

International Faculty Recruitment in Kazakhstan:

The Case of Nazarbayev University

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Introduction

Since gaining independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has implemented a number of policies to modernize and internationalize its higher education system. These policies have allowed the rapid growth of private providers, encouraged study abroad through foreign and domestic scholarship programs and set targets for cross border institutional partnerships and faculty mobility. Notably, they have also fostered and financed the development of internationally oriented universities like Nazarbayev University (NU), which represents a distinctive point of confluence for many changes occurring in Kazakhstan's higher education system. NU is unique in this system due to its predominantly international faculty and strategic partnerships with universities and research centers overseas. Examining NU's experience since its inception in 2010 offers some insights into the challenges and opportunities for recruiting and retaining international faculty in a newly independent nation.

We begin with an overview of the national context, followed by a brief description of the educational policy environment before focusing on the government's

approach to the internationalization of higher education. This chapter focuses on Nazarbayev University as a case study of the different approaches used in the recruitment of international faculty members. The emphasis is on recruitment because the university is effectively in its early stage of development, having graduated its first undergraduate class in 2015.

Kazakhstan: Context

Kazakhstan is a landlocked and resource rich country in Central Asia, whose biggest trading partners are the neighboring Russia and China. Since gaining independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has been following a nationality policy promoting interethnic and religious tolerance and common identity among its ethnically and linguistically diverse 16.6 million people. At the same time, the government is interested in promoting and maintaining the culture and language of the titular nationality of Kazakh traditions, who have become the majority over the years of independence.

Kazakhstan's economic profile has benefited from oil and gas exports, its mining sector, and from livestock and grain sales. The government realizes that its economy is over-reliant on extractive industries and has acted to diversify the economy. Many of the sectors targeted for growth require higher skill levels and this is reflected in the government's education policies.

National Education Policy Context

Following national independence in 1991, Kazakhstan witnessed a marked loss of talent due to migration outside the country. Many who left Kazakhstan were highly educated; therefore, many sectors of the economy experienced a loss of skilled labor (Hiro, 2009.). Consequently, the government needed to fill that skill vacuum to maintain services and to diversify the economy.

Another inevitable consequence of independence was decline in the quality of education. The centralized system of education, which had been established in the Soviet Union, could no longer serve the needs of the new market economy. In the early years of independence, Kazakhstan has started the process of modernization of the educational system to bring the quality of education in compliance with market needs and government's plans for economic development.

In addition to that, the dissolution of economic and cultural ties, which followed the demise of the Soviet Union, has affected Kazakhstan's system of research and innovation, which are viewed by the modern government as key drivers of sustainable economic growth. Hence, the government spends much effort to stimulate the development of research capacity in the country. Given the complex set of challenges facing Kazakhstan, the State Program for Education Development for 2011-2020 sets out three main pillars of higher education policy:

- (a) Training of professionals to support a more diverse economy;

- (b) Integration into European Higher Education Area, with greater institutional autonomy, a national qualifications framework, and independent quality assurance; and
- (c) Promoting economic development and innovation through closer integration of education, science, and industry.

The state program is revised periodically to accommodate economic and political changes such as the articulation of the nation's **2050 Strategy**, which has the overarching goal that Kazakhstan becomes one of the world's 30 most developed countries. This requires a significant investment in human capital development, and transformation and modernization of educational institutions, policies, and processes. Some of the necessary changes are set out in the May 2015 **Plan of the Nation: The 100 Concrete Steps** that directs 10 higher education institutions to specialize in six key sectors of economy, and proposes the staged expansion of academic and managerial autonomy of educational institutions and a gradual shift to English language instruction in high schools and universities. The stewardship of these changes rests with the Ministry of Education and Science, which is responsible for higher education policy.

Governance of Education

The national Ministry of Education and Science (MES) directs the higher education system through a framework of 64 legislative acts and accompanying norms and

regulations. The governance of public universities is highly centralized, with MES determining personnel policy and compensation rates, and appointing, evaluating, and dismissing most university leaders. Rectors of national universities are appointed by the President of Kazakhstan. Rectors report directly to MES and remain free from local control. Within each institution, the rector dominates decision making, and faculty participation in governance is usually limited to offering advice through the academic council, the *Uchenyi Sovet*. MES is the largest single source of funding for the higher education sector although it is not the main source of funds.

Financing

While the overall national education budget increased markedly in the last 10 years, it has increased less significantly as a proportion of GDP, moving from 3.2 percent to 3.6 percent. Government spending on higher education is very low in comparison with countries of similar GDP level. Only 0.3 percent of GDP is allocated annually to higher education yearly. Higher education receives 8.6 percent of total state budget for education.

The main sources of funding for higher education in Kazakhstan are direct national budget allocations for institutions, state grants which are effectively tuition vouchers awarded on merit, and tuition fees. Tuition is very important because only 30 percent of students are funded by “state grants;” while the rest of the students pay tuition. Tuition rates vary between private and public institutions. Some prestigious universities, such as the Kazakh British Technical University, charge around USD \$10,000 per year.

National universities charge less, around USD \$3,500 while other public regional universities charge closer to USD \$2,000. The 70 percent of students who pay for their education usually do so from their own funds or with family support. Educational loans provided through the government are not popular because of high interest rates.

Currently, there are 126 higher education institutions in Kazakhstan; seventy one are public institutions including thirteen which mainly focus on law enforcement. The other public institutions include, 9 national universities, 31 regional institutions, 1 autonomous institution (Nazarbayev University), 1 international institution (Kazakh-Turkish University), and 16 institutions that take the form of joint stock companies.

There are also 55 private institutions. The number of higher education institutions decreased in last ten years by 30 percent, as the government withdrew the licenses of some small low quality, mainly private, institutions and merged some public institutions. Many of the private institutions were established in the late 1990s, when Kazakhstan pursued a market approach to higher education and some regional universities opened parallel private entities to generate revenue. The rapid growth and recent contraction in the number of institutions are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

[Figure 1 about here]

Enrollment

The changing number of institutions was not always linked to student demand. Higher education enrollments stayed around 300,000 for the first seven years after independence and then increased sharply to around 750,000 over the next seven years. During the last couple of years the level of enrollment has dropped. In the beginning of the 2014-15 academic year, the total number of students was 477,387. The decline in enrollments is primarily linked to lower birth rates during the economic and political turmoil of the first years of independence. Birthrates did not return to pre-1990 levels until 2010. Full-time students make up 75 percent of the total enrollment, with more than 20 percent of students enrolled in *zaochnoi* programs, and less than 5 percent studying in the evening. Slightly less than half of students (48.6 percent) are enrolled in public universities. Participation in higher education is disproportionately female (57 percent) – and in some regions like West Kazakhstan, East Kazakhstan, and Aktobe, women make up over 60 percent of enrollment. The shifts in enrolment numbers have been partly mirrored by changes in numbers of faculty.

Faculty

There were around 21,000 higher education faculty members when Kazakhstan became independent. Numbers fluctuated until the late 1990's when they grew in line with the increase in total student enrolment, peaking at the same time. Faculty numbers started to fall as enrolments fell but after a few years began to grow again even though enrolments still went down. The changes in student enrolments and faculty numbers

are graphed against each other in Figure 2. At the start of the 2014-15 academic year, there were 40,300 faculty members, a number that includes some part time academics. Slightly less than half of the higher education faculty holds doctors degrees or are candidates of science (a qualification that is broadly equivalent to a PhD). The low salaries for academic posts and the low levels of investment in research in Kazakhstan in the immediate post-independence years deterred talented young specialists from entering doctoral programs; thereby, reducing the pool of research active potential faculty members. In combination, these factors have shaped the demand for international faculty.

[Figure 2 about here]

Most of the current faculty in Kazakhstan's universities are graduates of either Soviet or post-independence Kazakhstan's universities. They generally lack training in new developments in teaching and research and receive inadequate salaries that cannot provide incentives or opportunities for re-training and raising professional qualifications. Students commonly cite frustrations with faculty members' didactic approaches to teaching, low morale, and a predisposition to bribery and plagiarism.

Meanwhile, some universities in Kazakhstan have been quite successful in increasing the quality of education by attracting international faculty. While these internationally oriented universities like KIMEP (the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics, and Strategic Research), produce good quality graduates, faculty members struggle to establish or maintain internationally significant research profiles.

Internationalization of Higher Education

The main pillars of the government's current approach to internationalization of education are:

- (a) pursuit of trilingualism, with the aim of having all citizens able to communicate in the Kazakh, Russian, and English languages;
- (b) The Bolashak Scholarship Program supports students in undergraduate and graduate programs at leading international universities and offers growing number of international fellowships and internships;
- (c) A national Strategy for Academic Mobility for 2011-2020 that promotes student and faculty mobility and cross border institutional partnerships;
- (d) Participation in the Bologna process by using the three degree levels (bachelor, master's, and doctoral) and by establishing independent accreditation mechanisms and moving to eliminate state attestationⁱⁱ;
- (e) Creation of an English language, research intensive university, Nazarbayev University, with international partners and internationally competitive faculty.

The trilingual education policy is still in its first stages and higher educational institutions use Russian or Kazakh as the main languages of instruction with the exception of KIMEP and Nazarbayev University.

The Bolashak Program has been running for over twenty years and over 7,000 recipients have returned to Kazakhstan. Half of the recipients earned master's degrees, one third bachelor's degrees, and a much smaller number have doctorates. Many have entered the civil service, but over 1,000 Bolashak graduates are working in universities, 200 of them in Nazarbayev University (Nygymetov 2014), but few of them hold faculty posts. Some are junior researchers and some hold posts in administration and policy analysis. There are other scholarship programs that offer students from Kazakhstan international study and exchange opportunities. Many of these – like the Muskie and Fulbright programs – are funded by other governments.

By 2013, Kazakhstan's higher education institutions had 2,704 international cooperation agreements with institutions across 46 countries. Many of these agreements are dormant with little actual mutual endeavor. A 2013 survey by the Ministry's Center for the Bologna Process revealed that many universities were reluctant to indicate how many formalized international agreements were operational. There are also department-to-department collaborations and individual faculty-to-faculty partnerships that are not captured in institutional level surveys.

The Strategy for Academic Mobility for 2012-2020 prioritizes student mobility. Its analysis of the situation concentrates on student mobility particularly within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The strategy set a goal increasing "the

number of foreign teachers and staff” by 10% annually. This is a more modest goal than those set for growth in foreign students attending universities in Kazakhstan (20% annually) and for growth in the number of domestic students traveling to the EHEA for a period of training (50%). While the expected results of the strategy do not include any explicit reference to recruitment of international faculty the Ministry has actually allocated funds for international faculty visits after being advised by the OECD & World Bank 2007 review, which noted that universities lacked “research and innovation opportunities” to attract leading international scholars and suggested that the system overall needed “more emphasis ...on ...exchanges with the world’s most competitive countries” (pp 25 & 28). This has had some success; over 4,000 foreign scholars and faculty were invited to teach courses in the last five years but many of the visits were short – under a month and some even shorter. This was akin to an earlier more focused initiative which allocated US\$ 1 million to each of the two national universities, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and L.Gumilev Euroasian National University, to invite high profile scientists and teachers to teach and consult with faculty and students for short periods (Tuymebayev, 2009).

There is no specific provision in the 2012-2020 policy to subsidize longer term international faculty appointments. The limited impact of many short term visits has led the Vice Minister to propose concentrating the funds for faculty exchanges on a smaller number of national institutions and, even within those institutions, on programs of economic interest to the governmentⁱⁱⁱ. This is in parallel with a general strategy of

concentrating resources on a smaller number of national research universities proposed in the draft 2016- 2020 state program. The State Program for Education Development for 2011-2020 sets a student academic mobility goal at 20 percent. This has been successfully attained for graduate students and even exceeded for doctoral students, where nearly one-third spent a term or semester abroad. But very little progress has been made on achieving the goal for first degree students. The fifth element in the internationalization policy is the creation of Nazarbayev University, a project that was also conceived as a modernizing strategy for higher education in Kazakhstan.

Nazarbayev University

Nazarbayev University (NU) is a distinctive feature of the government's economic and social development strategy for the period up to the year 2020. The university's mission is "to be a model for higher education reform and modern research in Kazakhstan and to contribute to the establishment of Astana as an international innovation and knowledge hub" (NU, nd.). Having been created through partnerships with leading universities and research institutes in the United States, England, and Singapore, NU is designed to be a research intensive university that uses English as the medium of instruction.

NU's first cohort of bachelor's degree students graduated in May 2015. It graduated master's students in 2014 and 2015, and enrolled its first doctoral students in 2014.

The university's basic goal is to produce graduates who are comparable to those of the best institutions in other countries. It is an elite institution serving only a small percentage of the population and its admissions process is highly competitive. By enrolling approximately 500 new undergraduate students a year, NU is taking in less than 1 percent of the national first year university cohort. In its first years of operation NU has admitted approximately one out of eight applicants annually.

The NU entrance examinations are designed to identify and to select students on the basis of intellect and English language proficiency. The entrance tests include an initial screening test of English proficiency, followed by two subject-specific tests and then an official International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test.

The academic programs and research centers at NU have a strong emphasis on science and engineering and English. Some of this is a product of the Soviet legacy, which valued science over the humanities (Navoyan, 2011) and some is tied to the nation's economic priorities, which are skewed towards science-based enterprises.

As well as aiming to become a world recognized institution, the government wants NU to serve as a site of innovation, experimentation and customization. NU is expected to try, test, evaluate, adapt, and customize successful higher education practices from other countries and disseminate these practices in some appropriate form to other universities in Kazakhstan. One of the international practices in question is institutional autonomy. NU is legislatively independent of the Ministry of Education and Science. It has a board of trustees that oversees its operation which includes independent decisions

in curriculum design, admission standards, and faculty compensation. The board is responsible for ongoing institutional oversight, in partnership with the university president. The president is selected by the board, not the Ministry or the government, as is the case of other public universities in Kazakhstan.

In summary, NU aspires to be a globally recognized institution and to have a high impact nationally and regionally. It is grounded in a common economic and social vision of society. And it has a marked degree of independence from the Ministry and other regulatory bodies in the higher education system.

NU's most notable implementation strategy is its engagement with multiple international strategic partners. NU is not a branch campus and is not a consortium. It has been established and is funded by the government of Kazakhstan and international partners are involved on a contractual basis. Using multiple partners minimizes risks that could come from relying excessively on a single partner. It also has the advantage of enabling the university to select the best provider in support of particular academic programs—for example, a business school – rather than taking bundled services of uneven quality from a single source.

NU is well resourced by international standards and is very well resourced by domestic standards. It pays higher salaries than local institutions for local talent, and pays international staff at market rates or better. The infrastructure is notably better than the one in domestic universities. NU's per capita funding is approximately 3 times that of funding rates at national research universities. Volatility in commodity prices especially

oil prices may dampen the level of State support even though the government has built a sovereign wealth fund to buffer fluctuations in global market prices for oil and gas (IMF 2015).

NU operates under a law that frees it from many regulations and norms expected by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance. This freedom extends to academic independence and ease of recruitment of international staff. The curricula of the schools and programs at the university are determined by NU, with varying degrees of involvement from the strategic partners rather than from the Ministry, as is largely the case for the nation's public universities. This independence is important to the international partners both in terms of academic programming and faculty recruitment. Furthermore, faculty members also participate actively in the Senate to raise important issues that affect teaching and research at a new university. These issues include traditional topics such as promotion and tenure as well as measures to enhance health and safety on campus and advocacy of issues that affect local faculty members. This shared governance with the executive leadership of the university is unprecedented in Kazakhstan's higher education system. The press coverage generated recently by a faculty member's claim that he was to be dismissed because he planned to speak critically of Russia's presence in Crimea was substantial. There was print and digital coverage in daily news sources like The Guardian and the Eurasia Net (Leonard, 2015) and 'trade' sources like University World News and The Diplomat (Putz, 2015) and in political science blogs like poliscirumors.com. The university's response was that

“academic freedom is and always has been a core commitment” embedded in the university charter.

NU is an avowedly international university. This is obvious in its leadership which comes from many different nations, selection of strategic partners, recruitment of international scholars and researchers, and adoption of international academic standards and programs. The deliberate strategy of internationalization has not yet extended to the composition of the student body; there are presently only nine international students.

In summary, after five years of operation, NU has established a high quality student intake at undergraduate and graduate levels and developed working relationships with a range of international academic partners. How it has gone about attracting and employing high quality leaders and academic faculty is explored below.

Focus and Rationale of the Study

Given the early stage of the development of the NU, many important faculty-related policies and employment practices are changing to fit the needs of an emerging university. By the time of this study (mid 2015), NU has undergone the first round of three-year contract renewals for faculty members. It is also finalizing its faculty promotion policy. Most schools are still striving to reach the desired number of faculty overall, in order to effectively deliver all their academic programs.ⁱⁱⁱ While a study of NU faculty’s experiences would be more robust when the university is fully staffed,

there is still merit in studying these early years. This study captures the diversity of approaches that each school is using in collaboration with different international partners and the perceptions and experiences of some internationally recruited faculty. One can expect the experiences to differ depending on the type of partnership arrangements, the vision of the partner, the availability of local faculty in a given discipline, and the international job market for academics in different fields.

As of September 2015, there are 339 NU faculty members representing 45 different countries (72 (21 %) faculty members are Kazakhstan citizens). Only four nations other than Kazakhstan had more than ten citizens on the faculty: USA, Canada, Great Britain and Greece. The second biggest national group was from the US (70). Citizens from the largely Anglophone nations of Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, New Zealand and the South African Republic make up nearly half the faculty (153). Only nine were Russian citizens, which may seem surprising given the proximity and low Russian academic salaries, but this is probably a function of the emphasis on English proficiency and peer reviewed publications in English language journals which we discuss below in our survey of recruitment policies and practices.

This study explores the recruitment and hiring processes used by several schools at the Nazarbayev University by pursuing three research questions: (1) What approaches are NU schools using to recruit and hire international faculty? (2) What might explain

differences in the recruitment experiences among the schools? (3) What lessons can be identified from these experiences with recruitment and hiring?

The study is based on qualitative face-to-face interviews with 10 senior faculty members and academic administrators from different schools at NU. These participants were selected for their direct involvement in the recruitment and hiring process (e.g., as a member of a hiring committee or senior leadership team of a school). The schools included in the analysis are the Graduate School of Education (GSE), Graduate School of Public Policy (GSPP), Graduate School of Business (GSB), School of Medicine (SM), School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS), School of Engineering (SE), and School of Science and Technology (SST). It does not include academic staff involved in the Foundation Year program.

The interview questionnaire included questions about;

- (1) approaches to determining hiring needs;
- (2) venues for and approaches to disseminating information about vacancies;
- (3) characteristics sought for in faculty;
- (4) characteristics of the applicant pool;
- (5) successes and challenges in recruitment, as well as change in approaches over time; and
- (6) the involvement of the international partners.

Findings

Why does the university hire international faculty?

From its inception, NU's leadership has pursued the goal of becoming a university comparable to the leading research intensive universities in the world. It is envisioned to be a model university, which disseminates its best practices to the rest of the higher education system. One of the reasons why the government decided to invest heavily in creating a new university was because prior attempts to modernize the education system by distributing resources among the various existing educational institutions were unsuccessful; poor personnel qualifications and resistance to change among the local faculty presented formidable challenges (Kuzhabekova, Mukhametzhanova, Almukhambetova, Soltanbekova, 2015).

How are hiring needs determined at NU?

Prior to analyzing the recruitment and hiring process, it was necessary to understand how hiring needs are determined at NU. Our interviews with representatives of hiring teams in several schools revealed that the identification of hiring needs has changed over time. Before accepting the first cohort of students, strategic partner institutions developed blueprints that predicted future annual enrollment rates and the corresponding numbers of faculty at different ranks to support the proposed academic

programs. Inaugural deans hired the first batch of faculty members based on these enrollment forecasts.

In subsequent years, as faculty numbers grew, some curricula underwent changes to better reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the student intake and the expertise of faculty members. Some initial programs did not attract sufficient student enrollments, while others were very popular and needed larger faculty allocations. These patterns of demand were used to adjust recruitment targets. Deans now use projected and actual enrollments to determine hiring needs. New targets have to be approved by the university-level executive team based on the available budgets and the competing needs of other schools.

While four out of five NU's faculty are not Kazakhstani citizens, the university's leadership acknowledges that longer term sustainability depends on increasing the proportion of local staff. Currently most schools do not differentiate between international and local candidates in the recruitment process. Rather, the primary concern is to hire qualified faculty regardless of citizenship. The result is that while most schools are aware of the importance of hiring locals, Kazakhstan citizens are a minority in the total faculty.

The only exception with respect to differential hiring is the case of the NU Medical School. The administration of the Medical School has a clear vision regarding the role that the local faculty should play in comparison with the international faculty. Since the school has the goal to train not only medical researchers but also practicing doctors for

the country, it needs to hire faculty who have practical experience working in Kazakhstan's health system. It needs people who understand local medical terminology and cultural norms and who can connect Western-trained biomedical researchers and NU students with the realities of healthcare in Kazakhstan. Hence, the Medical School is the only unit at the university that plans to hire a specific number of local clinicians and a specific number of researchers, who may be local or international.

What strategies are used to advertise faculty positions?

Apart from very senior leadership posts in the university, like the Provost, there is little reliance on specialized international or domestic search firms. Rather once hiring needs are identified; schools start to advertise the existing vacancies. The schools take the lead in determining the location and timing of advertisements. Three basic approaches are commonly used. First, all schools use key conferences in their field as venues to gain visibility for the largely unknown Nazarbayev University. While many participants mentioned that participation in career fairs, sponsoring social events, and setting up information booths are not directly related to the number of applications for available positions, conference presence raises the visibility of NU.

Second, many individuals responsible for recruitment and hiring mentioned that they always post ads on specialized higher education job websites such the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, jobs.co.uk, HigherEdJobs, and others. Posting on these websites seems to attract a large number of applications in disciplines that are not in high demand in

the international academic job market. This approach is effective in achieving greater visibility for NU.

Third, while the structure and the content of the job ads posted by NU are similar to that posted by Western universities, NU's postings also contain basic information about partner institutions, the city of Astana, and the university. The tone of the postings is often commercial-like, where metaphors describing the reputations of the international partners and the characteristics of the university are intended to attract applicants with an image of a newly created institution that is distinct from anything else in the world. These ads also portray Astana as a modern city undergoing rapid development with promises of an unforgettable adventure:

...a little paragraph that explains Astana, that it is a new capital and it is very exciting and everything is modern. We emphasize that this is an ambitious project, which is going to meet the global standard, we talk about the number of students we have...the fact that they are English speaking, that the faculty come from many countries, and we talk about the fact that the faculty have PhDs from (recognized) universities. Sometimes we use it for recruiting students; it is very similar to what we put in job ads.

In addition to the common approaches to advertising, there are some differences in how schools make vacancies known to the potential applicants. These seem to be determined by the established practices in a particular discipline and by labor market conditions.

In fields with very strong professional societies, advertising and initial interviewing happens in the specialized annual conferences or via key websites, where the professional societies announce job vacancies. These meetings are attended by many recent graduates, who expect to see all legitimate employers in attendance, as well. In the words of one of the interviewees: “The university does not exist on the map of job seekers unless it sets up a booth at the career fair of this conference.”

In some fields, such as sciences and engineering, which may have a high level of specialization, advertisements are posted in key scholarly journals. Given that journals tend to draw readership specializing in particular topics, hiring committees at NU frequently post ads in journals to target academics with specific areas of expertise (e.g. robotics).

Social networks (e.g. Facebook, academia.edu, linkedin.com), as well as special interest groups in larger disciplinary societies, do not seem to play a major role in attracting applicants for vacancies in sciences, engineering, or at the business school. By contrast, in addition to posting in highly specialized journals, these social avenues are more extensively utilized in social sciences and education to attract faculty, who conduct research in Central Asia.

Finally, the Medical School posts advertisements on its website, which is a tool for attracting and maintaining the interest of the job seekers. The dean of the school noted that his school constructs and updates the website so that it contains answers to most of the questions that the potential applicants might have about NU. The website portrays

NU as an interesting and welcoming place to work. The school puts useful information about its achievements on the website as well as podcasts from the dean and other faculty members. The website is viewed by the dean as the more effective in attracting faculty applicants compared with other venues used for advertisement.

What are the roles and procedures in the process of selection?

While multiple approaches are used by NU schools and departments in attracting and evaluating candidates, a common feature of all processes has been the central role of the provost. For much of the period under review the provost was very active in the recruitment process by interviewing each recommended candidate. The provost has exercised the power to reject a candidate proposed by a dean. Candidates could be re-presented with additional supporting material and occasionally this was successful. While this approach has changed under the current provost, there is still a strong central role in determining final salaries.

Four main approaches are used within NU for selecting and hiring faculty. The choice of the approach seems to be determined by three main factors. First, schools seem to differ in selection procedures depending on whether they offer only professional/graduate programs or both graduate and undergraduate programs. Second, the difference in selection practices also depends on the contractual arrangement and the extent of involvement of the international partner institution. Third, discipline norms in hiring also create differences among schools.

One approach used at NU places great emphasis on the involvement of existing faculty members. In the Graduate School of Education, for example, the dean appoints faculty members to constitute the hiring committee on an annual basis. The dean also appoints the chair of the committee. This committee includes one of the vice-deans and an executive director of the school as ex-officio members. The committee is responsible for initial screening and Skype interviewing of the candidates. The second round interview is the purview of the international partners (in this case, the University of Pennsylvania and Cambridge University), and these are usually done by Skype. The partners offer written advice to the dean who has the final decision on who to advance to the third and final round of interviews, which is conducted by the dean and the provost. At the end of each round, recommendations are made for proceeding with the next round. While the dean and the partner institution may disagree on who should advance, disagreement is relatively uncommon. The final step is the review of a recommended candidate's case by the NU Salary Committee, which determines the salary level in the job offer.

Another approach, followed by most of the multi-department schools – which, until recently, offered predominantly undergraduate degrees and which had a small number of faculty members in individual departments – involves organization of the process via a specialized arrangement called the International Faculty Assessment Committee (IFAC). In this arrangement, the candidates shortlisted by the chairs of individual departments are interviewed on specific dates in Washington, DC, or in London. The

interview team includes the representatives of the hiring department (including the chair) and/or the dean of the school, the provost, and an external expert in the discipline. The latter, in some cases, can be a representative of a partner institution. The candidates are paid roundtrip transportation and are interviewed face-to-face. As long as the interview involves the partner institution, the school representatives, and the provost, the names of the approved candidates may go straight to the salary committee.

A very distinct approach is used in by the department of economics, due to a high degree of standardization of the hiring process in the discipline. In this field, universities follow a timeline pegged to the annual meeting of the American Economic Association, where initial interviews are conducted with the candidates. The meeting is very important for the candidate and for the universities, due to the signaling function of the association membership. The representatives of the NU department of economics conduct the first round of interviews at the meeting because this symbolizes for candidates institutional credibility and academic rigor. As one member of the department of economics indicated, if a school does not participate in the interviews at the annual meeting, it sends a message that it is not a serious place of scholarship:

If you don't do it [go to the annual meeting of the American Economics Association], you are a black sheep. You are sending the wrong signal. So, what happens if you don't go? The candidates consider you as something wrong, something wrong with your university, something is not right here.

Subsequent interviewing is conducted by the department of economics either at one of the IFAC meetings or by Skype to make sure that the candidate is approved by the provost and the international partner university.

In the Graduate School of Business (GSB), its partner, Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, is very actively involved in selecting new faculty. All candidates are provided round trip transportation and two-day accommodation for interviews at Fuqua. During the visit, they give a job talk and meet with Fuqua faculty and students. Duke's active involvement attracts many job applicants, and the interviews are an opportunity to provide the candidates with more information about Astana, NU, and the academic program. In the words, of one of the participants, "the interviewees were as much interviewed as they were interviewing."

What characteristics important in hiring an international faculty member?

One of the questions pursued in the interviews was about the characteristics that distinguished very good candidates in view of the members of the hiring teams. While discipline-specific expectations from the candidates varied between the respondents, five characteristics were noted in many interviews. These included in the order of importance having a degree from a top ranked university, the ability to conduct high quality research in the field of specialization, teaching and graduate student supervision experience, stress resilience, and personality fit with the department.

One of the characteristics considered important in the candidates is having a degree from a recognized university, in fact from one of the top ranked universities in the world. While many interviewees were frustrated with the unwritten requirement, they noted that the reason for having this requirement was the desire of the university to project the image of a truly world-class university. As one of the participants explained:

The main thing is the PhD from an internationally recognized university. And this university puts a heavy emphasis on ranking of the universities, so actually, there might be an applicant from a top ten university, so I take the advantage of this...And one of the reasons for this is because we want to project an image to the world: Yes we are real; we have the best professors. That seems very effective.

Given the global aspirations of the university, a candidate's capacity to produce high quality research is viewed as the most important characteristic for faculty positions at NU. In every department represented in the study, hiring committees do not consider applicants without journal publications regardless of the name recognition of their PhD awarding institution. Such applicants are encouraged to apply in the future after gaining basic publication record or are suggested to start as instructors. Many participants noted that the lack of publications is one of the reasons why many local applicants with Western PhD degrees, do not succeed in the hiring process.

While research is emphasized more than teaching in the applicant's profiles, many participants in this study valued teaching experience. In many schools, the lack of

senior faculty members means that previous experience in teaching and thesis supervision are valued. The ability to teach in English seems to be more critical in sciences and engineering since these fields tend to attract many applicants from non-English speaking countries. Even if an international candidate had completed a PhD in an English-speaking country, the person's English writing and speaking skills may still be weak. For social sciences, given the limited research on Central Asia and the post-Soviet region, faculty members are expected to be able to draw on their research in teaching. Even if they do not have experience conducting research in the region or on topics relevant to the region, they are expected to be able to demonstrate how they can adapt their research agenda to the local realities and needs. In the words of one of the participants:

In economics, number one we are looking for people, who are interested in research in Central Asian-Russian context...It does not have to be their prior research field, but it could be a minor research... We really want to have research driven teaching...because there is not really so much literature here. And we have to develop (the literature) ourselves...

Another important feature is the ability of the candidate to cope with the constantly changing, highly unpredictable, and underspecified environment of a new university. One of the ways an applicant can demonstrate this ability is to have prior experience living abroad or working at a new university or academic unit. Many of the interviewed members of the hiring committees are cognizant of the challenges of working in a new

institution, and they attempt to avoid recruiting people who would be unhappy in a rapidly changing environment.

Although 'fit' is important in selection of candidates for many hiring committees in the West, the ability to "become an integral part of the family" is even more important for hiring committees at NU. Having like-minded people around is viewed as a prerequisite to building a team that will be able to coexist under the conditions of stress and rapid change. In addition good interpersonal relations are very important in a small academic community situated in a foreign country where most people do not speak English.

What backgrounds do applicants come from?

While NU seeks to hire well qualified international faculty, the decentralized recruitment processes and the still emerging central institutional research capability mean that there are no reliable or readily accessible data on the characteristics of applicants. Some generalizations can be drawn from data in the interviews.

Geographically, the majority of applicants come from North America and Europe.

Other major sources of applicants include the Middle East (notably Saudi Arabia) and South East Asia (notably Singapore), Pakistan, and India, especially from universities that have a significant numbers of faculty who use English as a language of instruction.

Most applicants hold Western university degrees in the area specialization. In some fields, such as computer science, there are a great number of under-qualified applicants, some of whom hold only a Microsoft training certificate, but still feel qualified to apply.

While there is no centrally held statistics on the number of applications by citizenship, the composition of the hired faculty body is predominantly Anglophone. Whether the noticeable distribution is the result of a bias in the hiring process or a lack of applicants from non-Western countries is difficult to ascertain. Some interviewees said that they exercise more caution when considering applicants with PhDs earned in non-Western institutions:

(We normally don't hire) people who...have PhDs from other parts of the world, which are not considered acceptable, you know, unless I know the professor they are working with or I have contacts, or I know they come from really good university in India, and I have people that actually did their Master's degree in India, and PhDs in States, in Canada, and I call them and ask them, 'What do you think about this person? This university? And working with this person?'

There seems to be some gender imbalance in appointments, especially in sciences, engineering, and business, which stands in stark contrast to the large number of female students in NU's science and engineering programs. For example one third of the School of Engineering's students are female while only, only 4 (one eighth) out of 35 faculty are women. One potential explanation for gender imbalance in appointments could be a lower predisposition for international relocation among female academics.

The majority of applicants seem to be early career faculty, who are applying for their first position or are currently employed as adjuncts or post-docs. These applicants tend to be of higher quality than the applicants at the more senior levels. The large supply of such applicants benefits Kazakhstan in its effort to build a truly international level research university. However, attracting high quality assistant professors is definitely not sufficient for the ambitious goal to be realized. Necessary conditions of employment should be also provided for the faculty to become productive and to stay at the university.

What challenges does NU face in attracting international faculty?

Despite offering a salary and teaching load comparable to US research intensive universities, and good conditions for conducting research, NU faces some difficulties in attracting international faculty particularly senior level faculty. Applicant pools at the senior level are relatively weak. A recent senior vacancy in NUGSE attracted no external candidates with experience in leading research programs and few applicants had solid experience in doctoral supervision. Many vacancies remain at the associate and full professor level. This is a major concern among university administrators since the lack of senior level faculty presents difficulties in providing proper mentorship for assistant professors, supervision of doctoral students, as well as leadership in committees that are responsible for developing procedures and policies in an emerging institution. As a result, the quality of teaching, research, and service may all be affected by the lack of more experienced senior level professors.

Salary and benefits package are seldom identified as barriers in recruitment. Faculty housing is provided, and there is a modest financial allowance for children's schooling as well as regular expatriation to visit one's home country. The main reasons cited for the inability to attract senior level faculty include the lack of a tenure system, a poor supply of senior candidates in the labor market, and the remote location of Kazakhstan. Associate professors tend to be middle age professionals who are already established and tenured in their current places of employment with an established network of contacts and funding streams. Many have family responsibilities and job security ensured by tenure. These factors, along with the difficulty in re-establishing new funding streams and research networks in a new context, makes relocating to a new university, even at a slightly higher level of salary, unattractive for mid-career academics.

Conversely pre-retirement academics with fewer family responsibilities and less pressure to publish for tenure or advancement are more interested. However, their age has sometimes been a barrier to being hired. In the past, the university had to allocate resources to fly some of the older and less healthy faculty abroad to receive medical treatments that are not available in the country.

Some of the schools are becoming more strategic in recruiting senior faculty. Different venues are used to post advertisements targeting applicants at the senior level. For example, in economics, job postings on the website of the American Economic Association target younger candidates in the initial hire job market, while ads in the

Chronicle of Higher Education are aimed at individuals already working in the discipline. In other disciplines, job ads are posted in European journals and job search websites to target early retirement faculty, who are more likely to be found in Europe and Scandinavian countries.

Another challenge seems to be the sheer number of positions that have to be filled as the student population increases with successive intakes and as new schools and programs open. Since many of the schools are starting or scaling up their programs, they have to fill five to ten positions at different ranks per year. All these hiring needs have to be met without sacrificing quality for quantity, and have to be met for several schools simultaneously. Such massive scale hiring requires much coordination and forward thinking, which inexperienced local administrators may still be developing as they grapple with multiple bureaucratic norms and rules.

Many interview participants indicated that the complicated, multi-stage process of hiring, as well as inability to negotiate offers, sometimes leads to the loss of highly qualified candidates. Since a variety of different players (IFAC, international partners, university top administration, and the department) are involved in the selection process, the time required for the final decision extends to several months. The layers of review limit effective communication with the preferred candidate. This delay gives the candidate a reason to continue the job search elsewhere:

Bureaucracy, (in) hiring is so slow. It is very debilitating, and we have lost a number of extremely good candidates because they just don't want to deal with that. It takes a long to respond to them, signing the contract, the sort of communication style...insulting and aggressive by all these people... There are a lot of people, who...say: 'I am not working here, forget it' and that is the biggest disappointment.

The hiring process at NU generally does not allow contract negotiation, which runs against the expectations of many international applicants. The personnel management system in NU uses a common template for compensation and benefits much like Kazakhstan's public universities. Nationally these templates are seen as tools to ensure parity, in terms of salary and benefits, between posts of the same rank and as ways to minimize patronage and favoritism. NU has adopted the same uniform approach. Templates make it difficult to negotiate even small adjustments in terms and conditions. This inflexibility is interpreted by some applicants as a signal that the institution does not care about the differing needs of applicants.

Some participants also commented on the limited involvement of existing faculty members in the hiring process especially in the schools serving undergraduates and relying on IFAC for hiring. Since the process of interviewing is conducted externally, and the final decision on hiring is made by senior NU officials, some faculty members feel that they are not sufficiently consulted on hiring needs or shortages of expertise in a department. The desire to achieve greater efficiency in the process of hiring, as well as

the ultimate concern for quality (understood as the involvement of the international partner institutions) has excluded existing faculty members. This is potentially problematic because the feeling of marginalization may undermine the process of integrating a newly hired colleague into a department.

A few schools face the challenge of processing a large number of candidates who are applying merely to improve their employment prospects and salary negotiations at other institutions. These individuals apply to NU without any intention to join the university, even if they receive an offer. Many hiring committees became more skilled in identifying and sorting out these applicants. Some of the interview participants explained that whenever they receive an application from a stellar candidate they always question why the applicant would like to come to Kazakhstan. Subsequently, they want to hear a clear explanation of the reason why the person might be interested to join NU during the first interview. If the candidate is unable to provide a clear argument, they do not proceed to the next level of interviewing.

There are really strong candidates, but we just know they will never come...

They have five publications, already, before they graduated, in top journals. Why would they ever think about applying here? We know these people never going to come here, we just write them: 'Thank you, but I don't think that this is a proper university for you to be, But if you really want this interview, we are more than happy to schedule an interview.' We do leave the door open, no, we don't close the door.

What are some of the successes in the process of hiring?

NU has been successful in attracting qualified faculty. While there are talented local hires among the faculty, the majority of the faculty is international and has contributed to the success of the first graduating class – many of whom have been admitted to top ranked international graduate schools (Institutional Research, 2015). In terms of research outcomes, NU faculty members have secured institutional, national, and international research grants. In 2015, NU researchers received a significant proportion of Ministry of Education grants. A bibliometric analysis conducted by Kuzhabekova (in press) revealed that NU has made a significant contribution to the number of peer-reviewed contributions produced in Kazakhstan since the first years of its existence and is responsible for a large proportion of peer reviewed publications in the country.

Many of the participants noted the high quality of assistant professors that have been hired by the university. In words of one of the interviewees from the School of Humanities and Social Sciences:

But mostly what we have, our really strong assistant professors, who I think in five years will be very big names... We have the largest concentration of specialists in Eurasia, Kazakhstan, anywhere in the world, which is amazing... These people can easily find jobs anywhere else, but they specifically chose to come here.

What is the role of the international partner in the recruitment and the hiring processes?

A distinctive characteristic of NU is its multiple international partnerships. This is a source of differentiation in its recruitment processes. Each school has a different partner or partners and different terms underlie each relationship. The role of the partner in the recruitment and hiring processes varies depending on the nature of the arrangements. In some schools, partners perform an advisory function, providing feedback during one of the stages of the interview. One example is the Graduate School of Education, where the partners believe that the decision to forward a candidate's file to the provost is the province of the school's hiring committee and its dean. In this case, the role of the GSE partners has changed over time. Initially the partners were very active in the process of hiring the dean and the vice-deans, as well as the first group of faculty. They stepped back in subsequent years, as the school's hiring committee has been formed and a more senior staff joined the school and were able to take a leading role in faculty governance. The evolving role of the partners in the hiring process mirrors the changing role they play in program design, student admissions, and moderation of student assessments. For example, for the initial intake of Master's students a representative from each partner read and commented on all applicants who met the language requirement. For subsequent intakes the partners acted as a reference point by reviewing a small selection of applications that represented strong, borderline and unacceptable

candidates. The changed role was based on the premise that the growing faculty body is assuming greater responsibility and the partners' role has shifted to quality assurance and validation.

In some schools, partners actively participated in the process of setting up selection and hiring mechanisms, but were less engaged in the hiring process after the procedures were set up.

In the NU Graduate School of Business, the international partner is actively involved in the process of hiring. As has been described above, candidates are interviewed at Duke to see if there is a match between the applicant's research interests and cultures of Fuqua and NU. Fuqua's active participation in the hiring process is a product of its contract with the Graduate School of Business because it mentors NUGSB faculty members and co-teach courses in Astana.

What Can Be Learned from NU?

There are obvious limits to the power of generalizations from one case, especially when the case is a young, evolving institution. But NU's distinctive characteristics, notably its multiple international partners and its use of devolved and centralized faculty hiring processes provide a rich set of observations that may be instructive to other emerging institutions. In all, we offer seven points worthy of reflection.

An initial observation is that it is possible for one institution to use multiple models to recruit international faculty. In NU's case the presence of multiple international

partners with different contractual, organizational, and educational relationships has produced different hiring processes. Some partners are directly represented on NU hiring committees while others have taken a benchmarking and quality assurance role after the appointment of the founding dean of a school.

Some of these differences within an institution are discipline based; different disciplines tend to use different recruiting strategies targeting field specific forums, journals, and conferences. This aligns with the norms of professional conduct in the subject area in regards to timing of advertisements and interviews.

Similarly some of the differences are linked to the level of the faculty being recruited. Different strategies have been used to attract junior and senior applicants. New junior staff members have tended to be pursued through the “job fair” elements of large conferences and professional membership associations. These venues have the benefit of scale, cost-effectively reaching many new graduates and post-doctoral fellows. Participation in these discipline-based events has also given a measure of legitimacy to the recruiting process. This is in keeping with the proposition in organizational theory that an institution or agency increases its survival capability when it “incorporates socially legitimated rationalized elements” into its operating environment (Meyer & Rowan, 1997 352.) This is particularly important for newly established entities. Furthermore, the hiring processes in a developing institution are not static. Policies and procedures evolved as more faculty members are hired to take on the responsibilities of recruiting, screening, and interviewing job applicants.

NU values international qualifications by placing a premium on doctoral degrees gained at high profile research intensive universities. It also values English language peer reviewed publications. These two criteria tend to limit the recruitment of local candidates. Meanwhile, in the absence of a tenure system, international, faculty are harder to attract and, possibly, to retain. It remains to be seen how NU would ensure sustainability in the faculty body with its focus on quality that limits the number of local hires and its absence of tenure, which interferes with recruitment and retention of internationals.

One outlier within NU in terms of the number of local hires is the medical school. Its faculty recruitment includes a noticeable orientation toward local hires because instructors must have a deep knowledge of the cultural context around health and wellness practices and the resource constraints of local medical infrastructure (Lineberry, 2015; Chandratilake, McAleer, & Gibson, 2012).

To attract highly qualified, English speaking faculty with publications in high impact journals, NU offers compensation packages and workloads that are internationally comparable. These offers are viewed relatively attractive and include compensation, insurance, housing, international travel to a home country, and tuition support for children. These offers are generally standardized, thereby deterring some applicants who wanted more flexibility to negotiate.

In summary, there is no single uniform recruitment and appointment process in the early years of NU's operation. There are differences between schools shaped by

different partnerships with different universities and by different norms of behavior between disciplines. The strongest point of commonality is the emphasis on attracting candidates with internationally recognized, research-based doctoral degrees.

NU is in its early stages of development as an institution. The first generation of employment contracts are ending, and issues of retention, continuity and sustainability are emerging as the university continues to develop. NU's aspirations to be an internationally recognized research university will depend in large measure on the faculty recruited, retained and promoted.

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Figure 1: Annual Growth and Contraction of Higher Education Institutions since Independence

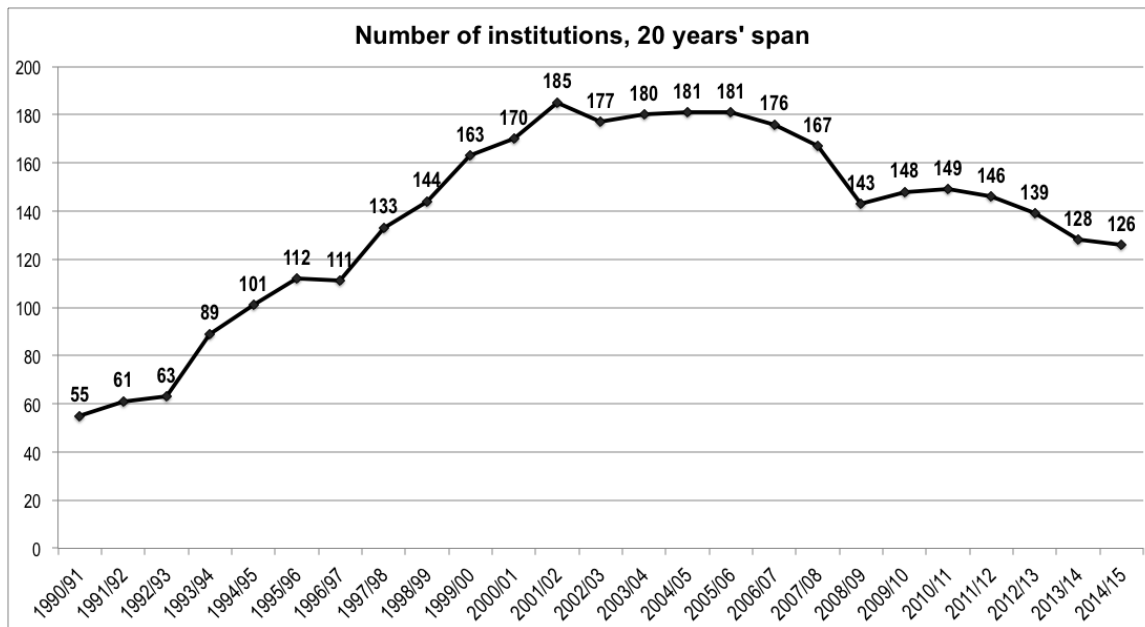
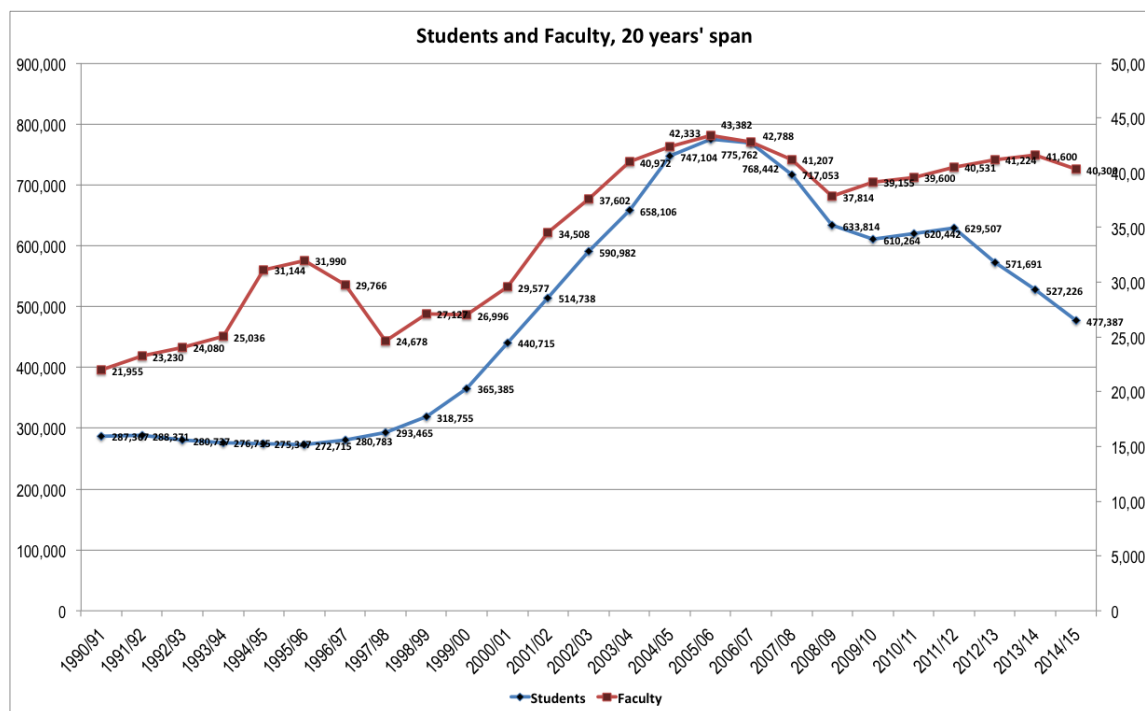


Figure 2: Annual Populations of Students and Faculty Over Twenty Five Years



i Zaochnoe students come to campus twice a year for a two to four-week sessions followed by exams.

ii Attestation is a process that awards or removes a license to operate as a higher education institution. It usually involves an assessment of how well an institution is following the 'state standards' which specify curriculum content for core courses. (See the OECD & World Bank 2007 review pages 107-123).

iii Interview with Vice Minister Tahir on 16 June 2015. Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Science RK for 2014-2016.

iv "School" indicates a faculty unit at NU (e.g. School of Humanities and Social Sciences).