1 Governing Universities in Post-Soviet States

Peter D. Eckel

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In 1991, a grand if unintentional experiment in University governance began. Fifteen countries once under a unified and tightly controlled and regulated higher education system were all given a unique opportunity to evolve their own University systems in their own ways starting from the same place and at the same point in time. The dissolution of the Soviet Union set off a chain reaction of University reform that proceeded at assorted paces, through different iterations, and in various directions across the former Soviet states (Froumin & Kouzminov, 2018; Smolentseva, 2016; Uvaleyeva et al., 2019). The fifteen sovereign nations that emerged or reemerged each had a different history before incorporation into the Soviet Union and then a period of forced commonality. But after 1991, the countries' economic, political, and social systems developed in mutual but also independent ways (Baris et al., 2021). So did their University systems. "The similarities and differences between the national contexts, together with the challenges of the independence period, created a unique constellation of political, economic, sociocultural and demographic conditions in each country" (Smoletzeva et al., 2018, p. 2). Each constellation of factors in turn influenced the direction of the newly independent countries' higher education systems and how they are governed.

The region continues to change and be challenged by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the damage and instability that has created. The story of change and independence in the region, starting from the common point in 1991, is dynamic and ongoing. What the war's impact is on the region's

3

universities and how they are governed is unknown and will continue to be for some time.

1.2 GOVERNING UNIVERSITIES IN FORMER SOVIET COUNTRIES

The former Soviet countries' higher education institutions (HEIs) during Soviet times were very similar, regardless of their location and local history. This was due to a highly coordinated, centralized, and well-funded approach to post-secondary education reflecting the unique goals of the Communist government (Azimbayeva, 2017; Johnson, 2008). The system was intentionally structured to remove competition between HEIs. They were immune from market and economic forces (Rezaev & Starikov, 2017) but not political or ideological ones (Kuraev, 2016). Soviet higher education institutions had a sociopolitical role that was different from Western and Asian universities in that they were "specialized parts of a state-controlled machine for manpower production . . . and for reshaping the social and ethnic structure of the state" (Froumin & Kouzminov, 2018, p. 46). Throughout the USSR, HEIs taught in a common language, regardless of geolinguistic tradition; they shared the same degree structures, curricula, and textbooks; they were vocationally oriented and conducted little research, which was the domain of scientific institutes and academies (Froumin & Kouzminov, 2018; Johnson, 2008). The missions of HEIs tended to be discipline- and field-specific – for example, agriculture, economics, pedagogy, engineering, medicine. At the end of the Soviet era, only 8 percent of universities were comprehensive, offering degrees across an array of disciplines and fields (Smolentseva et al., 2018). The governance of HEIs was scattered, with many HEIs falling outside the control of the Ministry of Higher Education. One count noted that by 1990 the approximately 900 HEIs across the Soviet Union were governed by over 70 ministries and organizations (Avis, 1990).

However, in some countries, such as Armenia, Imperial Russia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, universities existed before the Soviet Union (Ait Si Mhamed et al., 2018; Froumin & Kouzminov, 2018; Karakhanyan, 2018; Leisyte et al., 2018; Saar & Roosalu, 2018). Here, universities with local focus and language instruction put down roots. These institutions were either absorbed into the Soviet structure or were closed during the Soviet period. Nevertheless, they often left a lasting impact on the mindset of the country, as a reminder about education for local relevance, and often became a starting point for post-independence higher education development and evolution.

Post-Soviet governments and their HEIs have faced a series of challenges since independence including finding their way in newly established market economies amid financial and political uncertainty and downturns; updating and broadening curricula and removing Soviet ideology; developing research capacities; coping with brain drain; and updating infrastructure, data systems, and facilities (Johnson, 2008; Smolentseva et al., 2018). They did this in newly competitive educational marketplaces with the entrance of private universities and providers and sizeable numbers of students who pay tuition fees and operating in a policy context that was in flux. The result was a range of varying higher education system transformations.

From this common starting point, today's universities in the former Soviet states have evolved in different ways and at difference paces. Universities in some countries, such as Belarus and Turkmenistan, reflect their pre-independence forms with strong governmental presence, little autonomy, controlled curricula, and government-appointed leadership (Clement & Kateva, 2018; Gille-Belova & Titarenko, 2018). Universities in other countries, such as Estonia and Latvia, have changed greatly, for example by joining the Bologna Process shortly after independence (Gorga, 2008; Rauhvargers, 2003). And universities in Kazakhstan and Moldova reflect a mixed level of reform with some universities strongly reflecting Soviet roots in terms of structure, control, and curricula, and others moving much more toward Western research University models, such as Nazarbayev University (Ruby, 2017) and the Moldovan Technical University (Eckel, 2019).

The dominant post-secondary institutions in most of the fifteen countries are public or state universities (Smolentseva, 2020). They educate most of each country's students (except in Kazakhstan at 48 percent) and they are the preponderance of universities in number across these countries, with four exceptions: Armenia (at 48 percent), Georgia (at 29 percent), Kazakhstan (at 33 percent), and Latvia (at 41 percent) (Platonova, 2018). They are the responsibility of governments, the beneficiaries of public funding, are often the most visible, and tend to be the key vehicle for broad and deep economic development and social reform. State universities have broad nation-building missions, which often stand in contrast to more narrowly targeted private University missions with their vocational purposes and profit motives; and they are expensive to run. Thus, there are incentives to develop effective governance mechanisms for state universities. And because these universities are public, even though individual University missions and their organizational structures can be different (Razaev & Starikov, 2017), their governance structures tend to be consistent within each country as the approaches to

University governance are set by the state via laws and statutes and to change them requires government action.

1.3 BODIES THAT GOVERN

This book focuses narrowly on University governance and does so with even more of a focus on university-level or institutional governance, as compared to state governance, such as at the ministerial level. It draws upon two definitions of governance. The first, by John Fielden (2008) in his comparative University governance study for the World Bank, defines governance as "all those structures, processes and activities that are involved in the planning and direction of the institutions and people working in tertiary education" (p. 2). The second, by Peter Maassen (2003), notes that governance is "the frameworks in which universities and colleges manage themselves and about the processes and structures used to achieve the intended outcomes" (p. 32). Both definitions indicate that governance concerns itself with processes and activities that occur through and are shaped by decision, communication, and coordination structures. However, the governance processes and outcomes that are captured in both definitions are notoriously difficult to study regardless of context and organizational type (Chait et al., 1993; Daily et al., 2003; Forbes & Milliken, 1999; Stevenson & Radin, 2015). The remaining element of the governance definitions, and the one we focus on in this book, is the definable, describable, and therefore comparative element: structure.

Admittedly, this is a narrow focus. This effort does not look at how these structures function. We instead exchanged depth for breadth and look across fifteen countries. This is a limitation and one we hope to address in future work. Nevertheless, our approach aims to better understand University structures that frame the dynamics of higher education decision-making and power play. The description of the fifteen University governance models spanning north-east Europe to Central Asia allows for the mapping of University governance models in this Eurasian region, presenting a systematic review of University governance structures.

The universities in former Soviet countries, indeed around the world, have discernible, different mechanisms for governance that determine mission, approve strategy, set policy, monitor University well-being, and oversee quality and compliance (see Feildin, 2008; Henard & Mitterle, 2010; Saint, 2009). System-level governance in the Soviet area was provided by a range of ministries and other oversight bodies tied directly to the state (Avis, 1990;

Froumin & Kouzminov, 2018). Three decades later, there are multiple actors and structures involved with governance (Austin & Jones, 2016; Henard & Mitterle, 2010; Larsen et al., 2009). We seek to understand the range and variety and how they reflect the University governance contexts. In all varieties of University governance forms and functions, some type of authority balance exists between government and institution. As explored later in this volume, in some instances University governance is mainly a state responsibility with most decisions held centrally and little notable independence at the institutional level. In other instances, governance is a University responsibility with indirect state roles. The variation reflects the degree of autonomy granted to universities by government (Austin & Jones, 2016; de Boer et al., 2010; Hartley et al, 2015).

The primary mechanism for institutional-level governance are governing bodies that go by a series of different labels, commonly including Academic Councils or Senates, Boards of Trustees, and Boards of Overseers. These bodies, regardless of name, are the essential bridge that spans governmental and institutional boundaries. They are increasingly recognized as the key link in the governance framework that includes macro-, meso-, and institutional-level structures (Austin & Jones, 2016; Fielden, 2008; Maassen, 2008). In some national contexts, such as the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, institutional-level structures are responsible for setting and overseeing the trajectory of a University, ensuring fidelity to mission and approving strategy, monitoring quality and relevance, safeguarding resources and assets, approving policy, and ensuring financial health. They are also responsible for the hiring, review, and termination of the administrative head, in these cases the rector (Chait et al., 2006; Committee of University Chairs, 2014). Many Asian countries follow a different model with tighter state control. Japan, for instance, reformed its tightly ministerially controlled universities to be slightly more autonomous, with governing boards appointed by the University president; however, the ministry still appoints the president (Oba, 2014). Scandinavia historically has strong academic-based governance: a rector elected from within the academic staff, who also chairs the board; and active Councils (Stensaker, 2014). In Finland, the academic collegium appoints and can remove external governing board members (Salmela-Mattila, 2014).

This book investigates the form and function of institutional-level governance bodies in former Soviet countries. The shared Soviet history provides a natural laboratory for innovation and such a comparison has not been done before. The fifteen national cases described and analyzed in this volume centers on the authoritative governing body at the institutional level for

several reasons. First, we focus on what is arguably the most important element in the governance schema – the institutional-level governance mechanism. These are the supreme decision-making structures within each University, as compared to a ministerial or buffer-body level (Austin & Jones, 2016). This is the point at which policy intersects with practice and where, metaphorically speaking, the rubber meets the road. As Vossensteyn (2016) notes in a World Bank report, "Internal governance arrangements can be considered the backbone of every higher education institution's capacity for coordination and strategic development" (p. 9). This level is different from but works in conjunction with systems- or policy-level governance (for example, see Dobbins et al., 2011).

Second, University governance is a complex system with a lack of clarity about what it is and what it consists of. The concept of University governance can include governmental agencies, buffer bodies, institutional-level structures, and unit-level decision bodies (Austin & Jones, 2016; Fielden, 2008; Shattock, 2014). This complexity makes comparisons challenging at best and ill-informed at worse. Thus, we seek to narrow the scope of comparison to the supreme governing bodies at the institutional level, allowing for what should be a somewhat parallel comparison.

Third, governing bodies, while long-established and consistent in some countries such as the United Kingdom and United States, are changing elsewhere as the governance and policy ecosystem and context evolve (de Boer et al., 2010; Fielden, 2008; Shattock, 2014). Thus, it is interesting to understand if and how these bodies are being developed and the forms the reforms take. In some instances, such bodies might have substantial authority, or they may be simply constituted as advisories with the Ministry holding tight the reins, either explicitly or implicitly.

Fourth, governing bodies provide a window into the broader structures and assumptions of governing systems and of the development of universities as independent and complete organizations (Brunnson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000; Krucken & Meier, 2006; Musselin, 2007). Structures reflect assumptions of work and coordination (Hammond, 2004) and "are selected to achieve an internal consistency or harmony, as well as a basic consistency with the organization's situation" (Mintzberg, 1993, p. 3). Governance structures therefore codify assumptions of control, coordination, responsibility, and accountability. They become the embodiment of policies, conventions, and preferences and are not impartial (Hammond & Thomas, 1989).

Finally, many countries and intergovernmental agencies, such as the World Bank (Arnold & Malee Bassett, 2021), are showing an increased

interest in institutional governing bodies as the predominant governance mechanism. Many countries have reformed University governance or are experimenting with University governance reforms that have pursued different approaches and led to different structures (Azmbayeva, 2017; Hartley et al., 2015; Oleksiyenko, 2019, Shattock, 2014).

1.4 POST-SOVIET SPACE AS A NATURAL LABORATORY

Because of their recent and shared starting point, the fifteen countries that once made up the Soviet Union create an interesting opportunity for comparison and analysis of university-level governance structures and how they have evolved over the past three decades. Outside this region, most University governance structures emerge from long histories and traditions that in some cases develop over centuries. Oxford and Cambridge created their governing structures in the Middle Ages, which not only continue to today but also became models for others. In the United States, Harvard and Yale Universities established their bodies in the 1600s and 1700s respectively. Thus, the 1990s are a comparatively short chronological distance away. Governing bodies in the former Soviet countries are relatively new and, as the case profiles in this volume demonstrate, they often undergo periodic transformation. Both Kazakhstan and Latvia changed their University governance structures during the writing of this book. This investigation takes a snapshot of the reforms that these countries have advanced as of 2019–2021, just three decades from a common starting point and a common Soviet-mandated governance framework.

The shared historic foundations of the former Soviet countries create a common starting place for evolution. University governance and its reforms are shaped by historic contexts (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, 1982; Larsen, Maassen & Stensaker, 2009). Local government expectations, variation in institutional missions, and the role of external stakeholders lead to institutional-level governance differences. Shattock (2014) notes, "national histories and cultural traditions determine that there are widely different starting points [for University governance reform] and that these starting points themselves often determine the direction for the change process" (p. 184). This is not the case across these fifteen countries. They all started from the same Soviet place three decades ago.

Today's variations within this set reflect recent local contextual changes and intentional decisions. While it is common to acknowledge what Rezaev

and Starikov describe as the "fifteen independent journeys, which resulted in different patterns of social and economic development" (2017, p. 129), to what extent do University governance mechanisms also have independent, divergent journeys, or do patterns of common approaches exist?

Finally, most current research sheds little insight on the actual mechanisms for institutional-level University governance (Gornitzka et al., 2017) even though there are significant investigations into the changing governing approaches around the world (de Boer & File 2009; Fielden, 2008; Larsen et al., 2009; Vossensteyn, 2016). Understanding the form and means through which university-level governance is conducted provides a ground-level view that is often missing from governance comparisons.

This book pursues a set of questions related to governing universities within former-Soviet countries:

- What are the current governing bodies across the public universities in the fifteen former-Soviet countries?

- In what ways are they the same or different, and what patterns exist across countries?

- What are the possible implications of the structural similarities or differences in University governance for their host countries?

Given their shared, historic starting point, this effort seeks to describe, compare, and analyze institutional-level governance structures. We maximize breadth and minimize depth, and we think this breadth to be important and relevant. A common challenge of comparative governance work is the difference that the political and social foundations of universities can have on governance understanding. For example, comparing Napoleonic, Humboldtian, and market models can be difficult (Dobbins et al., 2011; Shattock, 2014). The underlying conditions are different as are the policy assumptions and even the legal structures by which they operate. For example, Kazakhstan adheres to a civil legal structure as compared to the United States, which follows a case law structure, meaning that University governance is underpinned not only by different legal structures but also different assumptions (Eckel & Apergenova, 2015). But we use the current contextual differences to advantage and explore the appropriateness of the structures identified to the context in which they are operating in the book's analytic chapters.

By focusing this investigation on countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union, the project benefits from broad coverage and it compares

similarities and differences across what was a common foundation. It is through patterns of comparison across the set that interesting insights emerge that could be missed with a more traditional regional focus, such as on the Baltic countries or Central Asia. Because higher education's evolution across a diverse set of countries has varied over time (Rezaev & Starikov, 2017; Smolentseva et al., 2018), the comparisons reflect important developments and choices worthy of exploring. This approach, however, does have its limitations as discussed below.

1.5 GETTING TO GRIPS WITH UNIVERSITY GOVERNING BODIES

This book focuses on institutional level governance structures: What are institutional governance bodies? How are they structured? Who serves on them and through what selection mechanisms? What do they do? How do they compare across contexts? This undertaking describes and compares institutional governing bodies across fifteen countries and their higher education systems that all emerged at the same point in time and from a common recent history.

But first a challenge: What are comparable governance bodies? The diversity of institutions is vast across this region and in some cases within countries, as are their governance structures (Gornitzka et al., 2017). In some countries, this choice is simple. There is one governing body per institution. Depending on the higher education system and country, institutional governance tends to take one of two forms (Esterman & Nokkala, 2009). The first are unitary bodies, in which a single body, such as a Board of Trustees, has the ultimate authority. This is *the* governance body. However, other institutions have multiple bodies, in which various authorities share governance responsibilities often for academic decisions and for operational and strategic ones. Most public universities in Canada follow this bicameral model (Shanahan, 2019). In some instances, the different bodies have complementary authority, but in other instances one of the bodies is advisory or consultative (Esterman & Nokkala, 2009). For instance, the University of Zurich in Switzerland has four governance bodies according to the description by Gornitzka et al (2017).

The book adheres to as clear a definition as possible. The first part of the answer to what are comparable bodies focuses on the scope of work, differentiating those bodies with authority, what de Boer and File (2009) label, but do not define, as supervisory boards from those that are advisory. Many

institutions are creating advisory boards under a variety of names with external representation to help create linkages between institutions and the societies and sectors they serve (Esterman & Nokkala, 2009; Hartley et al, 2015). In the North American context, we would argue the interest is in fiduciary boards, a legal threshold (AGB, 2015; Shanahan, 2019) with duties of care, obedience, and loyalty. To differentiate governing boards from advisory bodies, we suggest the following definition: *Governing bodies have tangible higher authority that transcend the authority of other bodies.*

Second, we differentiate governance work from a focus on management and academic administration. For example, the description of the University of Zurich's four-part governance structure includes one part, the extended rectorate (*Erweiterte Universitätsleitung* in German), which includes the rector, four vice-rectors, and all the deans, as well as others (Gornitzka et al., 2017). While this body does address issues of governance, it likely has (or at least shares) management duties. Thus, we can say *governing bodies are those that are not intended to manage (or not very much nor consistently), relative to other University bodies; and that separate management positions and bodies (such as rector and vice rectors or management Councils) exist outside or concurrent with governance positions.*

However, discerning governance from management in practice can be difficult. It is more than saying that boards set policies and management implements them or that boards establish the ends and administration the means (Chait et al., 2005). Looking at governing bodies in Europe, some of their activities are distinct from those responsibilities of the chief executive (management); but in other instances, the work of the supervisory body and that of the executive are merged or at least overlap (de Boer & File, 2009). This may be particularly true for governance bodies chaired by the executive. *Thus, governing bodies are those that work to safeguard the long-term interests of the institution through steering and setting policy and are accountable for institutional progress on agreed upon goals.* Composition of these bodies and the role of the chief executive (rector, vice chancellor, president) are factors to be investigated. Management, on the other hand, is the effort to get the work done, develop means and processes, and deliver on policy and objectives. Management is accountable to governance.

Finally, other universities have what seems like competing governance bodies. Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (or KU Leuven), for instance, has both a Board of Directors and a Board of Trustees (Gornitzka et al., 2017) and some Kazakhstani universities in recent times have both Boards of Trustees and Boards of Overseers (Hartley et al, 2015). To differentiate among these

bodies, we focus on those bodies with what the UK's Committee of University Chairs says, have "*a responsibility for all decisions that might have significant reputational or financial implications*" (CUC, 2014, p. 11). Again, there may be overlap with other University decision-making bodies. The governing body may not make each decision that has reputational or financial implications, but they are accountable for those decisions and their outcomes.

Even with this definitional parameter, there exists a risk that identifying institutional governing bodies may not be an apples-to-apples comparison, but the threshold here is at least to be comparing apples to other fruit. In sum, the focus on governance here refers to those bodies that:

- have tangible higher authority that transcend the authorities of other decision-making bodies;

- work to safeguard the long-term interests of the institution through steering and setting policy and are accountable for institutional progress on agreed upon goals;

- do not manage (or not very much nor consistently), relative to other University bodies and are separate from management positions and bodies that exist outside or concurrent with governance positions; and

- have the primary responsibility and accountability for decisions that might have significant reputational or financial implications.

1.6 CONCEPTUAL APPROACH AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The book approaches these research questions through a lens of comparative case studies. For each of the fifteen countries we have developed case profiles. The cases are snapshots in time (2019–2021) that provide the opportunity for comparison. The case profiles are presented through a common structure. Each case describes the national context that likely impacts and informs higher education and its governance such as the economic, political, and demographic factors. The profiles then describe the shape and structure of the higher education sector in each country, with an emphasis on state or public universities as indicated above. It describes characteristics of the governing context, including higher education laws, levels and types of autonomy, and other factors that inform University governance. The first two sections of each chapter are intended to describe the context for what is

the heart of each profile – the final section that describes the University governing structure, including the governing body of the most authoritative; the membership and composition of that body; its selection or appointment processes; leadership; and its accountability and scope of work. Each element is described below:

- Structure. Governing boards seem to range in size, sometimes codified through law or mandate, but other times through practice, precedent, and history. In this category we include the number of body members and the connection to the rector or executive of the University.

- Membership and Appointment Process. Of interest is the membership on the governing bodies. What is the mix of representation and affiliation? Internal staff versus non-employed individuals? What are their backgrounds, such as representatives of the Ministry, if selection is dependent upon it? What is the proportion of governing body members internal to the institution and external to it? Is the rector or chief executive a voting member of the body?

- Chair Appointment Processes. Through what means is the body head identified and selected? This may be done by the government (ministry head of state, etc.), from representation (stakeholder groups), elected by the governing body, or part of the position held at the University, such as rector.

- Accountability. Governing bodies are accountable for the institutions they govern. The question is to whom are they accountable: Ministry or other governmental entity; a buffer body; or an independent organization, such as US private institutions. This is the most difficult element to discern and admittedly we struggled.

- Scope of Work. What is the scope of work of the governing body? If these bodies are developed related to levels and types of autonomy, then Esterman and Nokkala's four types of autonomy (2009) may be a useful framework for understanding governing body work: (1) organizational structures and institutional governance – in particular, the ability to establish decision-making structures and determine University leadership and structure performance accountability; (2) financial issues – in particular, the different forms of acquiring and allocating funding, the ability to set and charge tuition fees, accumulate surplus, and borrow and raise money, as well as the ability to own real property and buildings and be responsible

for financial accountability procedures; (3) staffing matters – in particular, the ability to hire staff and determine the responsibility for terms of employment such as job duties, salaries, and issues relating to employment contracts; and (4) academic matters – in particular, the capacity to define the range of academic offerings, introduce or terminate degree programs, define the structure and content of degree programs, determine the roles and responsibilities with regard to the quality assurance, and make decisions regarding student admissions.

As a set, the country profiles were developed in 2019 and 2020, with some timely updates in 2021. We understand that the countries and their higher education systems continue to evolve after this manuscript was submitted. Latvia, for instance, changed its law on higher education and governing structure in 2021. Thus, the profile was rewritten to reflect the most recent policy. Furthermore, the Russian invasion of Ukraine occurred at the end of our work on this book, creating much uncertainty not only for the Ukrainian University system but even for the sovereignty of Ukraine and its well-being. Armenia's anticipated update of its law on higher education is overdue.

The profiles were created via desk research during the pandemic drawing on primary and secondary materials including publicly available documents such as published laws and statues, materials produced by others, and national and international reports. We reviewed institutional websites for examples of governing bodies, their structures and the scope of their work. Some of the materials were in English, either written or translated, and others were in the local language. The obtained materials are documented in each case. Among the book's contributors are individuals who speak several but not all of the languages represented in the region.

This approach is not without limitations. First, we relied on documents and materials that were published at a particular point in time for particular purposes that likely are different from our use. Second, many of them were translated. We cannot vouch for the quality or accuracy of the translations, nor about the consistency in language. For example, in Russian, there is often inconsistency in translating the different English notions of University management versus governance, two different concepts in the West. It is possible that two documents from the same country may have used either of these terms indiscriminately and without definition leading to confusion on our part. Third, variation likely exists on the ground and in practice. We may not have always understood within-country differences, if they exist between different types of universities or between the structure as stated and practice.

Fourth, it would have been ideal to have an in-country collaborator for all cases. We had some, and this was a role fulfilled by members of the research team in some countries (Kazakhstan, Latvia, Tajikistan). We also sought feedback on the case profiles from a range of knowledgeable individuals. Fifth, we focused on a narrow window of time. We did not want to be reporting on and comparing structures from points drastically different in time and laws continue to change and University governance continues to evolve. Finally, and likely most importantly, given our approach, we cannot discern how the governance structures are used and the extent to which they fulfill their objectives. We did not observe the structures working, nor do we have outcomes data. We can only report on how they are organized and intended. For example, we know that in Armenia, a governing body structure intended to be inclusive of multiple stakeholders was populated by individuals with strong ties to the government. For instance, student representatives were only selected to the governing body if they were approved by the political party, which was not as intended (Smith & Hamilton, 2015). Thus, what is designed may not be how it is used.

1.7 OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

This book is organized into four parts. Part I sets the stage for this book. It introduces University governance as a dynamic enterprise and its importance to University success. Chapter 2 looks at the Soviet legacy and the governing context when independence was gained. It is the ground zero from which the current approaches emerged. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the now fifteen independent countries found themselves with opportunities to develop a public University system or systems and develop their own approach to governing higher education. To understand their current structure and why these changed the way they did in common and uncommon ways, it is important to understand the Soviet context and its legacies impacting higher education. History shapes organizational structures but also organizational identities. The organizational future can be shaped by the past (Wadhwani & Bucheli, 2014).

Part II presents the country profiles of all fifteen countries that formerly comprised the Soviet Union. The case profiles are organized alphabetically and presented in a common structure as described above with each case reviewing the national context that likely impacts and informs higher education and its governance, the shape and structure of the higher education

sector in each country, and factors that likely inform University governance. The final section of each profile presents the University governing structure.

Part III of the book includes our analysis and contains three chapters. While the set of descriptions in Part II have value, an analytic investigation adds depth, explanation, and understanding. We adopt a set of alternative and complementary frameworks to explore and analyze the current governing structures that reflect the different academic traditions and analytic tools we as a group bring to the topic. Chapter 18, the first chapter in Part III, describes the variation and commonalties across the countries' approaches to University governance. It identified four emergent models across the fifteen countries – *state-extended*, *academic-focused*, *internal/external stakeholder*, and *external civic*. Chapters 19 and 20 explore questions of appropriateness as a surrogate for effectiveness through leveraging two different frameworks linked to context relevance. Chapter 19 applies the Fukuyama model of governance, concerning itself with levels of autonomy and governmental quality (Fukuyama, 2013). Chapter 20 pursues a complimentary model by Aghion et al. (2010), using autonomy and competition as evaluative lenses.

Part IV consists of a single chapter that pulls together the insights from the descriptions and different analyses to make sense of the various findings and their explanatory insights. It explores the ways that these emerging governance models may address four common dilemmas of governance (Larsen et al., 2009). Chapter 21 outlines future research questions and identifies implications for policy makers and University leaders.

This book aims to make four significant and original contributions: First, it focuses on a topic that is gaining in importance – University governance and governance reform. As more countries around the world seek to improve their University systems, modifying their governance structures seems to be a common approach. Many seek to create what the World Bank's Jamil Salmi notes is "favorable governance" (2009, p. 8) to advance their universities. Yet countries often lack intentional models suited for local contexts and needs or they look to the West to adopt approaches that might or might not be context relevant. This book offers an examination into a variety of structures that surfaced after the collapse of a centrally planned and governed system to describe how they work and to analyze of their approaches.

Second, the book focuses on former Soviet countries as a comprehensive set. These fifteen countries provide a unique laboratory to study the evolution and trajectory of governance bodies given the common starting place of each due to the legacy of the Soviet Union and their various patterns of

development over the past three decades. In that sense, they are post-Soviet. This is a dynamic part of the globe, and in turn, so is the higher education space. Some countries within this set look toward Europe and the West. Others look to Russia or are caught in its gravitational pull. Some try to look both ways and often find themselves caught in between. All are charting their new courses and adapting to local circumstances and responding to global trends as part of an increasingly global education sector. Progress on reform varies across this set as does the level of sophistication of their University systems.

Third, there is little written on University governance at the institutional level outside of the high-income countries. Furthermore, most governance scholarship focuses on European, North American, and British Commonwealth countries. And those that do look beyond the typical North American and European contexts tend not to have comparisons across country income levels. Finally, governance scholarship tends to look at state actors rather than at institutional level efforts. This book proposes to investigate governance at the institutional level, which is the nexus of higher education policy and institutional decision-making.

Finally, most books that offer a comparative investigation of higher education and more specifically of higher education governance are edited volumes. While they benefit from the breadth of authors, they struggle with continuity across chapters and lack a framework for cross-country comparison beyond a concluding summary. Their focus is on the individual chapter rather than as the set as a whole. This book takes a different, integrated approach, drawing on a single team of scholars to address the breadth of countries.

The intended audiences for this book are many. Academics interested in understanding University governance and scholars who focus on post-Soviet countries and regions such as Central Asia, the Caucuses, and Eastern Europe will find the insights of interest. Policy makers seeking higher education reform, particularly those that are pursuing increased autonomy or changing accountability schema may also find this book of interest. University leaders and members of University governing bodies may also find this work helpful as it describes alternative as well as common models and approaches and the contexts in which they operate to help them make choices on how to function. Finally, individuals driving University reform, consultants, and staff from international agencies and NGOs will also benefit from the descriptions and analysis. This book might offer ideas to move their University systems forward as they seek to spur reforms and improvements.

While some may find this volume worth reading front to back, we anticipate that others will pick and choose select profiles and analyses chapters. We understand that those in the former group may find the fifteen country profiles possibly repetitive given that they share a common structure. On the other hand, those readers who are interested in only select countries or groups of countries should find the structure helpful and efficient.

University governance is a complex phenomenon across the world, even in countries where institutional-level governance is a long and strong tradition. This natural experiment in University governance across fifteen different countries that evolved from a common place at a shared point in time is an immense opportunity. The ideas shared here will be relevant to those interested in this wonderful and dynamic part of the world. They should also be of interest to those who study and are curious about University governance.