulting scarcity of qualified teaching staff, higher education institutions often had to make do with less than qualified personnel. Student numbers soared, in part driven by a market need for the qualifications higher education institutions had to offer, in part by the prestige higher education conferred on graduates, and in part because the bleak economic situation offered few alternatives to young people. The lack of adequate state funding for higher education institutions created an incentive to attract and retain any fee-paying students, while the lack of (rigorous) regulation made higher education easy to enter, including those who didn't meet the requirements. Both private and public higher education institutions needed the supplementary income provided by tuition-paying students. The relation of fee-paying to budget students subsequently rose from roughly 1:1 in 2001 to almost 4:1 in 2006. As a consequence, the quality and, in turn, reputation of higher education began to suffer, in particular that of young, regional and non-publicly owned higher education institutions. Emigration of qualified teaching

staff and the practice of teaching at several higher education institutions to improve one's income further contributed to this decline in quality.

The expansion phase reached its peak and turning point around 2005. Many private higher education institutions failed to survive the intermittent economic crisis and competition for students with the public education sector in which they were at a disadvantage. The higher education system had expanded to such a degree that the available offer of places at higher education institutions had saturated and even exceeded demand. On the other end of the supply-demand equation, high incidences of emigration and low birthrates led to a decline in the number of potential students. The state as a regulating agency had further consolidated structures and was implementing stricter forms of quality assurance which were restricting the operation of sub-par higher education institutions, and — more recently — also clamped down on corrupt practices in school-leaving and university entrance examinations, which further reduced the number of potential students. Poor reputation of some higher education institutions made them less attractive to those students who were eligible for higher education and who had increasingly more choice between affordable options, not only in Moldova but also abroad. The consequences of declining student numbers have long been visible in the declining number of private higher education institutions, while public ones are so far kept alive by state funding. [1] Of the 32 private higher education institutions that existed in 2000, only 11 survived. As of 2015/2016, there are 30 higher education institutions in operation in Moldova, 19 of them public.

## **Types of Higher Education Institutions in Moldova in 2015/2016**

The above-mentioned developments have shaped Moldova's higher education landscape. Based on the dimensions of size (in terms of student number), scope (in terms of types and number of study programs), research activity, prestige, and internationalization as discussed above, a number of distinct types of Moldovan higher education institutions can be distinguished:

**Large high-prestige comprehensive universities (Type I)** have developed a good reputation in teaching and — partially — research, as well as developed infrastructure, and a strong team of teachers. Over two-thirds of all students are enrolled at these universities. All except one (Balti) are located in the capital city, Chisinau. **Specialized middle-to high-prestige universities (Type II)** offer high quality study programs in a small range of subjects such as medicine, economics, or arts. These universities have developed a good reputation in their respective fields. All of them are located in Chisinau. Three **regional public universities (Type III)** were founded between 1991 and 2004 in small cities in the south of the republic. Barely over 3% of all Moldovan students study at these new regional universities located in Cahul, Comrat, and Taraclia. These higher education institutions are characterized by a small

number of students (between 300-700 students in total), a reduced range of studies and little research activity. There are 5 **highly specialized public higher education institutions (Type IV)**. These were founded with the objective of educating future staff for government-related institutions such as ministries, the armed forces, or the academy of science. **Small private higher education institutions (Type V)** play only a marginal role. They often struggle with lack of infrastructure (they typically have to rent premises), small number of students, and the absence of research activity. In addition to these higher education institutions, there are four **special higher education institutions (Type VI)** with a unique profile that does not fit any type.

## Conclusions

Comparing the situation in 1991 to 2015, one cannot help but note that the Soviet-era institutions still form the core of the higher education system. Only two truly new higher education institutions have grown to resemble the 'old' institutions in terms of size, scope and quality, while most newer higher education institutions are smaller and focus serving the regions or very specific market niches, and make up only a small part of the higher education system. The demographic and economic situation makes it unlikely that all higher education institutions will be able to thrive in their present form. Those higher education institutions with the least fortunate geographical and demographic potential in the regions as well as those with the worst reputation will likely be hit hardest. Either as a consequence of stricter accreditation and quality assurance requirements, government intervention or simply due to a lack of students, many higher education institutions will likely disappear. To the degree that this consolidation process channels available funding towards the strongest higher education institutions, this development may even contribute to the quality of higher education in the country.

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## Notes

[1] *The low participation in higher education was due to a combination of a predominantly agrarian character of the national economy and lack of academic tradition in the Moldovan society.*

[2] *Some experts argue that in favor of long-term viability, quality and efficiency, the number of public higher education institutions should be reduced from the current 19 to just seven (Turcan et al. 2015).*

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# Stages of Policy Changes and Institutional Landscape of Russian Higher Education

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## The Soviet Legacy and Rapid Massification

Russian higher education system was expanding during the Soviet times. Higher education was bounded by the industrial economy that implied a major focus on "provision of manpower," hence, on education and training. In the Soviet system, the majority of higher education institutions were highly specialized and affiliated to corresponding industrial ministries or departments. The federal design of the country underlay the spread of different types of higher education institutions within all Russian regions as well. In general, there were three types of higher education institutions according to their functions and integration into national economy.

Comprehensive universities spread wide across most of the regions. Besides the support for the local economy, they also provided faculty for other higher education institutions and schools. National industrial institutes were attached to the Soviet industrial clusters and particular factories, thus subordinate to particular ministries. Finally, there were regional higher education institutions with a particular specialization on teacher's training, medicine etc., serving for socio-economic development of the region.

After the collapse of the USSR the system witnessed dramatic transformations. During the first post-Soviet decade the rate of growth was extremely high. The number of students had increased 2.25 times by 2002. Then the pace slackened, and after the peak in 2009 the system started to decline. Russian higher education has been rapidly moving toward a 'universal' stage of expansion. By the 2009 peak the 17-25 age cohort participation in higher education was 35%, and according to the World Bank statistics participation in tertiary education was more than 77%.



The system expanded in terms of absolute size too. By the end of the Soviet era there were 514 higher education institutions in Russia. Since then the system has grown 4.5 times. Now there are about 950 public and private higher education institutions, and 1320 their satellites.

### Three Waves of Policy Changes in Higher Education

The changes in policy agenda through the post-Soviet period affected the structure of modern higher education system. During the quarter-century the system went through three major stages of higher education policy.

In the 1990s the economic and political circumstances determined the 'laissez-faire' period in higher education development. The government had not intervened in higher education system with large reforms until the early 2000s. Yet, new legislation provided new opportunities for expansion: private higher education institutions, doubletrack tuition fee system in public universities, diversification of higher education institutions' activities. Besides, the government's inability to support the system financially in its large scope left it to the households to invest in higher education. The new socio-economic conditions underlay the drift toward higher education as a social norm. The rapid expansion of part-time education and the scope of satellite higher education institutions reflected the demand for 'cheap' education.

Higher education development has been considered as a priority since the second half of the 2000s. The government started investing in institutional reforms, such as Bologna process, unified entry exam, programs for integration of education and science. It initiated support programs to inspire higher education institutions for change. In search for a proper structure of leading institutions the government launched several mergers establishing higher education super-institutions – federal universities. The program of national research universities provided special support for research-intensive higher education institutions.

In 2012 a new wave began. The driving ideas behind the reforms were derived from new public management, e.g. evaluation. The Ministry of Education and Science launched performance-based monitoring of higher education institutions in order to optimize the system. The efforts to fight diploma mills led to mergers and dismissals. On the other end of the spectrum, the new excellence program (5-top-100) provided a frame to stimulate research activity in selected universities. The new program aimed at creating flagship universities (by mergers) focuses on second-tier higher education institutions with a focus on regional development as a priority.

### Modern Higher Education Landscape

Massification and targeted government reforms shaped the modern higher education system landscape. The expansion led to great differentiation of higher education institutions in terms of their sizes. Part-time education and privately funded participation contributed to this trend a lot. higher

education institutions responded to changes in the environment by diversifying the range of fields (e.g., popular demand). The Bologna process influenced the balance between bachelor's, master's, and traditional 5-year 'specialist' tracks. The measures aimed at extracting a group of leading research universities might be seen in R&D revenues and federal funding shares. The introduction of the Unified State Examination (national exam) and the retention of the school Olympiads (academic competitions) system determined higher education institution diversity based on their selectivity. With regard to these changes, we clustered higher education institutions into several groups:

Large selective universities, supported by the measures toward the global world-class movement formed the group of research universities. About 4% of students are estimated to enroll in them. The internal diversification and growth of part-time enrollment determined the group of large regional public universities with about 32% of all students. These are usually situated in regional centers, and the state supports them significantly.

Small specialized higher education institutions were preserved after the Soviet times and now attract about 8% of all students. Most of them are highly selective medical institutions and industrial higher education institutions which managed to sustain their narrow orientation despite the economic fluctuations.

As a reaction to demand growth in high participation systems, demand-absorption higher education institutions accumulate a large share of the system. This segment primarily consists of mass public universities with 36% of all students. These higher education institutions have low selectivity and high state funding as a result of social guarantees of higher education. Besides, three sub-groups of privately funded institutions represent different aspects of popular demand. In total, they absorb about 20% of enrolment. First, small specialized higher education institutions provide low-cost education in popular fields (usually economics, management, social sciences). Second, the diversified private non-selective higher education institutions have a low share of full-timers. Third, so-called 'open' higher education institutions focus entirely on part-time distant education, providing education in popular fields.

The quarter-century evolution of the Russian institutional landscape consisted of periods of rapid marketization and state-driven correction. The 'natural' diversification times were followed by a selective system segmentation into several tiers. During the post-Soviet period most higher education institutions changed their profiles (even though keeping their old names). Many new institutions have emerged; they form entirely new groups of higher education institutions. Yet, the Russian higher education design is still work-in-progress. The development is under path-dependency effect originated both from the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Different stakeholders participate in the ongoing process of consensus-building, either in the policy-making field or public discussions.

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# From Soviet Union to European Union: Estonian Higher Education Landscape after 1991

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## Introductory Notes

Estonian higher education system can be characterised as ever-changing – the country was reforming its higher education during the post-Soviet years, and is still in the process. Precisely therefore we can safely say that the current state of affairs in Estonian higher education is not so much specific to but to post-socialism, facing the problems that were already created after the re-independence. We claim that Estonian higher education is on its way to become even more flexible for students, precarious to work in, and instrumentalised by nature, if not all that yet. This paper guides us through some aspects of the resilience of the system and its certain characteristics within the context of simultaneous europeanization and neoliberalization of the system.

## Resilient Higher Education Institutions: From Swedish Times to Soviet Times

During the Polish–Swedish Wars the territory of Estonia was incorporated into Sweden in 1617, remaining under the rule of the Swedish king Gustav Adolf II, and this era was favourable for the development of education. In 1632, Tartu Grammar School was named Academia Gustaviana, and this is regarded as the establishment of the first university in Estonia – the University of Tartu, that was the most significant center of national higher education during the pre-Soviet period. There were also a number of other higher education institutions that taught specialists in narrow fields – engineers, artists, musicians, and others. Estonia was able to produce a Western-style but nationally minded, Estonian-speaking intelligentsia that met the needs of the country at the time of independence after 1918. It can be suggested that Estonian higher education institutions during the pre-Soviet period were between the

Humboldtian and Statist tradition: there was freedom of study and teaching, and the universities were governed by their academic bodies but they operated according to the state budgetal decisions, with the Ministry of Education stating the student places, study fees, wages and salaries in the universities.

After World War II, when Estonia was incorporated into the Soviet Union, the introduction of the principles of the Soviet education system began and possibilities for developing independent national education policy were left very limited. Education system was now constructed as an integral part of party-state institutional structure and organised on the basis of three main principles: centralization, standardization, utilitarian and egalitarian goals. A strong functional approach was prevailing in education, while the officially declared goal of education reforms was to provide more opportunities for the previously disadvantaged groups. Even though Estonian higher education system was significantly redesigned in the Soviet period, dropping the Humboldtian and emphasising the Statist model, it managed to maintain Estonian as the language of instruction, and Estonia was permitted – especially in the 1970s and 1980s – to gradually develop more independent education policies. By 1988 the education system in Estonia included six higher education institutions: one university, four special institutes (pedagogical, technical, agricultural institutes, institute for art) and a conservatory. Besides these, there were a number of vocational and specialised schools.

## Symbolic Drift and Binary Divide: Between Freedom and State?

Following independence from the Soviet Union, Estonian higher education underwent rapid changes. The neoliberal doctrine, which stressed the need to diminish the role of state in public life, had a great impact by stimulating an explosion of private educational institutions and the development of institutional autonomy. Universities changed from “hollow organizations” with limited discretion over resource allocation to “employment organizations” with considerable independence with regard to decision-making in most areas, and the state has since “released its hold” concerning the quality assurance management and implementation (Udam 2013). Still, while Estonian higher education policy seems to be a part of the more general neoliberal agenda, in terms of political leadership and public (including EU) funds, the Estonian government, via its Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency and various commissions, has been reported to have an increasing will to intervene as well as the power to do so. Beyond re-adjustment of Estonian higher education system to the European frameworks – such as Bologna process – it should not be overlooked that the re-acquisition of independence in 1991 was also accompanied by the dismantling of the centrally regulated system of vocational education and training. Reform policies were introduced in the field, and these were greatly influenced by common EU priorities aimed at raising

the effectiveness and quality of vocational education and training (Ümarik 2015).

Additionally, to 'intensify' research activities in these new universities, and as part of restructuring the Estonian Academy of Science from the institutional to individual membership, the Academy's research institutes were transferred to major universities. Estonian universities contribute heavily to the fact that Estonia is considered quite successful in publishing in highly cited international peer-reviewed academic journals and in acquiring competitive international research funding (see Ilves 1994, Allik 2011). In Estonia, the level of the European Commission framework program funding is far more beyond government funding of research than EU average, indicating the insecurity of competitive project-based research work in Estonia. This has brought about binary divide in higher education institutions: firstly, performance indicators clearly distinguish academic universities from other higher education institutions, and secondly, set bigger universities apart from others. How did this pattern emerge?

### Phases of Post-Soviet Changes: From Expansion to Contraction?

Late-socialist and post-socialist reforms in Estonian higher education can be divided into the following four periods (Tomusk 2004):

The first period (1988-1992) saw how Estonia developed a rather influential, grassroots movement for education renewal – while still formally within the framework of the Soviet Union. As cooperative enterprises were legalised in 1986, the first private higher education institutions were founded in 1989, when Tartu State University abolished the word "state" from its title and declared academic autonomy. Other public higher education institutions changed their titles and became universities.

The second period (1993-1998) saw the expansion of the system and the development of legal frameworks and quality assurance mechanisms. By the academic year 1993/94, there were 20 higher education institutions, and in 2002 – 49, all for a population of 1.3 million. This occurred through the establishment of private universities and professional higher education institutions; reorganization of specialised secondary schools as public professional schools; and new legislation allowing foreign universities to establish branches. With this the number of students enrolled increased 2.7 times.

The third period (1999–2005) indicated the next wave of reforms, hallmarked by the higher education reform plan 2002. The growth of the system was considered too fast, competition within the system was deemed fierce and the system was not fully geared towards the expectations set out in the Bologna Declaration.

The fourth period (since 2006) is marked by strengthening competitiveness and sustainability of the shrinking sector and increasing inequality of access.

### Higher Education Landscape in 2016: Holding Its Fortress or Furthering Precarity?

The current landscape can be described as a binary system where the main differentiation still goes between academic universities and professional institutions – similarly to 2003, and not much unlike 1993, when the latter were not considered part of higher education system. Formally there is no differentiation within the group of public universities: all of them provide education at all academic levels (bachelor's, master's, PhD) and are engaged in high-level, internationally visible research activities. Still, as universities also differ by size and fields of (main) specialization, their research profiles differ too. In terms of further differentiation between public universities, funding – including research grant based funding – varies greatly. It would thus be reasonable to distinguish between three types of universities: one "flagship university" - Tartu University; two big universities - Tallinn University of Technology and Tallinn University; and four specialised universities, including one private university. In conclusion, while the size of the sector has changed over the past 25 years, the 2016 number of higher education institutions is again comparable to that of 1993.

It remains to be seen to what extent the underlying processes of further neoliberalization would take hold in post-socialist context in Estonia, where the state has once again established itself as a major player in defining and redefining the goals and structure of higher education provision.

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# Trajectories of Higher Education Massification in Latvia

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## Trajectories of Higher Education Expansion

No doubt, participation in higher education in Latvia has increased since 1991 and presents a case of a mass higher education system. There were two main drivers for this development. One was the liberalization of higher education sector governance involving the emergence of privately funded higher education that were able to absorb larger numbers of students. Another one was the growing demand for higher education among both traditional and non-traditional student age cohorts, especially in the fields of social sciences.

## Liberalization of Higher Education Sector

Prior to 1991, market demand for higher education was not a crucial force driving participation in higher education because access to higher education was fully regulated by the state, which determined both the number of higher educational institutions and the numbers of student enrolment. It changed in 1991 as the legislative body of the Republic of Latvia, which had declared *de jure* independence from the Soviet Union, passed a new Education Law. This law enabled the emergence of private institutions of higher education, allowed tuition fees at both private and public institutions, and lifted state control over the total number of students that public institutions of higher education could admit. This law stipulated that the government would annually fund of a certain number of students per discipline. Hence, this law introduced dual-track tuition in Latvia enabling public institutions of higher education to receive governmental funding for a number of students and admit additional fee-paying students. The liberalization of higher education sector and the acknowledgement of higher education cost-sharing enabled the expansion of higher education sector making it possible to better absorb an increased public and market demand for modern higher education.

## Demand for Modern Higher Education

The demand for modern higher education was especially pronounced in the fields of social sciences such as political science, sociology, law, economics, and business. National and international resources were allocated towards creating up-to-date study programs in these fields of studies in Latvia. The number of students in social sciences at public institutions of higher education increased and eventually significantly exceeded the number of students in natural and technical sciences. By 2014, about 70% of all students in Latvia pursued study programs in social sciences and humanities. The steadily developing private sector was tapping into this demand for higher education in social sciences and grew into the largest private higher education sector in the Baltic countries. In 2014, there were 26 private institutions of higher education in Latvia, enrolling 34% of all students in the country.

## Higher Education as a Path in Lifelong Learning

The expansion of participation in higher education was characteristic but not limited to the traditional student age cohort. By 2014, higher education became one of the stages in lifelong learning engaging students of diverse age groups. While the traditional 17 to 23 age cohort students continued to represent the dominant share among all higher education seekers in the country with almost one-third of this age group participating in higher education, the share of mature students leapt too.

In 2014, two percent of the population between 24 and 65 years of age were pursuing higher education. It was a much larger share in comparison with 1991 when only 3% of the total 17 to 65 age population was enrolled in higher education. Participation in higher education in Latvia has more than doubled over the past quarter century.

### **From Expansion to Contraction: Challenges for Higher Education Sector in Latvia**

While evidence suggests that higher education in Latvia will retain its characteristic of mass higher education, data also shows that Latvia represents a case of a contracting higher education sector. It reached its peak of expansion in 2007, with the highest number of students ever in the national educational history, when institutions of higher education enrolled 32% of the traditional higher education age cohort. Since then the total number of students has been declining due to an overall depopulation caused by low birth rates and excessive emigration. In addition, institutions of higher education in Latvia are now part of the global higher education market where many students choose to study abroad. Thus, higher education establishments in Latvia will increasingly face the pressure to become more active in international student markets, as well as to develop strategies aimed at persuading local students to choose to study in their home country rather than pursue higher education abroad.

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# Reading List on Selected Countries

## Kazakhstan

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## Baltic Countries

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## New Publication

We are happy to present *The Global Academic Rankings Game*. This book is a result of a project coorganized by the National Research University Higher School of Economics and the Boston College Center for International Higher Education. It provides a much-needed perspective on how countries and universities react to academic rankings. Based on a unified case methodology of eleven key countries and academic institutions, this comprehensive volume provides expert analysis on this emerging phenomenon at a time when world rankings are becoming increasingly visible and influential on the international stage. Each chapter provides an overview of government and national policies as well as an in-depth examination of the impact that rankings have played on policy, practice, and academic life in Australia, Chile, China, Germany, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. *The Global Academic Rankings Game* contributes to the continuing debate about the influence of rankings in higher education and is an invaluable resource for higher education scholars and administrators as they tackle rankings in their own national and institutional contexts.

**The book  
is available  
at major  
bookstore  
chains.**



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## About HERB

Higher Education in Russia and Beyond (HERB) is a quarterly informational journal published by National Research University Higher School of Economics since 2014. HERB is intended to illuminate the transformation process of higher education institutions in Russia and counties of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The journal seeks to adduce the multiple-aspect opinions about current challenges and trends of regional higher education and give examples of the best local practices. Our audience represents wider international community of scholars and professionals in the field of higher education worldwide. The project is implemented as part of cooperation agreement between Higher School of Economics and Boston College Center of International Higher Education.

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