

HOW ACCREDITATION STIMULATES BUSINESS SCHOOL CHANGE: EVIDENCE FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

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Abstract

There is scarce or almost non-existing research on changes that take place in business schools in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Changes in CIS business schools (B-schools) are influenced by different external factors (e.g. socioeconomic system, market forces, financial crisis, demographic problems, changes in policies of higher education; influence of the Bologna process). On the other hand, B-schools in the CIS need to make internal changes to gain the external accreditation. We look into the nature of change processes taking place in CIS B-schools, observing them through the prism of ongoing external accreditation processes. The purpose of the study is to examine the effect of the accreditation process on CIS B-school changes. We used a comparative analysis based on the study of 22 B-schools from four countries (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan). We discovered that these changes refer to introducing more strict entrance requirements, strengthening financial resources, and improving efforts to reach the accreditation standards. Moreover, schools have to review their mission, decrease their student-to-faculty ratio, introduce measurement metrics for learning goals, and internationalise their programs. The advanced B-schools in Russia and Kazakhstan usually start with an international programme accreditation, and then move to an institutional one. The trend has begun spreading to schools from non-Bologna countries like Belarus, but it is still a long-time agenda item for Kyrgyzstan.

Keywords: AACSB, AMBA, Accreditation, Business Schools, Change, EFMD, Quality

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past 30 years, business schools (B-schools) have been among the fastest-growing segments in higher education (Antunes & Thomas, 2007; Friga et al., 2003). In the early 21st century, the higher education sector has become a “competitive enterprise”: in many countries universities compete for status and ranking, and generally for funding from

governmental or private sources, where students must compete for scarce places in universities (Altbach et al., 2009). B-schools are facing rising pressure to increase the value-added in their services. To meet this challenge in an era of tightening resources, B-schools will need to undergo fundamental changes in the way they operate and continuously seek ways to create future value (Bailey et al., 1999).

With the proliferation of institutions offering higher education it is fundamental that B-schools

employ the right strategies and resources that will allow them to achieve their goals, while remaining competitive in the evolving global market for business education. Quality will become an ever-growing concern for B-schools, in particular with regard to measures for determining and improving the quality of programmes and schools. Zammuto (2008) argues that the growth of for-profit universities and the global spread of accreditation are two long-term changes that will reshape the environment of traditional B-schools. The top B-schools of the future will not only implement changes to remain competitive, but will seek accreditation and quality improvement programmes to prove to the market that they are committed to excellence and innovation (Cornuel, 2007). International accreditations are often associated with “the seal of quality” as being facilitators of sustaining service quality. Baden-Fuller and Ang (2001) note that status and reputation are close allies, where reputation is the expectation of a high level of quality as perceived by an audience. This gives a strong association between the processes of accreditation – namely reputation building activities – and the expectation of quality. According to the OECD (Quality and Recognition in Higher Education, 2004, p. 29), *“external quality assurance and accreditation arrangements now have become full features of modern regulation systems in higher education. Besides the national state, inter-institutional networks and associations, professional bodies, and specialised agencies have also been active in establishing external quality assurance and accreditation systems,”* where some experts see the system of “multiple accreditation” as a desirable outcome. Its application in countries is limited so far, but elements of it are expanding rapidly and leading to certain changes.

Change processes in higher education are under the influence of different external factors (Friga et al., 2003; Vasiliev, 1994), e.g. the socioeconomic system, market forces, the impact of financial crisis, demographic problems, changes in policies of higher education, and impact of these policies on higher education institutions – with some influence of the Bologna process. External challenges like globalisation, regional integration, and the ever-increasing mobility of students and scholars have made the need for internationally

recognised standards among and between nations more urgent. That is why external quality assurance in higher education has risen to the top of the policy agenda in many countries. The external quality assurance processes in B-schools are connected to the processes of international accreditation.

Our paper focuses on B-school internal changes due to the impact of external accreditation. As most studies on service quality in business education have been conducted mainly in Western countries and cultures, our objective is to focus on non-Western countries. Specifically, empirical studies pertaining to service quality in business education in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region remain rare despite rapid growth in business education in recent times, and especially since the development of accreditation agencies has been a growing phenomenon even in Europe (Cret, 2011). Therefore, our purpose is to find out B-school priorities and changes in the process of international accreditation for B-schools in the CIS region, as there is almost non-existent research for this region. Our objective is to present and discuss internal changes that CIS business schools undergo because of the intended implementation of external accreditation. From a methodological perspective, this is a comparative study (Lor, 2011). We compare the change processes in four CIS countries (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan). These four countries are referred to as cases or “comparators” (Hantrais, 2009).

In the following sections, we first present our main research question and its theoretical underpinnings. Next, we describe the methodological approach. In Section 4 we explain and discuss the results. Conclusions are presented in the final section.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Quality is one of the competitive priorities that has migrated from the literature of manufacturing strategy to the service arena. Interest in service quality has increased substantially in recent years. There are different models and processes on which quality systems can be based (Hodgkinson & Kelly, 2007): Total Quality Management (TQM), the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM),

Balanced scorecard, the Kaizen process, school-wide quality steering groups, two paradigms of organisational self-assessment, and subject reviewer training. The arrival of TQM in higher education began tentatively in the 1980s with increasing interest in the early 1990s. This growing interest in TQM was motivated by institutions' need to cope with tremendous pressure from their customers to update and improve the quality of their services (Ewell, 1993; Voss et al., 2007; Zemsky et al., 1993). In general, quality is an objective measurement in manufacturing and a subjective one in the service sector. Service businesses are heterogeneous, quality is intangible, and production and consumption of the product (service) are inseparable. Therefore, in the service sector, 'quality' refers to meeting and/or exceeding customer expectations (Pariseau & McDaniel, 1997).

Winter (1991) notes that while traditional businesses use the principles of TQM, "not much is heard from the higher educational sector." Dillard and Tinker (1996) show how TQM – continuous improvement technologies are being promoted within the business schools and consider possible implications to provide them as a basis for AACSB standards, but identify inherent social tensions. Sohail and Shaikh (2004) review the development of the quality system and examine the concept of service quality in business education in non-Western countries, where these practices remain rare despite the rapid growth in the higher education sector. Their study shows that students from the Middle-East region enrolled prior to the AACSB accreditation process, and assess the quality practices as better than expected as compared to those enrolled after the AACSB accreditation. Another study of Sulaiman et al. (2013) shows that even when the perception of TQM is positive, it could be implemented where a culture of collective consciousness or teamwork is accepted within educational institutions.

Quality is becoming an ever-growing concern for B-schools, with regard to measures for determining and improving the quality of programmes and schools (Cornuel, 2007; Gidley et al., 2010). Accreditation is perceived as a tool in facilitating service quality in higher education. Accreditation process serves many purposes for B-schools, including quality assurance for themselves and their

stakeholders, marketing advantages, and the ability to benchmark and network with their peers. There are many cases of institutions seeking accreditation outside their national context for a number of reasons (Marginson & Van der Wende, 2006): a lack of accreditation opportunities at home; using international accreditation to enhance relative national position; using international accreditation to evade the requirements or prohibitions of national accreditation; enhancing global recognition via accreditation by a reputable foreign accreditation body.

Guler, Guillén & Macpherson (2002) illustrate two reasons why B-school accreditation has spread so fast considering institutional and social network theories. First, institutions in country B learn from institutions in country A how to make their products more attractive. This means that in becoming accredited, B-schools distance themselves in terms of reputation and provide a short-term competitive advantage until others achieve accreditation. Second, institutions seek certification when they see the potential for increasing competitive advantage domestically or when they believe that lack of certification would reduce their ability to sell into the global market. This implies that the value of B-schools accreditation is in attracting international students to accredited schools, making unaccredited schools less competitive.

Following the break-up of the USSR in December 1991 the entire Soviet education system had to be restructured. Temporary school curricula and programmes were adopted in 1993, followed by the revised law on education (1996) and legislation dealing with attestation and accreditation. For the past 20 years, these two documents have formed the basis for the entire Russian education system (Ziganshina, 2013). In December 2012 Russian President Putin signed a new law entitled "On Education," which is to enter into force from September 1, 2013. The new basic document in the field of education is to replace two outdated laws "On Education" and "On Higher and Postgraduate Vocational Education," which were adopted in 1992 and 1996, respectively (Putin signs new law On Education in Russia, 2012). The new law introduced the notion of "the public accreditation" for educational institutions and professional programmes. The recent trend is that Government has also

reviewed a draft of the federal law “On the accreditation of the national accreditation system” developed in accordance with the concept of forming a unified national system of accreditation in the Russian Federation, where representatives of business and experts’ society actively participated.

The 21st century opened the arena for national and international accreditation schemes. In Table 1 we present a comparison among different types of international accreditations. As seen in Table 1, accreditors are not equivalent; otherwise, multiple accreditations would not be necessary. Besides different missions, each accreditor has its area of focus, and its own standards. Therefore, some of the schools with multiple accreditations feel that the different emphases of their accreditation processes are complementary (e.g., EQUIS’ emphasis on internationalisation strategy versus AACSB’s assurance of learning processes), and thus worth the price of having more accreditations. The important thing is that the accreditation process requires strict

adherence to quality planning – a necessity in the increasingly crowded educational landscape (Friga et al., 2003).

Accreditation bodies adapt major revisions to their standards (AACSB: 1991, 2003, and 2003 standards had been revised in 2010, 2011, 2012) or introduce the new standards. In March 2013, the AACSB proposed new standards justifying it as follows (Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation, 2013, p. 2): “In this context of constant change, standards and processes for accreditation must be designed not only to validate quality management education and impactful research, but also to provide leadership, encouragement, and support for change in business schools.” The EFMD announced that it targets to strengthen the EQUIS through significantly revised and expanded standards for Financial, Risk Management, and Performance reporting (in addition to its revised standards in January 2013).

Table 1. Comparison of key international accreditations bodies

	AACSB International	EFMD		AMBA
Year of foundation	It was set up in 1916 as the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business, expanded internationally in 1995	EQUIS, the European Quality Improvement System, was created in 1997, launched in 1999	EPAS was launched in 2005	AMBA founded in 1967, launched accreditation in 1997 for MBA
Membership	2013: More than 650 member institutions hold AACSB Accreditation. Overall, nearly 50 countries and territories are represented by AACSB-accredited schools	2013: Over 800 member organisations from academia, business, public service, and consultancy in 81 countries, at the heart of the EFMD are over 550 B-school members		2013: AMBA accredited programmes offered by 201 B-schools in over 70 countries
What each body assesses	AACSB assesses the “accreditation unit” which is the institution which may be defined as a sub-unit within the institution as a whole, for example a B-school or a department of B-studies.	EQUIS assesses institutions as a whole: research, e-learning, executive education, community outreach.	EPAS evaluates the quality of any management programme that has an international perspective and is of a high quality.	For all MBA, DBA, MBM programmes: full, part-time, executive, distance. Focus on programme mission, strategy, curriculum, faculty & students’ qualifications.
Standards	AACSB has many quantitative standards – has a more prescriptive approach, and they are used to evaluate a B-school’s mission, faculty qualifications/ contributions, operations, programs, other.	EQUIS has more qualitative standards: it expects schools to justify an excellence in their own way. It has “floating” standards for quality	EPAS is narrower in focus: to reinforce contribution to enhance of B-education to its stated mission.	AMBA programmes should be of the highest standard and reflect changing trends and innovation in postgraduate management education.

	AACSB International	EFMD		AMBA
Key areas of standards (the new proposed, 2013)	<p>15 standards:</p> <p>Strategic management and innovation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mission, Impact, innovation; 2. Intellectual contributions, Impact and Alignment with the mission. 3. Financial strategies and allocation of resources <p>Participants:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Student admission, progression, and career development 5. Faculty sufficiency and deployment 6. Faculty management and support 7. Professional staff sufficiency and deployment <p>Learning and teaching:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Curricula management and assurance of learning 9. Curriculum content 10. Student-faculty interactions 11. Degree programme educational level, structure, equivalence 12. Teaching effectiveness <p>Academic and professional engagement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Student academic and professional engagement; 14. Executive education 15. Faculty qualifications and engagement 	<p>10 standards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Context, Governance and Strategy 2. Programmes 3. Students 4. Faculty 5. Research and Development 6. Executive Education 7. Resources and Administration 8. Internationalisation 9. Ethics, Responsibility, and Sustainability 10. Corporate Connections 	<p>Standards in 5 areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Institutional context: national / the Bologna reforms; 2. Programme design; 3. Programme delivery; 4. Programme outcomes; 5. Quality assurance process 	<p>Programme Mission and Strategy.</p> <p>Purpose and outcomes (what MBA is about).</p> <p>Views of alumni, employers, sponsors.</p> <p>Faculty Qualification (75% - PhD), Students' Qualification: work experience, good English</p> <p>Curriculum content</p>
Emphasis	<p>Old: In the areas of mission, programmes / assurance of learning, faculty, and students</p> <p>New: Accreditation standards focus on the quality of education and supporting functions.</p> <p>Emphasis on strategic management of resources focused on the development and delivery of high-quality academic programs.</p>	<p>Focus on programmes, students; degree of internationalisation.</p> <p>Focus on the international reach of school and on a school's connections with the business community</p>	<p>Academic rigour, internationalisation, quality assurance systems</p> <p>Emphasis is on achievements in the areas of academic rigour, practical relevance and internationalisation.</p>	<p>Curriculum (nature, design), knowledge, delivery, and mode, duration.</p> <p>A focus on program mission and strategy, curriculum content, faculty, and student qualifications.</p>
List of accredited schools in the related region (Russia)	<p>Institutional AACSB International: Russia (0)</p>	<p>Institutional 1 school in Russia, St. Petersburg University, Graduate School of Management (3 years)</p>	<p>Programme</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Higher School of Finance and Management, 2. Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration 3. Institute of Business Studies (IBS-Moscow), Academy of National Economy 4. Lomonosov Moscow State University Business school 5. MIRBIS (Moscow International Higher Business School) 6. Graduate School of Management, St. Petersburg University 	<p>Programme EE (Eastern Europe) and Russia: 18 schools. In Russia - 9 local B-schools - below (and plus 3 -international):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GSIB (Graduate School of International Business) 2. Institute of Business Studies, Moscow, within Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration 3. International Institute of Management LINK 4. International Management Institute, St. Petersburg (IMISP) 5. MIRBIS 6. Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences – Kingston Russia MBA 7. Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Plekhanov Business school Integral 8. Sinerghia Institute of Economics and Finance 9. St. Petersburg State University Graduate School of Management

Sources: Accreditation, 2013; Accredited Business Schools A-Z, 2013; Adolphus, 2013; EPAS Accredited Programmes, 2013; EQUIS Accredited Schools, 2013; Istileulova & Peljhan, 2012; The Global Guide to Accredited MBAs, 2013; Trapnell, 2007; Urgel, 2007; Zammuto, 2008.

Over the last ten years, systems of higher education in Russia and many other CIS countries have undergone considerable change in the following areas (The Russian Education System, 2013): (1) Goals - with an orientation towards the needs of the market, society, and individuals; (2) Structure - decentralisation (in contrast to Soviet centralised planning); (3) Autonomy of higher educational institutions - introduction of private higher education; (4) Financing - diversification of financial sources instead of a reliance solely on state financing; (5) Content - increasing the humanitarian components in the curriculum, diversifying programmes and courses; and (6) Internationalisation of higher education is a reality, but still a great challenge for Russian and other CIS universities.

According to the literature (Elliott, 2010; Heriot, Austin & Franklin, 2009; Kondakci & Van den Broeck, 2009; Lejeune & Vas, 2009; Onzoño & Carmona, 2012; Pomey et al., 2010; Romero, 2008; Zammuto, 2008;) the main changes affected by the accreditation process are the following: review of the B-school's mission and strategy; enhanced reputation and leverage for change; internationalisation of faculty members; attraction of international students to schools in destination countries; comparisons regarding learning outcomes and other performance measures; increased focus on research and quality; an introduction of the systematic process in curriculum management; improvement of the connections with business community and stakeholders; an introduction of continuous quality improvement programs; creation of leadership for quality improvement initiatives; the acquisition of more resources; a better image and an increase in community interactions; gained reputation, legitimacy, and improvement of the survival prospects; and the changed structure and processes of B-schools.

Based on the literature review, our key research question is "What are the changes that are present in CIS business schools due to accreditation processes?" This question is related to the changes that occur in the environment of the higher education institutions (HEIs) as well as the changes resulting from international accreditation of B-schools in the CIS. The purpose of our research question is to look into the nature of internal changes processes that are observed through the prism of undergoing, external international accreditation processes.

3. METHODOLOGY

To answer the research question, we used a comparative analysis with 22 higher education institutions from four CIS countries (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan) that took place in 2011. The results are based on a survey questionnaire and interviews with deans and/or other members of B-school management. From a methodological perspective, this is a comparative study (Lor, 2011). We compare the change processes in four CIS countries. The four countries are referred to as cases or "comparators" (Hantrais, 2009). We examine the experience of B-schools in the countries which are the official members of the Bologna process (Russia from 2003 and Kazakhstan from 2010), and the countries that have not yet joined Bologna (Belarus and Kyrgyzstan). As follows, we justify why we have chosen these four countries. Business education did not exist in the Soviet Union, and it became a new phenomenon in the CIS after the break-up of USSR. Russia is our unit of analysis, as it is a leading CIS country in business education and the processes of international accreditation within the last decade. Russia represents the benchmark for other CIS countries, with its established traditions in higher education (with 6.5 million students in more than 1,000 HEIs and an additional two million students in college), and the common Russian language, culture, mentality, and similar methods of business communication. Even though Russia got off to a chaotic start when a wave of business activity swept the country at the beginning of 1990s, business education became a fast growing sector, with the tuition fees varying from \$60,000 at the largest B-schools and \$5,000-\$10,000 for less reputable courses in smaller schools (Kilyakov, 2013).

We included the other three countries because the Ministry of Education of Russian Federation issued the Decree "On the equivalence of documents on education of the Republic of Belarus, Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Kyrgyz Republic" (1999). It means that a diploma issued in these countries is recognised by Russia, and students who want to enter universities can do it on the same basis as local citizens. In addition, the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia was launched from January 2010 as a first step towards forming a broader

European Union-type economic alliance of former Soviet states. In 2011, Kyrgyzstan also announced that they would join this Union by the end of 2013. Moreover, Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan are also gradually moving towards a Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Finally, as well as Russia in the CIS, Kazakhstan represents the pattern for business education in Central Asia for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan – where Kyrgyzstan is the closest ally.

In Table 2, we present a comparative analysis of four Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in four CIS countries that were the units of our analysis. HEIs that participated in this study are mainly the leading B-schools and oldest ones on CIS markets, many of them were founded at the end of 1980s/beginning of 1990s (Russia, Kazakhstan) prior or just after the break-up of the former Soviet Union. As seen in Table 2, six B-schools from Russia

Table 2. Comparative analysis of CIS Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

	Russia	Belarus	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan
Number of HEIs (academic year 2011-2012)	1,080 HEIs where: 634 – public 446 – private and 2,925 colleges: 2,665 – public 260 – private	55 HEIs , where: 45 – public 10 – private	146 HEIs, where: 33 – state; 73 – private; 9 – national; 1 – international 16 – JSC (Joint stock company); 13 – non-civic academies.	54 HEIs, where: 33 – public 21 – private
Number of students at HEIs (2011-2012)	6,490,000 in HEIs 2,083,000 in colleges	445,576 in HEIs; 387,172 (in public) 58,404 (in private)	610,000 in HEIs 320,000 (in public) 290,000 (in private)	239,208 in HEIs 209,400 (in public) 29,808 (in private)
Types of tertiary education institutions	Universities, Academies, Institute, Private Institutions	Classical University, Profile University, Institute, Higher College.	Institutes, Academy, University, National Research University, National Higher Education Institution, Research University	University, Academy, Specialised HEIs, Institute.
Number of B-schools	150	15	9	7
Number of educational institutions: offer business degrees	586	28	70	27
AACSB membership (Jan, 2012)	6	0	3	0
EFMD membership (2012)	15 (where 12 B-schools)	1	2 (where 1 B-school)	0
Priorities in Higher education	Set out in the National Doctrine of Education equivalent to a 'White Paper' in Europe). New law On Education (Dec., 2012)	Available education, its quality, the financial efficiency of the activities of HEIs	Priority is for research, collaboration and integration in education worldwide and in line with specific national programmes	Priority is for research, in line with regional and national needs
Bologna process	Yes, from 2003. Bologna structure fully implemented in all or most fields of study	Non Bologna-signatory country. The Bologna process being implemented by ad hoc groups under the supervision of the Ministry of Education	Yes, from 2010. Extensive but gradual introduction of Bologna structure/ongoing adaptations or enlargement	Non Bologna-signatory country. Bologna process being implemented by ad hoc groups under the supervision of the Ministry of Education

Sources: *Guide on business schools, 2012; Higher Education in Kyrgyzstan, 2010; Hoare, 2011; Istileulova & Peljhan, 2012; List of Members, 2013; Overview of the Higher Education Systems in the Tempus Partner Countries, 2012; State of Play of the Bologna Process in the Tempus Partner Countries, 2012; The Russian Education System, 2013.*

and three B-schools from Kazakhstan are members of the AACSB. By the estimated number of HEIs in four selected countries with business education programmes by AACSB we can indicate that the leading positions belong to Russia. In Tables 3 and 4 we provide the list of schools participating in our

research. The ownership of the selected Russian B-schools is mainly public, whereas the leading Kazakh B-schools have a private ownership, especially those that apply for external accreditation. Public B-schools in Kazakhstan do not apply for any international accreditation.

Table 3. Business schools from Russia and Kazakhstan participating in the study

RUSSIA B-schools	External accreditation	Ownership	KAZAKHSTAN B-schools	External accreditation	Ownership
1. HSE	planning (AMBA)	Public	1. BCB, KIMEP	Other (AFBA)	Mixed (foreign private and public)
2. MIRBIS	EPAS, AMBA	Private	2. UIB	Planning	Private
3. Plekhanov Integral	AMBA	Public	3. IAB	CEEMAN, planning AMBA	Private
4. IMEB	in process (AMBA and by RABE, Russian Association of Business Education)	Public	4. IBS KazEU	Planning (ACBSP, then EPAS)	Private
5. ISB FU	in process (AMBA)	Public	5. KBTU Dep PHE	Planning (but not yet defined)	Private
6. IBS	EPAS, AMBA	Public	6. Kainar	not defined	Private
7. HSFM	EPAS	Public	7. Turan, MBA/DBA	not defined	Private
8. HSEM UFU	in process (EPAS)	Public	8. Academy RFCA	not planning	Public

Table 4. Business schools from Belarus and Kyrgyzstan (non-Bologna) participating in the study

KYRGYZSTAN B-Schools	External Accreditation	Ownership	BELARUS B-Schools	External Accreditation	Ownership
1. Bishkek Academy of Finance and Economics (BAFE)	"Other type"; National+CAMAN (Central-Asian Foundation for Management Development)	Private	1. IPM	"Other" type of regional accreditation (CEEMAN)	Private
2. Higher School of Magistrate, International University of Kyrgyzstan (Высшая школа магистратуры)	"Other type"; National attestation every 5 years with the Ministry of HE - госинспекция по лицензированию, аккредитации (аттестации)	Private			
3. Kyrgyz-European Faculty of Economics & Management, KNU	considering AMBA (not in the process)	Public			
4. KSTU named after Razzakov (Институт управления и бизнеса) Institute of Management and Business	"Other type"; National	Public	2. School of Business and Management of Technology, BSU	In process (CEEMAN, AMBA)	Public

Note: "Other type" of accreditation refers to the accreditation that is not coming from the EFMD, AACSB, and AMBA. For instance, the regional accreditation coming from CEEMAN (Slovenia) is quite "popular" in these indicated CIS countries and considered by them as an international accreditation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Russian B-schools apply for the most recognised international programme accreditations like AMBA and EPAS (see Table 3). Kazakh leading B-schools apply for the “other” external international regional accreditations. The private B-schools from Kazakhstan apply either for CEEMAN, Central and East European Management Development Association (e.g. IAB, which gained it in 2010), or the ACBSP (IBS; see Table 3). The private B-schools with the foreign participation in Kazakhstan like BCB KIMEP, the leading B-school in Central Asia – applied for the AFBE, the Asian Forum for Business Education, that assist B-schools with their recommendations to apply further for EQUIS/EPAS. B-schools from Belarus also consider CEEMAN accreditation as the one that they can apply for (see Table 4). B-schools in Kyrgyzstan are less experienced in external accreditation. They try to make their first steps applying for the regional accreditation like CAMAN (Central Asian Foundation for Management Development), that was founded based on the example of CEEMAN and its experience (see Table 4).

However, according to the opinions of representatives of two leading B-schools from Kyrgyzstan who are the national Tempus experts, so far CAMAN does not have any strong influence on Central Asian countries due to its weak and disorganised activities. On the other hand, the Russian Association of Business Education (RABE) which is very active in the business education of Russia has also introduced its

own accreditation based on the example of CEEMAN, and some B-schools (like IMEB in our study) apply for this accreditation (see Table 3). Thus, the strongest B-schools in Russia apply mainly for the international programme accreditations like EPAS and AMBA, while B-schools in Kazakhstan and Belarus start from the regional international accreditations (Asian AFBE or Central East European CEEMAN). The less developed B-schools (Kyrgyzstan) that are still in the process of applying for the national attestation/accreditation after gaining this status applied for the less developed Central Asian’s regional CAMAN (coming from Kazakhstan).

In our study, we first investigated the estimated advantages of international accreditation by CIS business schools (see Table 5, where 1 is the most important and 7 is the least important when calculating means and the determining rank order). In Russia, the results show that the main advantages of international accreditation are as follows: an improved reputation of the business school on the domestic market (rank 1); having an international accreditation is a signalling strategy for students that the school is of high quality, thereby attracting more students (rank 2); international accreditation distinguishes B-school from competitors (rank 3). The least important advantage (rank 7) seems to be that international accreditation is a signalling strategy for the Faculty members that the school is of high quality. On the contrary, Kazakhstan B-schools are more interested in introducing the system of quality improvement (rank 1). Belarus B-schools are

Table 5. Advantages of international accreditation: Assessment of business schools

Advantages of international accreditation	Russia (Mean)	Russia (Rank)	Kazak. (Mean)	Kazak. (Rank)	Belarus (Mean)	Belarus (Rank)	Kyrgyz. (Mean)	Kyrgyz. (Rank)
1. Improved reputation of the school on the domestic market.	2.70	1	3.20	3	3.50	4	4.00	6
2. Improved reputation of the school on the international markets of higher education.	4.50	4	5.50	6	5.50	6	2.50	1
3. Increased value of our assets and brand.	4.75	5	4.50	5	7.00	7	4.00	7
4. Competition on the markets is strong and international accreditation will distinguish our school from competitors.	3.50	3	5.50	6	4.50	5	3.00	2
5. Signalling strategy for students that school is of high quality.	3.00	2	3.00	2	2.00	1	3.00	3
6. Signalling strategy for Faculty members that school is of high quality.	5.10	7	4.00	4	3.50	3	4.00	5
7. Pursuing an international accreditation is a way to introduce a quality improving strategy.	4.40	6	2.20	1	2.00	2	3.30	4

more focused on the signalling strategy for students (rank 1). Kyrgyzstan is a country with the least experience in international accreditation processes as HEIs started the national accreditation processes. They perceive that the most important advantage of international accreditation is that it leads to the improved reputation on the international market (rank 1). Regarding the disadvantages of international accreditation process, B-schools that experienced the international accreditation strongly agree that the process is both very time-consuming and requires considerable human resources to be involved.

According to our literature review, we examined the relevance of 13 changes for B-schools from four investigated CIS countries. We included B-schools that already have the international accreditation or are in the process of getting one. Mostly, B-schools indicated that they have to make the entrance requirements to become stricter or progression rates lower so that only high quality graduates will be "produced." In addition, they indicated that they have to strengthen the school's financial resources to be able to carry out planned activities and improvement efforts to reach the accreditation standards. Other important changes are the following: schools have to review a mission statement, decrease their student-faculty ratio, and introduce measurement metrics for the learning goals of programmes and internationalisation of faculty members. The change that was considered unnecessary was an increase in the share of full-time employees.

In the CIS, the issues of external accreditation and Bologna process are related, but there are still a lot of contradictions, because of the political introduction of the process without any previous debates in society (Russia in the Bologna process, 2008). The main disadvantage of the Bologna process from the position of Russian universities was that the algorithm of quality assurance in the higher education had not been clearly formulated, but, on the other hand, it was recognised that an external accreditation process facilitates the quality of higher education (Resolution of international conference, 2004; Koler, 2005). Russia's acceptance to the Bologna process and its positive and negative consequences have been the most discussed topics in the last years within the academic community of

Russia. The degree and speed of change vary considerably across these countries with Russian B-schools as the leading ones, followed by Kazakhstan, and then by Belarus' and Kyrgyzstan's schools. Russia is a leading CIS country in the processes of international accreditation and presents the benchmark for other CIS countries. For leading B-schools in Russia the preferable international accreditation comes from the British AMBA, followed by European (EPAS, EQUIS), and then by American accreditation (AACSB), which has been assessed as the most difficult one to pursue.

For example, the Director of Additional Professional Education from the public Russian B-school HSE, the Higher School of Economics, explained in the following (Interview, 12 June 2011): *"As a public B-school, we know that the Government probably has money for the purpose of international accreditation, but our school is earning money itself to apply for accreditation. In our self-assessment report, we consider that AMBA accreditation makes sense first for our local market, but the EPAS programme accreditation is also included."* Two months later (on 30 September 2011), the interview about the plans on international accreditation with the Dean of HSE was officially published on the official HSE website (Interview with the HSE Dean, 2011): *"Accreditation is very important as a result, and we think that the process of gaining accreditation itself is useful, because it includes thorough and comprehensive examination by the leading foreign experts that are attracted by EFMD... Availability of this EMFD accreditation is probably is not so important for the Russian market – our market is not so sensitive, but accreditation may play a role for the international partnership of our Faculty. For our foreign partners it would be a signal of high academic quality of our programmes and it will have a positive impact on such a seemingly ordinary thing as student exchanges... On 13 September (2011), a meeting of the EPAS Committee approved the programmes of the Faculty for admission to the accreditation process. However, it was mentioned that our "problem zone" is the level of internationalisation of our Faculty and University as a whole...."*

Currently there are nine local and three joint programmes of B-schools in Russia that have been AMBA certified, six programmes with EPAS (from the EFMD), and one institutional EQUIS accreditation

(see Table 1). In the efforts to improve quality, there is strong support coming from the RABE, the Russian Association of Business Education. Presently, no CIS B-school has been accredited by AACSB. However, six B-schools from Russia and three B-schools from Kazakhstan are already the members of the AACSB. Our forecast is that the main competitors for AACSB accreditation in the CIS are two leading B-schools - the Graduate School of Management, St. Petersburg University from Russia (the first in CIS with EQUIS accreditation) and BCB, KIMEP University (Kazakhstan) with more than one international programme accreditation. Somehow, AACSB accreditation will be granted depending on the so-called "special status" of these B-schools (in the case of Russia, the indicated B-school has the required status). This "special status" seems to be a very unique situation for B-schools in the CIS, and the literature review does not indicate any similar cases with AACSB on the matter of any "special status" for B-schools.

In November 2009, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed a law granting St. Petersburg State University the special status of "a unique scientific and education complex, the oldest institution of higher education in Russia being of a great importance to the development of the Russian society." The right of giving its own diplomas with the official symbols of the Russian Federation has also been granted to the University (St. Petersburg State University – School Description, 2013). The new law on Education also specifies that Saint Petersburg State University and Lomonosov Moscow State University are the leading classical universities in Russia, and the special federal law defines the peculiarities of this legal status.

Kazakh B-schools were founded at the beginning of 1990s with the first leading international B-school of western type in the CIS. This is KIMEP University, BCB which was the first to introduce foreign lecturers and business programmes in English, and was set up in 1992. Kazakhstan joined the Bologna Process seven years after Russia, in March 2010, and compared to Russia, the international accreditation process that takes place in B-schools is behind Russian B-schools. During the interview processes it has been revealed that all private B-schools make their decision based on the orders coming from B-schools' owners (the interesting detail is that the owners of

B-schools are at the same time the Rectors or Presidents of B-schools). The decision on international accreditation of local B-schools still depends on the policy of the Ministry of Higher Education in Kazakhstan. The leading B-schools in Kazakhstan prefer to start their process of external accreditation not from the "leading international accreditation bodies," but from "the other" types of accreditations coming from the European "regional" accreditation like CEEMAN (Central and East European Management Development Association), AFBE (Asian Forum on Business Education), or AQA (Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance, which is recommended by the Ministry of Higher Education for the HEIs). Also, the ACBSP (Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs), has been mentioned in the case of one business school from Kazakhstan. However, four out of eight leading Kazakh B-schools demonstrated priorities and preferences in the international accreditations process. Their reasons to apply for the Asian AFBE Accreditation, for instance, refer to: (1) the relatively short-term accreditation process as compared to the AACSB or EQUIS accreditations, which are more time-consuming and expensive; and (2) good advice how to achieve the stage of international accreditation based on EPAS/EQUIS standards. This Asian regional accreditation has been designed as an alternative approach to EQUIS, AACSB, and AMBA.

The difference in Kazakhstan B-schools compared to Russian ones is in the structure of ownership with the prevailing private schemes of ownership. It is also different from all other HEIs in the CIS, where there is much higher share of public (state) HEIs and B-schools. In the case of Kazakhstan, the number of private HEIs and B-schools is bigger than the public schools. The other difference is that practically all B-schools from Kazakhstan start from the "other" type of accreditation, and then plan to apply for the leading accreditations. From 2009-2010 we can observe a common trend towards a reduction of HEIs through the processes of mergers and acquisitions in the studied CIS countries. This trend is connected with the issues of optimisation, the emphasis on quality, and the demographic shift of students' population.

In Belarus, the internal changes for B-schools due to the processes of international accreditation refer mainly to the substantial increase in the

quality of publications of faculty members. Also, there is a difference who makes the decision on accreditation process in a private school (by the owner), and in the state business school (by the Rector and faculty members). The private business school follows the regional accreditation (CEEMAN) process. In the case of the public business school from Belarus, the main advantage is to introduce a quality improvement strategy to the school. Both schools agree that the accreditation process is very time-consuming and requires considerable human resources and investments. There is the indicated future trend towards AMBA accreditation, followed by the European EQUIS, and then by American accreditation (AACSB).

The internal changes for Kyrgyzstan's B-schools are still a long way from implementation. In the case of the private schools, the most important change is a review of their mission statement. Kyrgyzstan B-schools will be working towards introducing changes related to their internationalisation and management. At the moment, B-schools are acquiring their national accreditation. They are acquainted with AMBA and EQUIS schemes, but most probably, they will start the process of international accreditation with the "other" type of accreditation (like the regional external institutional body CAMAN based in Kazakhstan, which is quite similar to CEEMAN, but without any strong support and reputation on the regional market). The perceived assessment of advantages and disadvantages reflect a weaker positioning of these B-schools, thinking that by doing the international accreditation they will improve "reputation of the school on the international markets of higher education." However, the private business school believes that "pursuing international accreditation is a way to introduce a quality improving strategy, making it better."

Our findings reveal that the most likely scenario for the future development of CIS B-schools is that they will become the members of the Bologna process and follow international accreditations coming from the European market, which consist of the following three steps. First, "strong" B-schools that have existed more than 20 years, in the first stage get programme accreditation (e.g. AMBA, EPAS accreditation) due to the highly-profitable MBA programmes, their popularity among CIS

customers, but at the same time are in a very competitive environment – in order to get a short-term competitive advantage. Second, CIS business schools move to regional accreditation coming from East-European countries (like CEEMAN) to understand the logic of accreditation and make them familiar with international accreditation. Third, B-schools start the process of obtaining Western European institutional accreditation due to the Bologna process to increase their internationalisation.

5. CONCLUSION

In the paper we analysed CIS business-school internal changes due to the impact of external international accreditation processes. Since most studies on service quality in business education have been conducted in Western countries and cultures, our objective has been to focus on non-Western countries. Our purpose was to find out what the CIS B-schools priorities and changes in the process of international accreditation are because there is scarce or almost non-existent research on changes that take place in B-schools during the processes of international accreditation in the CIS region.

We found out that CIS B-schools changes due to the accreditation processes refer mainly to introducing more strict entrance requirements. In addition, they indicated that they have to strengthen their financial resources to be able to carry out planned activities and improvement efforts to reach the accreditation standards. Other important changes are the following: schools have to review their mission statement, decrease their student-to-faculty ratio, and introduce measurement metrics for the learning goals of programmes and internationalisation of faculty members. In CIS countries, B-schools usually start from programme accreditations (AMBA and EPAS), or rarely, from institutional regional accreditation (CEEMAN) (B-schools cases: IMISP, Russia and IAB, Kazakhstan). Then schools want to apply for the European institutional international EQUIS accreditation (as St. Petersburg University, Graduate School of Management (Russia)). However, there are no schools

now in the CIS region with institutional AACSB accreditation. This is the next target for business schools in the CIS that are either accredited with EQUIS (Graduate School of Management, St. Petersburg University), or B-schools awarded with international programme accreditations, and with the so-called “Special status” which is required by the AACSB in this region.

We believe that in assessing strategic options for the future, CIS business school leaders must take into account their institutions’ existing structure and ability to change. Currently, some educational leaders and faculty lack full awareness or concern for the potential changes. Without some change, however, especially in the critical areas of new markets, products, and partnerships, some business schools may face trouble in the years ahead. For future research, we suggest comparing the characteristics of accreditation processes among different countries, especially countries from Central and Eastern Europe, where we lack the empirical studies about B-school accreditations. Further, it would be valuable to compare how B-schools make decisions about accreditations, how this opportunity is actually brought to a particular school, and how accreditation signals are perceived by the market.

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