LUKAS BISCHOF
HOCHSCHULBERATUNG

Effects of the Bologna Process on quality assurance regimes in the Post-Soviet space

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”Future of Higher Education – Bologna Process Researchers’ Conference” (FOHE-BPRC 3)

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Some words about the presenter

BACHELOR
Gemeinsam gestalten

- Masters' degree in Organizational and Educational Psychology at University of Freiburg
- 2011-2016: Researcher, Consultant and Trainer at *CHE Consult*
- 2014-2017: PhD on the *Governance of Post-Soviet Higher Education Systems* at University of Leipzig (Germany) and Higher School of Economics (Moscow)
- Since 2016: Research Fellow at HSE and Consultant & Trainer at *Lukas Bischof Hochschulberatung*

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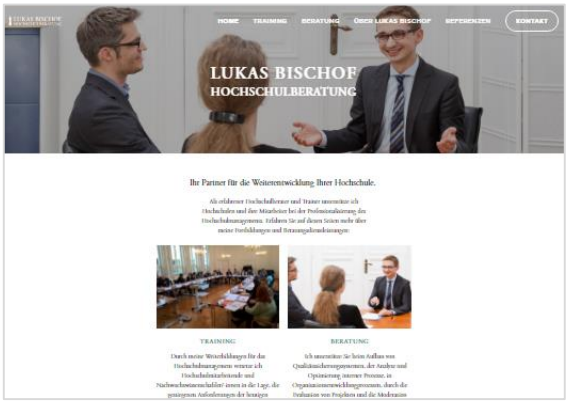


This presentation in a nutshell

1. The Soviet Approach to Quality Assurance in Higher Education
2. Trends shaping Quality Assurance in the Global and the European Context
3. Changes in Quality Assurance in Moldova, Russia, and Kazakhstan
4. Conclusion: Convergence towards a global model? Convergence towards a “Post-Soviet” Model?

Theoretical/conceptual framework

The Higher Education System of the Soviet Union

- Complete state control, market is absent
- HE as a “manpower supply machine”, mandatory job placement
- Separation of teaching and research
- Number of study places and financing defined by Gosplan
- HEIs subordinated to sectoral ministries: Strategy set by Ministry, rectors appointed by and accountable to branch ministries

→ ***Main task of HEIs*: Compliance with legal norms and implementation of Ministry plans and strategy**

Kouzminov, Semyonov, Froumin (2015)
Hartley et al. (2016)

Quality Assurance in the Soviet Union

- **Quality Standards**:
  - Professional qualification requirements for specialties
  - Centrally mandated standard course programs for 99% of HEIs
- **Quality Assessment**:
  - State final certification of graduates
  - Inspections by State Inspectorate
  - Attestation of scientific degrees and staff by *Higher Attestation Commission* (VAK)

→ Quality Assurance mostly via control of compliance with state standards and norms

Strong isomorphic forces are shaping QA worldwide

The Global Context

- Trend from state control to state supervising and steering from a distance (Goedegebuure et al., 1993; Marginson 1997; Meek et al. 1996).
- **New Public Management**, HEIs to become **complete organizations** (Leišytė et al. 2006)
- **"Global model"** (Baker, Lenhardt 2008): Institutional autonomy for rectors, governance boards, performance-based state funding, diversification of income, external evaluation
- **Promoted by OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank** worldwide and in Post-Socialist reforms (Silova, Steiner-Khamsi 2008)

The European Context

- Bologna Process (1999), extends into Post-Soviet space 2003-2005-2010
- *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance* (ESG) → relevant for QAAs to become members of ENQA and be registered in EQAR
- TEMPUS projects, Erasmus Mundus cooperation, EU-Central Asia Education Initiative, "Eastern Partnership" activities; high-level meetings, technical working groups, national level dialogue → promoting Bologna Process in Post-Soviet Space.

→ Strong isomorphic pressures on HE systems

Scope and methodology of the study

- Three non-EU EHEA member countries
  - Moldova
  - Russia
  - Kazakhstan
- 25 years of transformation

1989	1991	1994	1997	2000	2003	2006	2009	2012	2015	(2017)

Explanatory theoretical framework

- **Institutional Isomorphism**
- **Glonacal Agency heuristic** (Marginson & Rhodes, 2002): Higher education systems are shaped by actors on three dimensions simultaneously:
  - Global level: e.g. World Bank, OECD,
  - Regional level: e.g. European Union, QA associations
  - National level: e.g. Ministries of Education, legislatures, Universities
- Different *strength of influence* due to different *resources* available to exert influence
- **Path Dependency Theory:** historical embeddedness of the structures on they are exerting influence (*Layers and conditions)* based on economic factors, traditions, ideals, etc.

Empirical basis of Research

- Document analysis
  - prior studies and academic research,
  - policy papers and
  - legal documents
- 51 Expert interviews with former ministers, high-ranking government officials, (vice-)rectors, experts, and consultants
- Many informal communications

What changed?
Formal institutions

Collapse of the Soviet Higher Education System

- **Economic collapse** of trade links, central planning, and subsidies
- **“triple transition”:** democratization, establishing market economy, state- and nation-building
- **National revival**; **conflicts about State language**,**regional conflicts** *(Transnistria, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh)*

1990ies across the Post-Soviet space:

- Regulatory vacuum
- Dramatic underfunding of HEIs
- Private higher education + double-track tuition system
- Colossal growth of enrollment and of the number of HEIs

(Offe & Adler, 1991)

Educational Standards and Quality Assurance

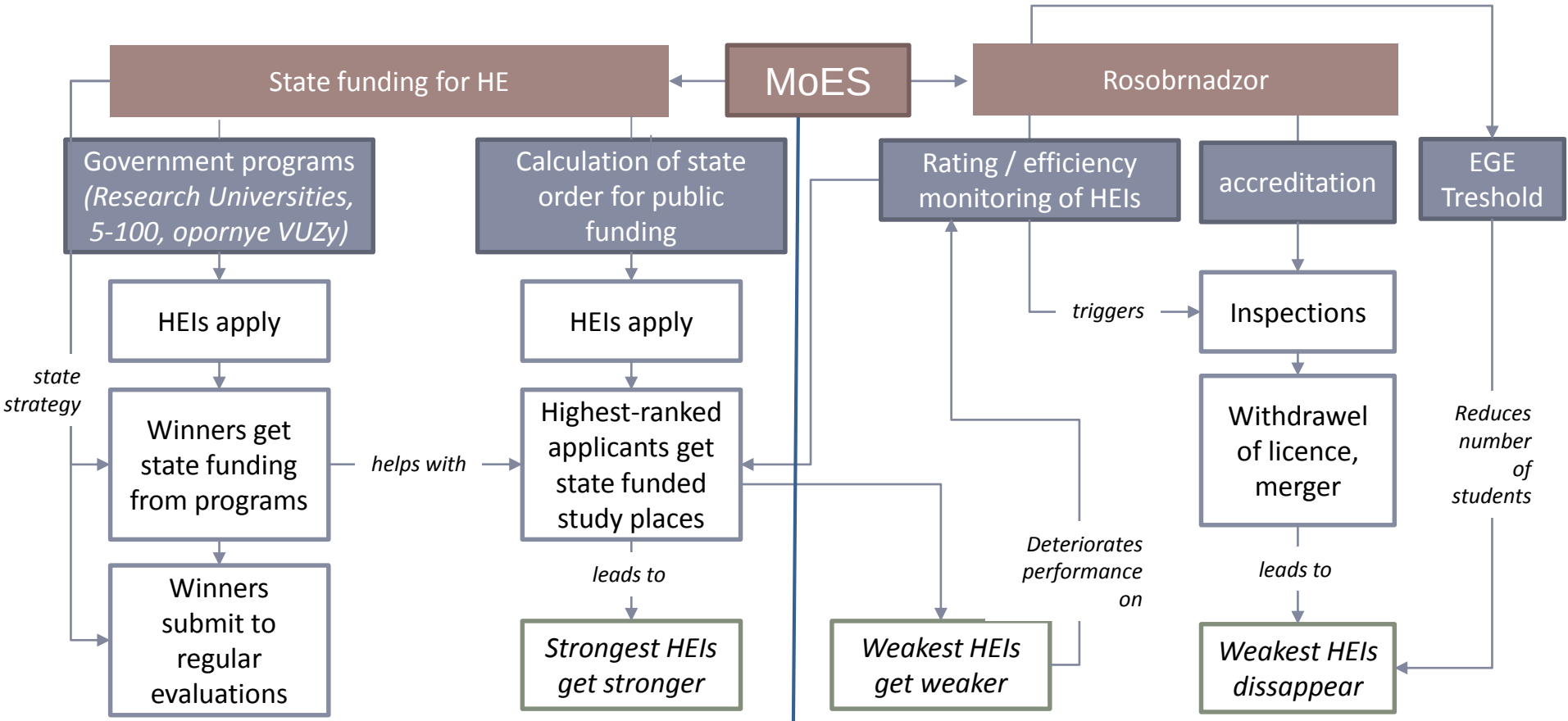
- **1990ies:** MoE licenses HEIs, authorizes study plans & issues diplomas, controls study plans
- **1997:** First accreditation agency CNEAA launches, is closed down again in 1999 by new government
- **2002:** Accreditation by ministry department, revokes accreditation of a number of private HEIs
- **2006-2008:** Two attempts to form new QAA
- **2008-2015:** No agency in place, MoE controls
- **2015:** New QAA founded, but MoE still in full control

- **1990ies:** State standards, *licensing, attestation* and accreditation
- **2000:** Attempt to introduce accreditation merged and made voluntary, institutes and programs
- **2005:** National Accreditation Agency renamed, Discussion about independent QAAs, *guild of experts*
- **2009:** Rosakkredagenstvo centralized in Moscow; receives right to conduct unannounced inspections and revoke licenses.
- **2012:** "effectiveness monitoring", campaign of "optimization" by Rosobrnadzor begins

- **1990ies:** Recreation of state standards, *licensing and attestation*
- **2001:** Attempt to introduce state accreditation
- **2002:** *Intermediate State control* and Inspection
- **2005:** SPED05-10 → National Accreditation Center is founded
- **2008:** IQAA founded
- **2011:** SPED11-20 → independent accreditation replaces state attestation; national register for QAAs, IAAR founded; intl. Agencies admitted
- **2017:** State Accreditation discontinued

1. State standards but increasing curricular autonomy
2. Bologna Process and ESG powerful factors in development of independent accreditation
   → independent only in KZ, endangered in MD
3. Powerful ministerial control remains everywhere
   → Increases in Russia
4. Continued existence of VAK-type body

The dual-track system of governance in Russia 2015



Steering by incentives and evaluation of top HEIs

Steering with administrative controls and intervention for rest

(Preliminary) conclusions

Conclusions – Effects of the Bologna Process

In **Moldova**,

- Bologna Process and ESG acted as a strong force of “coercive isomorphism” (Toderaş 2012) → Significant resources and support by the European Union to support policy convergence.
- ***BUT the*** shifting political landscape, political inter-dependencies of key actors, vested interests of the academic oligarchy, corruption in the HE system and the overall economic and financial difficulties of HEIs create inertia and resistance to any systemic change to the governance of the HE system. To what degree the new QAA will be indeed be independent and be successful in the long run, remains to be seen.

Conclusions – Effects of the Bologna Process

In **Russia**,

- during the 2000ies, there was a clear openness to adopting a “European” model of quality assurance and some attempts to create an ESG-inspired system
- ***BUT*** support among top echelons of MoES and the Russian government was never sufficient to overcome the resistance within the state bureaucracy and parts of the higher education establishment.
- Independent Quality Assurance inspired and legitimatized by ESG continues, but on a small, voluntary scale
- On the system-level, after 2009, adapting to the ESG ceased to be a relevant consideration altogether, as Russia developed its own governance model using NPM instruments for “manual steering”

Conclusions – Effects of the Bologna Process

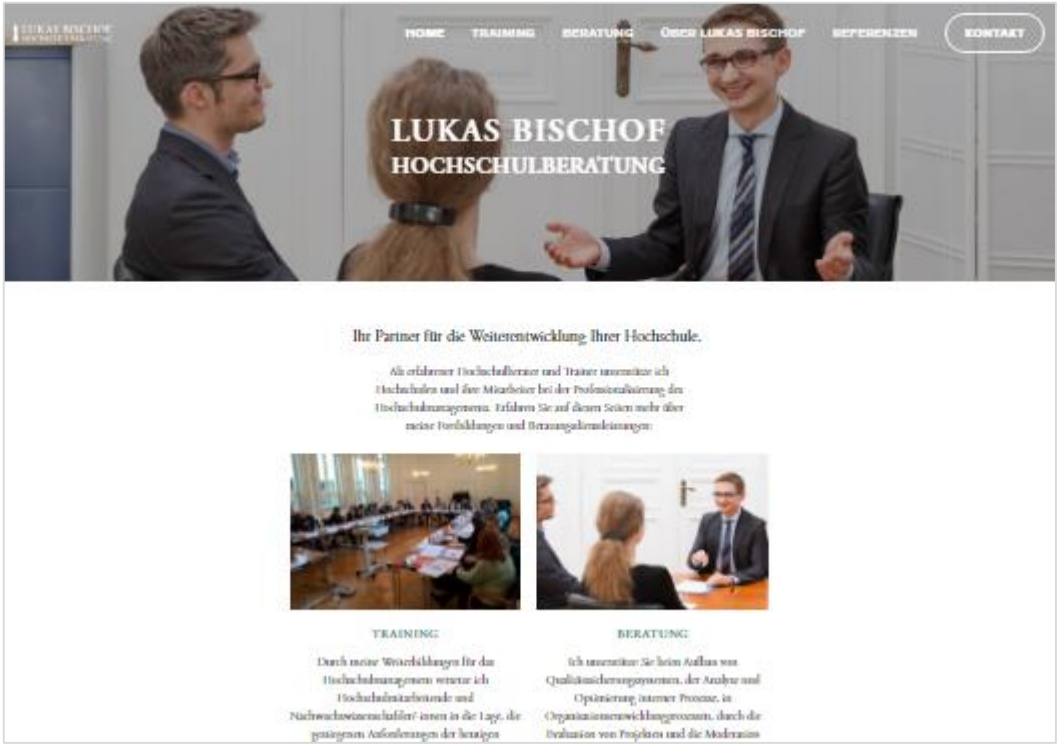
In **Kazakhstan**,

- Since 2004, the BP has exerted a strong isomorphic pressure, as have OECD and World Bank recommendations.
- KZ as model of “authoritarian reform”: President as the decisive proponent of reform and key in overcoming (or overruling) resistance and skepticism in the ministerial bureaucracy.
- Direct appointment and the new system of election-appointment of rectors are used to align university development plans to state policy and strategy. The activities of interested QAAs, support through Bolachak alumni, EU programs and Nazarbayev University support alignment to BP principles.
- This sets Kazakhstan apart also from other Central Asian countries, where “traveling policies” promoted by international organizations have increasingly clashed with the desire of policy-makers to maintain Soviet education legacies (Silova 2011b).

A wider perspective on quality assurance in Post-Soviet Higher Education Systems

1. The “Global Model” of HE governance, as promoted by OECD, WB and EU clearly left its traces in all case countries.
2. On the instruments-level “surface”, it does look like a process of convergence is taking place.
3. In each country, the state is absolutely dominating the governance of the system. Only the instruments by which it does so differ (and, arguably, the efficiency).
4. The hierarchical style of governance, management and leadership is very present in all countries. While this is universally seen as a problem for greater effectiveness and efficiency, it is reinforced by personalized responsibility and accountability. In all countries, the majority of HEIs are still very reactive and expect the state to provide strategic direction
5. Institutional change is happening in “pockets” in RU and KZ via different transmission vectors….
6. …but no clear convergence towards a single model of governance

Thank you for your feedback and thoughts!



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