

The formation of National higher education systems of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

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Abstract— This paper argues that during the pre-1991 period the institutionalized context of the Soviet higher education governance was transformed dramatically, and has attempted to explain the outcomes for higher education from the pre-1991 period and proposed the theory of “institutional dis/continuities”. The theory employs elements of historical institutionalism in the explanation of higher education governance changes during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods in the countries under review, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Uzbekistan. Historical institutionalism addresses the institutional changes in historical development. The changes are explained by “critical junctures”. Therefore, the pre-1991 period is seen as a critical juncture in this paper. They may be caused by times of great uncertainty. The changes were dramatic in spite of the short timeframe. This critical juncture period is identifiable subject to a reference to the Soviet period.

Keywords— Politics & Development; Higher Education; Higher Education Management; Study of Higher Education; History of Education; International & Comparative Education; Education & Development; Education Policy; Education Politics.

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to provide an understanding of the nature, causes and consequences of the higher education (HE) governance changes in three post-Soviet countries—Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In doing so, the paper addresses the following research question: What are the continuities and differences of the forms of HE policy-making and HE governance in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods?

These two countries thought to be analytically suitable for examining the continuities and differences in HE governance changes since they share much of Soviet legacy in general, while their specific patterns and processes in HE development show a considerable variability that begins from period the pre-1991.

This paper argues that during the pre-1991 period the institutionalized context of the Soviet HE governance was transformed dramatically. Moreover, the new mechanisms of changes would become the causes of greater diversity in the HE system in the USSR as a whole.

There are the country-specific peculiarities of the Central Asian countries under review which distinguish them from other republics of the former USSR. In particular, certain pre-1991-era anticorruption campaigns in the two Central Asian countries led to the leadership changes as “one of the first tasks for Last Soviet leadership was to change the leadership of the republics to ensure that his reformist policies were supported by the republican leadership” (Dadabaev, 2016, p. 189). These events of the

“Zheltoksan” in Kazakhstan and “Cotton Affair” in Uzbekistan became the causes of greater divergences in HE governance between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan but also from other Union-Republics. The specificities of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan can be distinguished by comparing with the HE governance changes in each other’s.

While Kazakhstan endorsed marketisation processes in education either in the pre-1991 or in the immediate post-Soviet periods, Uzbekistan sustained the centralised Soviet model of education. It could be argued that the patterns and processes in HE governance changes in these countries reflect to a large extent, the political and economic systems that have developed since the pre-1991 period.

The paper is structured as follows: section 2 provides the theoretical framework. The following section presents a methodological discussion: Section 4 gives a brief overview of the Soviet system of HE governance. Section 5 presents the accounts of the dramatic economic, political and social changes that were undertaken in the USSR in the pre-1991 period. Section 5 also traces the major transformational processes in Soviet HE during the pre-1991 period. Section 6 presents empirical accounts of changing HE governance patterns and processes in the pre-1991 and post-Soviet Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Section 7 offers a concluding discussion.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this paper emphasises the central importance of the “institutional dis/continuities” to help trace events. This theory of “institutional dis/continuities” is also useful in explaining the HE governance changes during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods in the countries under review. It draws on the concepts of path-dependency and critical juncture from within historical institutionalism theory.

The theory of historical institutionalism is helpful in explaining the uniqueness of the outcomes of national policies. Institutions are regarded “as the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy” (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 6).

The notion of path-dependency is the central concept of historical institutionalism. Crucially for my argument, path-dependency “rejects the traditional postulate that the same operative forces will generate the same results everywhere in favour of the view that the effect of such forces will be mediated by the contextual features of a given situation often inherited from the past” (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 9). To put it simply, path-dependency refers to the way in which a current set of decisions is bounded by the decisions that were made in the past. This implies, that “simple transplantation of any kind of organization, structure, curricula, etc., of course would not provide lasting and successful results” (Anweiler, 1992, p. 38). Rather, for instance, “educational reforms borrowed from the ‘West’ have often mutated as they clashed with socialist legacies during the implementation stage” (Silova, 2009, p. 315) resulting greater differences between post-socialist countries. Range of responses based on national differences, but the argument is that they were fundamentally shaped by the *pre-1991* creating local responses to this period of a common socio-economic and political upheaval.

If path-dependency has been used primarily to analyse the stability and persistence of institutions over time, the notion of critical juncture within the path-dependency concept has been used to analyse institutional changes. Thus, periods of continuity are interrupted by “critical junctures”, that is, periods of significant change from where historical development moves onto a new trajectory, and can generate “a situation that is qualitatively different from the ‘normal’ historical development of the institutional setting of interest” (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007, p. 348).

The main argument of this paper is that in the case we are examining, the *pre-1991* period though relatively brief, was the critical juncture at which the Soviet society moved

onto a qualitatively different path of its historical development, and triggered dramatic socio-economic, political and educational changes. This represented a radical new trajectory when “the Soviet leadership [moved] first slowly and lately with rapidity from the organising principles of state socialism to those of western capitalist states” (Lane, 1991, p. 96). These junctures are defined as critical because in Pierson’s words, “they place institutional arrangements on paths or trajectories, which are then very difficult to alter” (Pierson, 2004, p. 135).

This brings us to the question of how to define the starting point of analysis. In general, previously exogenous causal factors have been seen to be responsible for branching points or critical junctures.

However, Collier and Collier (1991, p. 266) developed a framework for analysing changes and determined critical junctures as the branching points when “new conditions disrupt or overwhelm the specific mechanisms that previously reproduced the existing path”. There are two useful perspectives from which critical junctures are analysed, some drawing on the notions of “uncertainty” and “contingency” (Capoccia, 2015; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007), and others focusing on “antecedent conditions” and “divergence” (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Slater & Simmons, 2010).

In relation to the first perspective, by employing the concepts of uncertainty and contingency, Capoccia and Kelemen (2007), and Capoccia (2015) seek to conceptualise critical junctures, defining them as periods of social and political fluidity. They argue that the moments of uncertainty correspond to the adoption of political choices and decisions of key actors during critical junctures as an initial institutional setting on certain path. These choices then persist for a long period of time constraining ensuing choices (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). Therefore, Capoccia (2015) claims that linking is changes to the decisions of policy-makers enables the capture of the policy dynamics when certain institutional selection over others took place in this short period of political flux. Thus, critical junctures are considered as the starting point for further path-dependent processes, which means that the decisions which were made at these points have an enduring influence on the further development of events (Capoccia, 2015; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007).

This paper employs the concepts of uncertainty and contingency in order to identify the starting point of the critical juncture. These concepts are useful in capturing and analysing the major institutional changes in this short period of political flux of the *pre-1991* period. Those changes were linked to the policy choices of key policy-makers, Gorbachev—the leader of the Communist Party of

the USSR and his close allies, followed by huge uncertainties and the contingencies of events. This is particularly relevant in the case of the Soviet Union due to its hierarchical one party system.

In relation to the second perspective; this group of researchers of critical junctures considers the antecedent conditions and divergence as analytically more useful. They claim that the main defining characteristic of critical juncture is divergence of outcomes across cases (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Slater & Simmons, 2010). In particular, Slater and Simmons (2010) assert that some antecedent conditions play a causal role in the outcome of interest. Moreover, they use the term critical antecedent in order to distinguish it from other types of antecedent conditions, such as background similarities and the descriptive context. They conceptualise the critical antecedents as the causal factors or conditions that come before a critical juncture which “can sequentially combine with causal factors *during* a critical juncture to produce divergent long-term outcomes” (Slater & Simmons, 2010, p. 889, *emphasis in the original*). Therefore, it is important to carefully examine whether the preceding variations made the cases diverge significantly following the critical juncture, thus putting them on differing trajectories (Slater & Simmons, 2010). This suggests that it is necessary to take into account the fact that the differences may have been in place across the cases before they diverged.

Overall, the paper argues that the concepts of antecedent conditions and divergence can explain the post-socialist diversities in education from the very outset of the collapse of the USSR. In the case of this paper, the critical antecedents are the different nationalities, religions, and cultures of the Union-Republics, and the causal factors of *pre-1991* are the emergent new political and economic factors. This study claims that a combination of these causal factors played a decisive role in bringing about the diversity of institutional trajectories in education, including HE governance, in post-socialist countries.

Thus, the *pre-1991* period is seen as both a cause of, and the starting point of, the long-term diversity in education of post-socialist countries, which consequently requires a thorough examination of the differences which emerged in the *pre-1991* period across the Union-Republics in the period before they diverged, that is, before the break-up of the USSR.

III. METHODOLOGY

This paper traces the changing processes and patterns of HE governance in the countries under review.

Process tracing is defined as a method for “unpacking causality, that aims at studying what happens between X

and Y and beyond” (Trampusch & Palier, 2016, p. 2). More precisely, Byrne (2012, p. 21) asserts that “by a combination of process tracing and systematic comparison, by a historical and narrative driven approach to investigating cause, [we can] establish causal patterns”. In process tracing, it is not the quantity of evidence that is the most valuable, but the link between the evidence and the research question(s). For process tracing, context is important because the outcome of underlying mechanisms “depends on the temporal and spatial conditions or even on contingency, which is produced by uncertainty” (Trampusch & Palier, 2016, p. 11). Crucially, process tracing requires a good familiarity with the history of the outcome of interest. However, the main difference between process tracing and historical explanation is that process tracers produce an analytical explanation which requires making the relevant theoretical frameworks explicit (Bennett & Checkel, 2015; George & Bennett, 2005; Mahoney, 2015; Trampusch & Palier, 2016). In other words, this research method has to be guided by theory in order “either to know in advances where to look for causal mechanisms or to know what causal mechanisms to test empirically” (Trampusch & Palier, 2016, p. 6). Thus, a systematic process analysis as process tracing is the most promising method for producing an understanding of causation, and also for assessing the capacity of theories to explain outcomes (Hall, 2003).

Thus, in this paper the processes of change are traced in a theoretically informed way. Hence, process tracing is the key method “for capturing causal mechanisms in action” (Bennett & Checkel, 2015, p. 9). Checkel (2005, p. 15) argues that in this step-wise approach the researcher is forced to reflect on “the connection (or lack thereof) between theoretically expected patterns and what the data say”. Moreover, process tracing permits the researcher to bring closer theory and data meaning, creating a continuous interplay between theory and the actual things that are going on in reality (Checkel, 2005).

The main objective of this paper is to employ theory to trace the nature and consequences of the changing processes and patterns of HE governance in countries under review during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Data used for process tracing can be gathered from various sources. In this paper, I draw on official governmental documents, such as reports, laws, decrees as well as speeches, and memoirs of the officials. In addition, I also collected data from secondary sources, such as books, volumes, journal and newspaper articles, online publications, and conference papers can also be examined.

IV. COMMON LEGACY: SOVIET SYSTEM OF HI

The Communist Party was involved in all aspects of Soviet life, unlike the individual Ministries, which had responsibility for the administration of specific branches of the economy. The role of the Communist Party was clearly defined for the first time in the 1936 USSR Constitution. According to Article 126, the Communist Party was the “vanguard of the working people in their struggle to strengthen and develop the socialist system and is the leading core of all organizations of the working people, both public and state” (USSR Constitution, 1936). Under the 1977 (Brezhnev) Constitution, the Communist Party’s role was strengthened and it became the “leading and guiding force” of Soviet society (USSR Constitution, 1977).

From 1928, the Soviet economy was guided by five-year plans, which reflected the centralized nature of decision-making in the USSR. The first five-year plan aimed at achieving rapid industrialization of the economy. Therefore, a large number of new engineers were required. Stalin thus demanded not only an increase in the number of working class students but also the acceleration “of creating a new technical intelligentsia capable of serving our socialist industry” (Stalin, 1928).

Moreover, following Stalin’s criticism of the HE system in April 1928, a number of reorganisations in HE administration were undertaken between 1929 and 1930. University schools were separated and put under the supervision of various organisations; for instance, economic schools were placed under the management of Gosplan and Commissariat of Finance, while law and medical schools were now to be overseen by the Commissariats of Justice and Health. These organisations were authorized to recruit for new positions in accordance with their needs, which had a direct influence on the types of expertise that flourished. Moreover, this new administration model pushed HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) into narrow specialisations. Industries were to become financially responsible for HEIs. These changes were deemed “the most expedient way of ensuring the required speed” (Stalin, 1928) in the rapid industrialisation of the economy. Overall, the educational programs in higher technical institutions were transformed. From 1930, students were to enroll in their respective specialism and to obtain a specialist on their graduation. A model curriculum for each specialism was introduced, and in order to qualify as a specialist, the set curriculum needed to be followed. The philosophy behind this policy was that a person should perform a specific task in order to be useful to society.

As a result, HE became an indissoluble part of the overall economic complex of the Soviet Union. In discussing the underlying rationale of this stage in the reorganisation of HE administration, it bears mentioning that the industrial sector, or branch, approach to cadre training led to a shift of emphasis towards the production of so-called prepared specialists, i.e. persons whose knowledge and skills were shaped according to a pre-established recipe, as a set of ready-made solutions permitting the application of knowledge within set parameter of industrial activity. (Eliutin, 1984, p. 22) Major changes in the political and economic agenda affected the educational area, in particular the HE system. The 20th Congress of the Communist Party in February 1956 opened a campaign for closer ties between HE and production. The study-work combination claimed to have significant effects both on education and production. This was considered to be part of a holistic transformation, where the ultimate objective of the process was the elimination of the differences between mental and physical labour (Eliutin, 1959).

Following the decision of the Communist Party’s 20th Congress on closer ties between HE and production, HEIs were moved from the central cities to locations in more industrial regions. This meant that HEIs became closer to the immediate work places of those future specialists. Moreover, in accordance with the territorial administration policy, most HEIs were governed by the authorities of the individual Union-Republics and economic regions. For instance, all 25 HEIs of the Kazakh SSR were subordinated to the Republic’s administration (De Witt, 1961). The stated purpose of this policy was to bring HEIs closer “to the areas of productive forces and the partial unloading of the old university centres” (Eliutin, 1967, p. 128). Khrushchov proposed to “proletarianise” non-working class origin students by requiring them to undertake a period of full-time employment. Only then were they to be permitted entrance into HE (Khrushchov, 1958).

However, after Khrushchev’s dismissal from office by the Politburo in 1964, his reforms were gradually reversed. In the HE system, the reforms focusing on the connection of HE and production, and on the expansion of HE relations with practice were subsequently abolished. As a result, HE administration became over-centralised.

The Union-Republic Ministry of HSSE (Higher Secondary Specialised Education) retained the general organisational and methodological supervision over all HEIs in the USSR through the 15 Ministries of HSSE of the Union-Republics. In fact, Republican ministries became the branch offices of the Union-Republic Ministry.

A number of HEIs in the Union-Republics were subordinated directly to the Union-Republic Ministry of HSSE in accordance with the decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Council of Ministers of the USSR (Statute of the Ministry of HSSE of the USSR, 1968).

Overall, from 1970 onwards, the influence of the Communist Party was strengthened in every aspect of HE, including operational management of research and teaching via integrating primary party organisations as a result of the reorganization of the purpose and processes of HE. Political reliability became the main factor in the selection and placement of teaching staff.

Thus, one-party Soviet system was structured vertically with socio-economic development plans of the state, which included provisions also for the HE system. However, the outcomes of the Communist Party policies largely depended on historical legacies of the Union-Republics. For instance, the share of native women in Central Asian HEIs was insignificant which was seen as an influence of local customs of Central Asia (De Witt, 1961). On the other hand, in Uzbekistan, the overall proportion students in HEIs from the titular nationality was below the share of that nationality in the total population in comparison with Russian origin students which was significantly greater than that of Russians among the total population (Bilinsky, 1968). Obviously, a uniform Russian language instruction in most of Soviet HEIs hampered HE access for native nationalities, for example, “Kazakh secondary school graduates complained that they had difficulty in getting admitted to institutions in higher learning in Kazakhstan because they were required to pass an entrance examination in Russian language and literature” (Bilinsky, 1968, p. 429). Above all, a free HE system in the Soviet Union also created improper practices in the selection process of students, such as when their parents and relatives had an influence in gaining access to HE for them. This structure mainly reflects a very rich horizontal differentiation. It would be wrong to say that the vertical differentiation simply put comprehensive universities on the top of the hierarchy. The vertical differentiation had a number of dimensions.

The most obvious was that of administrative vertical differentiation. Part of the higher education institutions were subordinated to the All-Union Ministry of Higher Education or sectoral all-union ministries. The status (and often the funding) of these institutions was higher than under the republics’ ministries. In various periods there were about 25–35 HEIs under the All-Union Ministry of Higher Education (Zinov’ev and Filippov 1983). Specialized HEIs were distributed between All-union and

republican sectoral ministries. Their superiority was supported by special functions related to other universities. Usually these “central” universities performed quality assurance for similar universities; they provided in-service training and concentrated doctoral programs not just for their own graduates but for those who had completed a “specialist” program at another university. Graduates of these programs were often sent back to their “alma maters” to become professors. This system was well structured: second-tier HEIs had quotas for sending their future professors for doctoral training.

Thus, it could be argued that even in the case of the uniform Soviet HE governance differences in performance and implementation existed before the *pre-1991* period shaped by different contexts within which these higher educational institutions operated.

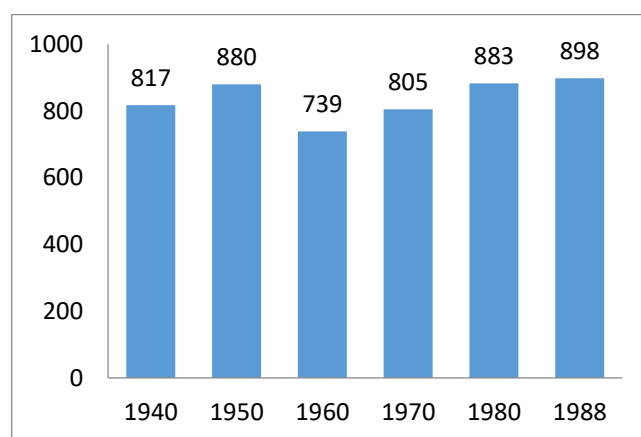


Fig.1 Number of HEIs in the USSR. Source: Statistic Yearbook, 1989. Moscow: Finansy i statistika

V. *Pre-1991* in the USSR

At the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party held in April of 1985, the Party leader, Last Soviet leadership, initiated “significant new departures in Soviet domestic and foreign policies” (Lapidus, 1988, p. 1). This period lasted for almost 7 years, and is known as *pre-1991* or *perestroika*, which means “restructuring”. However, restructuring began without a premeditated plan; Gorbachev “did not conceive of his reform programme all at once. Certainly its enunciation only unfolded step by step, probably in response to events and problems as they emerged” (Daniels, 1990, p. 237).

From 1985–1987, the course was presented in the materials of the April Plenum of the Central Committee in 1985 and in the 27th Congress of the Communist Party in February 1986. Initially, “restructuring” meant mainly two things: *uskorenie*, acceleration of socio-economic development of the country and *glasnost*, which means openness of decision-making and access to information.

The acceleration was understood as a means to increase the rate of economic growth, which was steadily decreasing. According to Lane (1992, p. 9), “the average increase in GNP was 8.9% for 1966–1970; 6.3% for 1971–1975; 4.7% for 1976–1980; and 4.0% for 1981–1983”. The mechanism of economic growth was based on three Union laws: the Law on Individual Labour Activity, passed on 19 November 1986; the Law on State Enterprises, adopted in June 1987; and the Law on Co-operatives, which came into force on 1 July 1988.

Significant political reforms followed the 19th Conference of the Communist Party in June 1988, when Gorbachev proposed a new supreme authority, the Soviet of People’s Deputies. This change signified a transition towards a multiparty system. Consequently, the position of the Communist Party as the leading and guiding force in society was removed from Article 6 of the USSR Constitution.

By the end of 1990, all the Union-Republics had adopted the Declaration of sovereignty. This implied that the status of national laws was higher than the status of laws imposed by Moscow, which in practice meant that Union-Republics refused “to honour Soviet laws unless they were endorsed by republican legislatures” (Strayer, 1998, p. 151).

Overall, the *pre-1991* reforms had not yielded the intended results. Rather, “in the grandest of ironies, those very reforms seemed to deal the Soviet system a fatal blow” (Strayer, 1998, p. 86).

The educational system was not excluded from the *pre-1991* reforms. Indeed, it faced all the contradictions generated by such volatile policy-making and socio-economic conditions. In addition, “the proportion of the state budget allocated to HE declined from 1.47% in 1965 to 0.97% in 1986” (Lane, 1992, p. 299) in the USSR.

The task of restructuring higher and secondary special education was set at the 27th Congress of the USSR Communist Party, held on 25 February 1986. This reorganisation of HE was seen as “one of the imperative tasks aimed at speeding up the country’s socio-economic development” (Prokhorov, 1987, p. 16). The key mechanism of the main transformations of the HE system was the “Basic Directions for the Restructuring of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education in the Country”. The most important direction and the main lever of HE restructuring was considered to be a close integration between HE, science and production by means of a transition to the new principles of their relationship—a direct contractual relationship (Lane, 1992; Savelyev, Zuev, & Galagan, 1990). This means that “a sort of market relationship will develop between *vuzy* [higher educational

institutions], enterprises and research institutes” (Avis, 1990, p. 7). This implied that higher educational institutions had to be able “to ‘sell’ their research to industry, which means that in applied fields, institutes will increasingly have to find their own sources of funding or be dissolved” (Lane, 1992, p. 301). However, the Soviet enterprises were themselves struggling “to cope with a new world of economic self-financing/cost accounting, [and] diverting funds to educational purposes often seems a luxury” (Balzer, 1992, p. 170). A contract form of relationship was established between the state and HEIs, which was regulated by the State Educational Order, with the aim of centralising the education of specialists. The State Order allocation of resources was to be made centrally and on priority basis (Savelyev, Zuev, & Galagan, 1990).

The next phase of *pre-1991* led to the emergence of new political and economic factors that had to be taken into account in order to reform higher educational institutions. The basic principles of new educational policy were formulated at the All-Union Congress of Educators, which was held in late 1988. The main prospects for reforming the educational system became: democratisation of the system; decentralisation of administration; and the empowerment and greater independence of educational institutions through the establishment of state-public administration in the educational system (All-Union Congress of Educators 1990). Furthermore, the structure of the educational system underwent fundamental changes at the All-Union level in 1988. The State Committee for Public Education was created to replace three educational authorities, namely the USSR Ministry of Education, the USSR Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education, and the USSR State Committee for Vocational-Technical Education.

Given resource shortages and political reforms, the reform initiative and authority over the educational system were increasingly delegated to the Union-Republics and regions of the USSR. The HE restructuring programs of 1986–1987 and 1988 were the last centrally directed reform initiatives (Balzer, 1991). Overall, the 4th World Congress on Soviet and East European Studies held in July 1990 recognised that “1990 marked the end of the time when one could write anything serious about Soviet education as a whole. Future efforts will need to adopt a more localist approach” (Kerr, 1990, p. 29).

The All-Union sociological survey “Higher Education: The Conception and Practice of *Pre-1991*” which was conducted in November–December 1990, showed a widespread belief among academics, officials, and researchers of higher educational institutions that the

market was capable of solving all the problems of HE (Higher Education. The Conception & Practice of Perestroika, 1991). Thus, for instance, the majority of participants saw a significant source of funding from the introduction of tuition fees. Furthermore, 71% of the supporters of a HE market and 20% of its opponents advocated converting higher educational institutions “to full cost accounting and even profitability” (Higher Education. The Conception & Practice of Pre-1991, 1991, p. 37).

V. INSTITUTIONAL DIS/CONTINUITIES OF THE PRE-1991 IN HE GOVERNANCE IN KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN

The previous section demonstrated that during the *pre-1991* period the institutionalized context of the Soviet HE governance was transformed dramatically. Moreover, the new mechanisms of changes would become the causes of greater diversity in the HE system in the USSR as a whole. Thus, the main focus of this section is to examine the empirical accounts of the changing nature of governance during the *pre-1991* and post-Soviet periods in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

6.1. Kazakhstan

During the early years *pre-1991* reforms, in December 1986, a massive protest of mostly young, ethnic Kazakhs, was held in Almaty. The protesters criticised Gorbachev's decision to replace the leader of Kazakhstan's Communist Party. He was replaced by “an ethnic Russian considered an outsider in Kazakhstan in terms of both his ethnic origin and experience in Kazakhstan” (Kunaev, 1992, p. 269). The demonstration was suppressed and thousands were arrested, and many jailed.

In March 1990, Supreme Soviet elections of the Kazakh SSR were held and 94.4% of those elected were the Communist Party members. This Supreme Soviet adopted the *Law on Education* and the *Law on HE* in 1992 and 1993, respectively. The policies of liberalisation and structural transformation of the economy, launched in Kazakhstan 1990–1991, were continued in the post-Soviet period.

In June 1992, a “Strategy for the Establishment and Development of Kazakhstan as a Sovereign State” was adopted by President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Under the strategy, the share of state ownership had to be reduced to 30–40%.

The HE system of Kazakhstan witnessed a number of negative developments in 1990s conditioned “by shortage or simply lack of funding” (Kusherbayev et al., 2001, p. 20). The state was able to finance wages, stipends and meals, but not in full, and spending on HE decreased dramatically

from 0.3% of GDP in 1991 to 0.04% in 1992, and constituted at only 0.32% of GDP in 2000 (Kusherbayev et al., 2001).

There were 61 HEIs in the early 1990s in Kazakhstan, with more than 280,000 students (Zhumagulov, 2012). All HEIs were state owned. The number of HEIs has grown dramatically since 1993, when the Law on HE permitted the establishment of non-state HEIs. The number of private HEI increased to 123 in 2001 (National Report, 2004). In contrast, the number of state HEIs decreased to 47, which included 28 universities, 13 academies and 6 institutes in 2000–2001 (Zhakenov, 2002). The decline in the number of state HEIs can be explained by the optimisation process which was undertaken by the government when pedagogical and technical institutes were converted into universities. Under a government resolution from 16 June 2000, the number of state HEIs was reduced further, when 12 state HEIs were reorganised into joint-stock companies (Zhakenov, 2002).

In terms of student enrolment, the number of students increased from 313,000 in 1998 (WB, 2000, p. 144) to 442,400 in 2000 (Zhakenov, 2003), and 477,387 in 2014 (MoES, 2015). While by 2002, the total enrolment constituted 514,000 students in all types of HEIs with 331,000 students enrolled in state HEIs, and 183,000 students in private HEIs (Zhakenov, 2003).

The large number of students in state HEIs can be explained by the fact that under the new 1999 Law on Education the state HEIs were allowed to enroll students on a fee basis. Furthermore, private HEIs attested by the state became eligible to enroll students under the conditions of the State Educational Order. In 2002–2003, for instance, 169,000 students were admitted to HE; 24,500 of them were covered by the provisions of the State Educational Order, while another 144,500 were fee-paying students (Analytic Memorandum for 1999–2002, 2003). Thus, the contractual relationship between the state and HEIs, the State Educational Order, which was introduced in an acceleration phase of the *pre-1991* period, continued to exist in the post-Soviet Kazakhstan. However, in the post-Soviet period, the students themselves became the consumers of educational services instead of state enterprises of the *pre-1991* period.

As was mentioned earlier, under the 1999 *Law on Education*, the principle of two-channel financing for state HEIs was established, one from the state budget and another from fee-paying students.

When “the republic's budgetary funds cover expenditure on the wages of professorial and teaching staff and, partially, students' stipends, while funds of the population cover expenditure on wages and communal

expenses” (Kusherbayev et al., 2001, p. 20). In the same year, in 1999, the extra budgetary earnings of state HEIs constituted 43% of the total amount of funding (Kusherbayev et al., 2001, p. 24), and by 2010, it made up over 85% of total revenues for HEIs (European Commission, 2010). The number of students who receive government grants was less than 20% (Tempus, 2010).

In the early 2000s, private HEIs constituted a majority in the HE system. By 2002, for example, in total 171 HEIs were in existence, which included 34 state, 12 joint-stock companies, 3 international and 122 private institutions (Zhakenov, 2002). Private HEIs became an important source of income for the state; for example, in 1999, they “raised about T5 billion in tuition fees, or 35% of the national budget for education” (Asian Development Bank, 2004, p. 36). In other words, the economic-financial difficulties were supposed to be one of the main reasons for adjusting HE “to the conditions of a market economy” (Asian Development Bank, 2004, p. 35) in order to reduce its financial commitments.

On the other hand, the state, by delegating most part of its mission to private HEIs, aligned with the WB’s recommendation to leave HE gradually to the “private sector to both finance and deliver” (WB, 2000, p. 38). It was considered that “further encouragement of the private sector to provide education services is an attractive policy option without any burden on the public budget” (WB, 2000, p. 163).

6.2. Uzbekistan

The “Cotton Affair” referred to earlier, first came to notice during the leadership of the General Secretary Andropov (1982–1984) which extended into the *pre-1991* period. The name changed to the “Uzbek Scandal”, and high party and government officials of Uzbekistan were accused of corruption and falsifying cotton production figures, which led to a massive dismissals and arrests of high-ranking officials. Thus, this “renewed campaign against Uzbek culture and the growing cotton scandal created considerable tensions among the republic’s elite, many of whom were implicated in the scandal, or accused of secretly engaging in Islamic or other ‘backward’ activities” (Hanks, 2005, p. 63) which caused the replacement of the first party secretary in Uzbekistan in 1988. However, these policies and processes led to the growth of reactionary national consciousness since “the campaign looked like an attempt to single out and scapegoat Uzbekistan for Moscow’s mistakes in its economic policies and planning” (Dadabaev, 2016, p. 189). In addition, a strong resistance to the marketisation

processes of the *pre-1991* period was noticeable within the high officials of Uzbekistan (Furtado & Chandler, 1992).

In the post-Soviet period, the economic reforms proceeded slowly and gradually (Ruziev & Rustamov, 2016) in contrast to the rapid restructuring of economy in Kazakhstan and Russia. Privatisation of small-scale enterprises in the agricultural and financial sectors were allowed whereas strategically important enterprises and HE sector remained under state control (Ruziev & Rustamov, 2016). Spending on education declined from 9% of GDP in 1990 to 7% of GDP in 1995 (Weidman & Yoder, 2010). The system of HE was regulated by the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education, which was formed in January 7, 1990. The Ministry “sets strict rules for the recognition of new developed curricula according to the state educational standards” (HE in Uzbekistan, n.d., p. 2).

Since independence, the macroeconomic stabilisation and economic growth achieved in the mid-1990s, constituting GDP growth by 1.6 and 5.2% in 1996 and 1997, respectively (Asian Development Bank, 2004). 1999, was also “characterized by macroeconomic stability with steady growth of GDP (4.4%), a small budget deficit (1.8%), controlled inflation (1.9% monthly, 22.8% annually), and a foreign trade surplus (\$125.1 million)” (Asian Development Bank, 2004, p. 93). Moreover, from the mid-2000s, the economy of Uzbekistan has shown an annual growth of around 8% (Ruziev & Rustamov, 2016).

Privatisation of small-scale enterprises in the agricultural and financial sectors were allowed whereas strategically important enterprises and HE sector remain under state control (Asian Development Bank, 2004). The Law on Education was adopted in 1992; however, major educational reforms were launched in the second half of the 1990s. The number of HEIs increased steadily from 46 in 1990 (HE in 1990–1991) to 58 by 1995–1996 (Ruziev & Rustamov, 2016).

The system of HE is regulated by the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education (MHSSE), which “sets strict rules for the recognition of new developed curricula according to the state educational standards” (HE in Uzbekistan, n.d., p. 2). Student enrolment in HEIs in 2008–2009 totalled “297,900 students 271,800 full-time and 26,100 enrolled in correspondence courses” (UNDP, 2009, p. 2). The state expenditure in HE represented a decline from 1% in 1990 to 0.6% in 2005 in GDP terms (UNDP, 2009, p. 6).

“The National Programme for Personnel Training” (NPPT) became the law in 1997. The reform programme of the education system included three-stage reform plan (Majidov, Ghosh, & Ruziev, 2010) with a main focus on the

expansion of vocational education. In accordance with the NPPT HEIs based “on the secondary specialised education (academic lyceum), vocational specialised education (professional college) and includes 2 levels: a Bachelor’s degree level and Master’s degree level” (HE in Uzbekistan, n.d., p. 2).

In 2015, there were “78 HEIs, comprising 11 comprehensive universities, 10 specialised universities, 35 institutes, 2 academies, 13 regional branches of HEIs, and 7 branches of foreign universities” (Ruziev & Burkhanov, 2016, p. 15) being almost all of HEIs are state-owned with an exemption of foreign HEIs’ branches. An enrolment in full-time study increased from around 180,000 to around 250,000 in 1989 and 2015, respectively. Moreover, evening and part-time study programmes were abolished, and HE study is only on a full-time basis (Ruziev & Burkhanov, 2016, p. 12).

Soon after the independence, several private HEIs briefly emerged. However, in 1993, only Tashkent Institute for International Economic Relations and Entrepreneurship (TIIERE) obtained an official licence, which was cancelled just a few months after (Ruziev & Rustamov, 2016).

VI. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

This paper has attempted to explain the outcomes for HE from the *pre-1991* period, and proposed the theory of “institutional dis/continuities”. The theory employs elements of historical institutionalism in the explanation of HE governance changes during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods in the countries under review, as historical institutionalism can explain the varying outcomes of national policies. From the point of view of historical institutionalism, it can be said that path-dependencies can indeed have a significant impact on subsequent reform processes. The path-dependency concept is useful in explaining the continuities in historical development, when the patterns of past decisions are reiterated in current decision-making processes.

Historical institutionalism addresses also the institutional changes in historical development. The changes are explained by “critical junctures”. Therefore, the *pre-1991* period is seen as a critical juncture in this paper. They may be caused by times of great uncertainty. The changes were dramatic in spite of the short timeframe. This critical juncture period is identifiable subject to a reference to the Soviet period.

In particular, the speed and scale, as well as the character of the *pre-1991* period allows us to claim that this period represents a “critical juncture”, a period of significant socio-economic and political upheaval. In other words, in this short period of time, the historical

development of the Soviet Union moved onto a totally different path by destroying the foundations of the old socioeconomic and political structures.

The quick abandonment of the key institutional elements of the old system, namely, the political power of one party system—the Communist Party, and the centralised economy, created much confusion and uncertainty in the USSR as a whole. In the words of Collier and Collier (1991), these new conditions disrupted the previous reproduction mechanisms that is, prior path-dependencies, by creating the branching point—a critical juncture in historical development.

The concepts of uncertainty and contingency of the critical juncture approach are particularly relevant at this point of my analysis. In this short period of socio-political flux, the political decisions and choices of key policy-makers put in place a new initial institutional setting which were followed by huge uncertainties and contingencies of events. The systematic comparison of the Soviet and *pre-1991* periods has shown the clear differences in the institutional context. Therefore, the period of *pre-1991* is considered as a critical juncture and the starting point for further path-dependent processes.

Following Capoccia’s (2015) suggestion that it is possible to see the dynamics of change by linking them to the decisions of key actors, it can be argued that the decisions of Gorbachev and his close allies were crucial in the processes of transformation in the USSR. Their significance becomes particularly apparent when one considers the hierarchical nature of the one-party system that was in place in the Soviet Union. Under such a system, the voice of the Party’s leader would in fact have been a decisive factor in any decision-making process.

The *pre-1991* period had also a very strong influence on the development of Soviet HE, in part because of the inherited tight relationship with the Soviet economy. Consequently, the economic reforms of *pre-1991* dramatically changed the relationships of HE with the economy, establishing market-like relations between them. Moreover, the HEIs, in accordance with the Law on State Enterprises, became independent legal entities. The main principles of the relationship between higher educational institutions, research institutions and enterprises were changed completely. The new relations were to be based on direct contracts between them, which meant the establishment of market-like relations.

The emergence of new political and economic factors were taken into account in subsequent reforms of the HE system. The All-Union Congress of Educators formulated new directions of the HE system, which included a focus on democratization, decentralization, and increasing the

independence of higher educational institutions. Consequently, as a result of much greater involvement of republic and local authorities, the governance of the former Soviet education system became far more distributed and complex. Moreover, the structural changes in central administration and planning organs considerably decreased the role of the centre over HE. This was a start of greater diversity in the educational systems of Union-Republics. Under these circumstances, the centre played a rather formal role, while the different nationalities and ethnicities across the USSR began to establish their own distinctive education systems. In general, all these changes created huge uncertainties and a great deal of fluidity in the education system.

Turning back to the divergence analytical concept of the critical juncture approach, it can be argued that the use of antecedent conditions is useful at this stage. In line with Slater and Simmons's (2010) argument, antecedent conditions in the form of different nationalities, religions and cultures of the Union-Republics, can be classified as *critical* antecedents, as they played a causal role in forms taken by the great diversification of the Soviet HE system. In other words, they created the greater divergence in the educational development in the Union-Republics, and regions of the USSR.

Moreover, according to Slater and Simmons (2010), these critical antecedents in combination with causal factors of a critical juncture, in the case of this study—the *pre-1991* period, can be the starting point of long-term diversification. Therefore, the concept of divergence can explain the greater differences in education of former Union-Republics from the very outset of the collapse of the USSR.

In these two countries under review, patterns and processes in HE development have shown a considerable divergence that started from the *pre-1991* period. My analysis suggests that the causal explanation of this trend may be captured in the following developments:

The political and economic systems that have developed since the *pre-1991* period in these countries have significantly influenced the processes of HE governance changes. In particular, leadership changes following the events of “Cotton Affair” in Uzbekistan and “Zheltoksan” in Kazakhstan led to the strong national consciousness in these Central Asian countries. However, the outcomes varied considerably; in Uzbekistan, the government officials became resistant to the *pre-1991* reforms whereas the reforms in Kazakhstan continued in line with the general policies of *pre-1991*.

By contrast, in Kazakhstan, it was only after the collapse of the Soviet Union the establishment of private

higher educational institutions was permitted, while the Uzbekistani case on the other hand is considerably different; the HE sector remained under the state control and the private HE sector was/is not in existence.

Finally, some of the legislative authorities or the governmental bodies of the individual republics, which were formed during the *pre-1991* period have remained in place following the collapse of the Soviet Union. For instance, in the case of Kazakhstan, the Supreme Soviet which was elected in the *pre-1991* period adopted the first legislation on education and HE in the post-Soviet period, in 1992 and 1993, respectively.

Thus, the *pre-1991* period can be seen as a significant critical juncture, and the starting point of the long-term diversity in the education systems of post-socialist countries. This implies that it is necessary to examine in great detail the differences which took place in the *pre-1991* period across the Union-Republics before they diverged, that is before the breakdown of the USSR. This implies that by identifying the *pre-1991* period as a critical juncture, a time when post-Soviet countries turned to a new path, post-socialist educational transformations became even more diverse and unpredictable.

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