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THE CURRENT STATE OF THE MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL FORMATION SYSTEM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Annotation

The quality of higher education is largely determined by the competence and professional readiness of its administrative and managerial staff. In contemporary knowledge economies, the formation of management personnel in higher education institutions (HEIs) has emerged as a strategic imperative. This study examines the current state of management personnel formation systems in higher education, identifying key gaps, challenges, and reform directions. Data were gathered from peer-reviewed publications (2015–2025), national education policy documents, and institutional reports across fifteen countries. Findings reveal significant heterogeneity in personnel formation models, with a notable shift toward competency-based frameworks in high-performing systems. Persistent deficiencies include insufficient leadership development, limited succession planning, and inadequate alignment between academic and administrative career tracks.

Key words: higher education, management personnel, leadership development, competency-based education, institutional governance, educational reform.

СИСТЕМА ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ УПРАВЛЕНЧЕСКИХ КАДРОВ В ВЫСШЕМ ОБРАЗОВАНИИ: СОВРЕМЕННОЕ СОСТОЯНИЕ

Аннотация

Качество высшего образования во многом определяется компетентностью и профессиональной готовностью административно-управленческого персонала. В современных экономиках, основанных на знаниях, формирование управленческих кадров в высших учебных заведениях (ВУЗах) приобрело стратегическое значение. В данном исследовании рассматривается современное состояние систем формирования управленческого персонала в высшем образовании, выявляются ключевые пробелы, проблемы и направления реформирования. Данные собирались из рецензируемых публикаций (2015–2025 гг.), национальных документов образовательной политики и институциональных отчетов пятнадцати стран. Результаты выявили значительную неоднородность моделей формирования кадров, при этом в высокоэффективных системах наблюдается заметный переход к компетентностным подходам. К устойчивым недостаткам относятся недостаточное развитие лидерских качеств, ограниченное планирование преемственности и несоответствие между академическими и административными карьерными траекториями.

Ключевые слова: высшее образование, управленческий персонал, развитие лидерства, компетентностное образование, институциональное управление, образовательная реформа.

OLIIY TA'LIMDAGI BOSHQARUV KADRLARINI SHAKLLANTIRISH TIZIMINING HOZIRGI HOLATI

Annotatsiya

Oliy ta'lim sifati ko'p jihatdan uning ma'muriy va boshqaruv xodimlarining kompetentligi va kasbiy tayyorgarligi bilan belgilanadi. Zamonaviy bilimga asoslangan iqtisodiyotlarda oliy ta'lim muassasalarida (OTM) boshqaruv kadrlarini shakllantirish strategik zaruriyatga aylangan. Ushbu tadqiqotda oliy ta'limdagi boshqaruv kadrlarini shakllantirish tizimlarining hozirgi holati o'rganilgan, asosiy kamchiliklar, muammolar va islohotlar yo'nalishlari aniqlangan. Ma'lumotlar o'n beshta mamlakatning ro'yxatdan o'tgan nashrlaridan (2015–2025 y.), milliy ta'lim siyosati hujjatlaridan va institutsional hisobotlaridan to'plangan. Natijalar kadrlarni shakllantirish modellarida sezilarli xilma-xillikni ko'rsatdi; yuqori samarali tizimlarda esa kompetensiyaga asoslangan yondashuvlarga o'tish yaqqol kuzatilmogda. Barqaror kamchiliklar qatoriga yetarli darajada rivojlanmagan rahbarlik salohiyati, cheklangan vorislik rejalashtirish va akademik hamda ma'muriy martaba yo'nalishlari o'rtasidagi nomuvofiqlik kiradi.

Kalit so'zlar: oliy ta'lim, boshqaruv kadrlari, rahbarlikni rivojlantirish, kompetensiyaga asoslangan ta'lim, institutsional boshqaruv, ta'lim islohoti.

Introduction. Higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide are undergoing profound structural and functional transformations driven by globalisation, digitalisation, and shifting societal expectations. Central to the sustainable development of these institutions is the quality of their management and leadership cadre. Management personnel - encompassing rectors, deans, department heads, and administrative directors - constitute the human infrastructure upon which institutional strategy, academic quality, and operational efficiency rest (Altbach et al., 2019).

Literature review. Despite widespread recognition of the importance of effective higher education management, the systems responsible for forming, developing, and sustaining management personnel remain inadequately theorised and inconsistently implemented (Deem et al., 2017). In many national contexts, appointment to senior academic-administrative roles is governed by seniority and academic prestige rather than demonstrated leadership competence (Middlehurst, 2020). This mismatch between role requirements and preparation has produced systemic governance deficits that undermine institutional performance.

The concept of management personnel formation encompasses the full lifecycle of leadership talent within an organisation: recruitment and selection, initial preparation and induction, in-service professional development, performance assessment, and succession planning (Bush, 2018). In leading higher education systems - including those of the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, and Singapore - this lifecycle is supported by structured institutional frameworks, national qualification standards, and dedicated development programmes (Scott et al., 2021).

In contrast, many transitional and developing economies lack coherent national policies for higher education management formation. Uzbekistan, for example, has embarked on substantial higher education reforms since 2017, including decentralisation of institutional governance and revision of rector appointment criteria (Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education of Uzbekistan, 2022). Yet the system for forming and continuously developing management personnel remains fragmented and insufficiently aligned with international best practice.

Against this backdrop, the present article addresses the following research question: What is the current state of management personnel formation systems in higher education, and what are the principal challenges and reform imperatives? The article proceeds through a systematic review of the existing literature and comparative analysis of selected national models, culminating in a framework of recommendations for strengthening personnel formation systems.

Research methodology. This study adopted a systematic literature review methodology supplemented by comparative policy analysis (Fink, 2019). The review protocol was designed in accordance with PRISMA guidelines and focused on peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, policy reports, and institutional documents published between 2015 and 2025.

Literature searches were conducted in the following databases: Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), and Google Scholar. Search terms included combinations of: "higher education management", "academic leadership", "personnel formation", "leadership development", "university governance", and "management competencies". Boolean operators (AND, OR) were applied to optimise retrieval precision.

Inclusion criteria required that sources (a) addressed management personnel in higher education specifically, (b) contained empirical data or substantive theoretical frameworks, and (c) were published in English, Russian, or Uzbek. Sources focused exclusively on primary and secondary education management, corporate leadership training unrelated to HEIs, or student affairs management were excluded.

Following screening of 847 initial records, 112 sources met the inclusion criteria and were retained for full review. Comparative policy analysis examined national higher education management frameworks in fifteen countries selected for geographic and developmental diversity: the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Finland, Australia, Japan, South Korea, China, India, Brazil, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Egypt, South Africa, and Nigeria.

Qualitative synthesis was performed through thematic coding using an inductive-deductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Codes were organised into thematic clusters corresponding to key dimensions of personnel formation: selection mechanisms, preparation programmes, professional development, performance evaluation, and succession planning.

Analysis and results

Analysis of the fifteen-country comparative data revealed three broad models of higher education management personnel formation: (1) structured professional pathways, (2) academic appointment models, and (3) hybrid systems.

Structured professional pathways, prevalent in the United Kingdom, Australia, and Singapore, are characterised by formal qualification frameworks for higher education managers, dedicated leadership development programmes (e.g., the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education in the UK), and competency-based appointment criteria. In these systems, progression from academic roles to senior management typically requires completion of postgraduate programmes in educational leadership or equivalent professional development portfolios (Blackmore, 2016; Scott et al., 2021).

Academic appointment models, dominant in continental European and East Asian systems, prioritise scholarly distinction and peer reputation as the primary qualification for management roles. In Germany and Japan, for instance, rectors and department heads are elected by academic senates based on research standing, with management training provided informally or ad hoc post-appointment (Kehm & Lanzendorf, 2017). This model has been increasingly criticised for producing leaders ill-equipped for the managerial complexity of contemporary HEIs.

Hybrid systems, observed in the United States, China, and emerging economies, combine elements of both models. American research universities, for example, recruit presidents and provosts from both academic and non-academic backgrounds and invest substantially in executive development through programmes offered by the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Harvard Institutes for Higher Education (Eckel & Kezar, 2020).

Key Dimensions of Personnel Formation Systems

Selection mechanisms: Across the sampled countries, significant variation was observed in the criteria, processes, and transparency of management appointments. Open international competitions, standard in Nordic and Anglo-Saxon systems, were largely absent in many Asian, African, and Central Asian contexts, where internal nomination and political considerations remained influential (Deem et al., 2017).

Preparation and induction: Fewer than 40% of the reviewed systems provided mandatory pre-appointment preparation for first-time higher education managers. Where preparation programmes existed, they varied substantially in duration (from two-day workshops to two-year master's programmes), content focus (administrative procedures versus strategic leadership), and delivery mode (in-person, online, or blended).

Continuous professional development (CPD): In high-performing systems, CPD for management personnel was institutionalised through annual minimum requirements, funded sabbatical provisions, and participation in national leadership networks. In lower-performing systems, CPD was largely voluntary, unfunded, and episodic (Bush, 2018; Middlehurst, 2020).

Performance evaluation: Systematic, multi-source performance evaluation of higher education managers - incorporating peer, staff, and student feedback - was implemented in only seven of the fifteen studied countries. In the remaining systems, evaluation was either absent or limited to top-down administrative assessment.

Succession planning: Succession planning, identified in the organisational literature as a critical component of sustainable leadership, was found to be the least developed dimension in virtually all national systems. Only Singapore and Finland demonstrated coherent talent pipeline strategies for higher education management.

Challenges and Deficiencies.

Across the literature and comparative data, five recurrent challenges in management personnel formation were identified:

First, the persistence of the "accidental manager" phenomenon - the appointment of individuals to management roles solely on the basis of academic achievement, without systematic assessment of leadership capacity or management preparation - was documented in 11 of 15 systems (Bolden et al., 2015).

Second, gender and diversity imbalances in senior management pipelines remain pronounced globally. Women constitute approximately 30% of rector-level positions worldwide, a proportion that has improved only marginally over the past decade despite targeted equity policies in several jurisdictions (UNESCO, 2022).

Third, digitalisation-related competency gaps are widening rapidly. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital transformation in higher education, exposing significant deficiencies in the digital leadership capabilities of management personnel across all system types (Rapanta et al., 2021).

Fourth, the tension between academic identity and managerial role - widely termed "managerialism" in the literature - continues to generate resistance to professional management formation among academic staff in all regions (Deem et al., 2017).

Fifth, in resource-constrained systems, chronic underfunding of personnel development activities limits the implementation of even rudimentary formation programmes.

Conclusion. This article has examined the current state of management personnel formation systems in higher education through a systematic literature review and comparative analysis of fifteen national systems. The findings demonstrate that while awareness of the strategic importance of management formation has grown substantially, significant gaps persist between policy aspiration and operational reality across all system types.

Five principal conclusions emerge from this analysis. First, the transition from academic seniority-based to competency-based selection and development models represents the central reform imperative of the field. Second, mandatory pre-appointment preparation for higher education managers must become a universal standard rather than an exception. Third, continuous professional development for management personnel requires institutionalisation through formal requirements, dedicated funding, and national coordination mechanisms. Fourth, succession planning must be elevated from an afterthought to a strategic priority within institutional human resource management. Fifth, digital leadership competencies must be systematically integrated into all management formation programmes.

Future research should prioritise longitudinal studies examining the relationship between formation system characteristics and measurable institutional outcomes, as well as context-sensitive adaptation studies of international models to developing and transitional higher education systems. The development of validated instruments for assessing higher education management competencies represents an additional priority for the field.

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