

*Digitisation to optimise administrative procedures: a case study of Nazarbayev
University*

by

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Abstract

The term “Digitisation” has nowadays been mentioned in every talk, speech and in the leaders’ plans for nations. In fact, it has become a trend for public and private organisations to digitise as much as possible, including giant sectors of economy such as healthcare, education and public service as such. It can certainly be said that Kazakhstan does not stand as an exception, but proactively engages into programmes which are supposed to increase the overall efficiency. Although policy implementers act on the belief that digitisation of services is a great initiative aimed at optimising procedures for consumers, there are many milestones which appear in the way to effective implementation. Nazarbayev University is another organisation which, positioning itself as a modern and up-to-date university, attempts to adopt the latest digital changes. Thus, this study discusses the complexities in the administrative procedures of the Nazarbayev University, using the School of Sciences and Humanities to demonstrate what academics and administrative staff go through. Although some of the procedures have been optimised in to digital management (online voting, approval and confirmations), some red-tape still prevails in the day-to-day activities of the School. We have identified the most common issues of these procedures and categorised them into “duplication”, “multiple layers” and “reporting”. The three categories showcase where each administrative procedure can be placed in, highlighting (in the hierarchical tables) the most time-consuming steps of the administrative process. Thus, by demonstrating the most stagnant steps, we propose a number of recommendations which should help to optimise these procedures first; rather than jumping into digitising them just for the sake of digitisation.

Introduction

Digital life

Digitisation has been taking over the modern world in every sphere of our daily lives. We watch digitisation (TV), we listen to digitisation (radio), we touch digitisation (smart phones), and we work with digitisation (computer-based hard and softwares). Anything or any one, which or who we want to access, is available within the space of a short time and at arm's length. This takes the form of a smartphone, which almost every country citizen possesses nowadays. Hence, many of the service providers reach out to smart solutions in order to deliver their products faster and more effectively. By doing this, providers compete and are encouraged to stay alert with the world's fast-changing conditions, as well as satisfy consumers by delivering first in an efficient and accurate manner. In fact, many of the businesses had to convert some of their features into mobile and digital forms, as the "real-time" maintenance was becoming costly and rapidly out-of-date. Not mentioning the private sector alone, governments had to also quickly acknowledge that how much of a burden would be taken off the institutions should the public service delivery adopt the digital way of supporting customers.

Nowadays, many countries have set digitisation as a strategic development priority, whilst most of the commercial world is being progressively transferred to the digital one. It is expected that digitisation will yield positive results in the long-run: it will reduce the level of corruption in government and businesses, simplify over-bureaucratization, open up opportunities for small and medium businesses, and that it will have an overall impact on the development of the country. "Aziya-Soft"'s Deputy General Director Oleg Chen believes that "digital systems will handle the coordinating tasks and create service optimization, which, in turn, will result in higher productivity of businesses, as well as hone the competitiveness among many other small-to-medium enterprises" (Kindirova & Osken, 2019).

As could have been expected, digitalisation is now being embraced by wider public services, such as medicine, public service centres, and education as well. While such "digital" progress may have already been long in trend in the Western World, Kazakhstan as a transitioning country has grown sufficient enough to adopt the fresh technology too. Ambitious programmes such as "Digital Kazakhstan 2018-2022" have been released with the aim to boost the country's competitiveness in various sectors such as economy, innovation and governance. A few of the IT services in the public services, start ups, online ticket purchasing, e-commerce, education and healthcare, if not fully, but still, partially, have been digitized. As Zerde National Infocommunication Holding reports, "Digital Kazakhstan" in its first year of implementation had

noticeably changed the lives of many Kazakhstani citizens – many of the public services have been digitized, call-centres became more accessible, and the submission rate of hard copy of documents has been decreasing. Now half of the service matters can be resolved through one’s phone or a computer (“Digital Kazakhstan”, 2019).

It can be noted that the “Domino effect” is inevitable – releasing such an initiative will evoke other issues, which would not have arisen otherwise. For example, it is the competency development, inter alia, educate citizenry effectively so they know exactly how to use and access products and services.

Although, this research project is aimed at analyzing the “digitisation” in the education system, it will not necessarily focus on “digitisation” of education delivery to students, but rather focus on the digitisation of administrative routine that the employees bear in their daily work. To be specific, this research project will use Nazarbayev University (hereinafter – NU or University) as an example of how the documentation of all the paper materials are in the process of being digitized. Following that, the project will look into administrative procedures of the University staff works with in their daily routine; how these procedures could be improved, and, provide recommendations, based on the early analysis of the above-mentioned points.

Nazarbayev University

Nazarbayev University is the educational institution founded in 2010 by the first President Nursultan Nazarbayev in the city of Nur-Sultan (former Astana), Kazakhstan. The University is considered to be one of the leading academic institutions and offers all of its academic programmes in the English language, taught by international faculty from the world’s top universities. Not only do students progress as they transfer from one year to another, but the University’s administration and staff, as the slogan goes “one university – one team”, stay in tune with the latest know-hows and trends in terms of workload efficiency.

As it can be noticed, Nazarbayev University was no exception when digitisation impacted the education sector.

The School of Sciences and Humanities (hereinafter – School) of the University is used as a case study to showcase administrative processes, both in electronic and hard-copy formats. As any other department or organization, the School has its own human resources, marketing, finance sections. Each of these sections is responsible for their respective areas of work with paper-based requirements, which need to be met. This research material will also touch upon digitization of paper copies, what challenges there are and what should be carried out in order to overcome these challenges. The School staff - professors and administrative managers have shared their views on

the current way of handling work, along with suggestions on what could be improved, added or eliminated altogether. Since most of the paperwork is carried out by administrative managers, it was our decision to concentrate on their responses as they contain valuable points, which may sometimes be overlooked by those in the Administration (i.e. the Central Point of the whole University's administrative procedures).

Literature review

In this research paper, let us distinguish definitions between “digitalisation” and “digitisation” first. According to J. Scott Brennen, Daniel Kreiss (2016, p.10):

digitisation being the material process of converting analogue streams of information into digital bits; whilst *digitalisation* being the way many domains of social life are restructured around digital communication and media infrastructures.

Whilst digitalisation is a broader term, which can be applied to any sector, digitization takes a narrower look into the processes within a chosen sector. Since this research project studies the administrative specificities of the Nazarbayev University, “digitisation” will therefore be deployed more extensively than the former.

Kazakhstan may be known for its ambitious goals of becoming one of the top 30 developed countries in the world – for example, how many reforms (such as “100 concrete steps”, “Kazakhstan 2050”, “Digital Kazakhstan” etc.) has the Government of Kazakhstan created so to conform to what developed countries do and achieve almost the same results? It has to be admitted that, although the all-too-common corruption still prevails, the Government has made some progress, maybe slowly, but gradually. For example, according to the 2017 Worldwide Governance Indicators, which measures the effectiveness of Governments, Kazakhstan is ranked number 1 (53.85%) amongst ten CIS countries. According to the World Bank “Government Effectiveness captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies.” (worldbank.org, n.d.) This is a promising indicator that somewhat explains that the situation in the civil administration could have been worse.

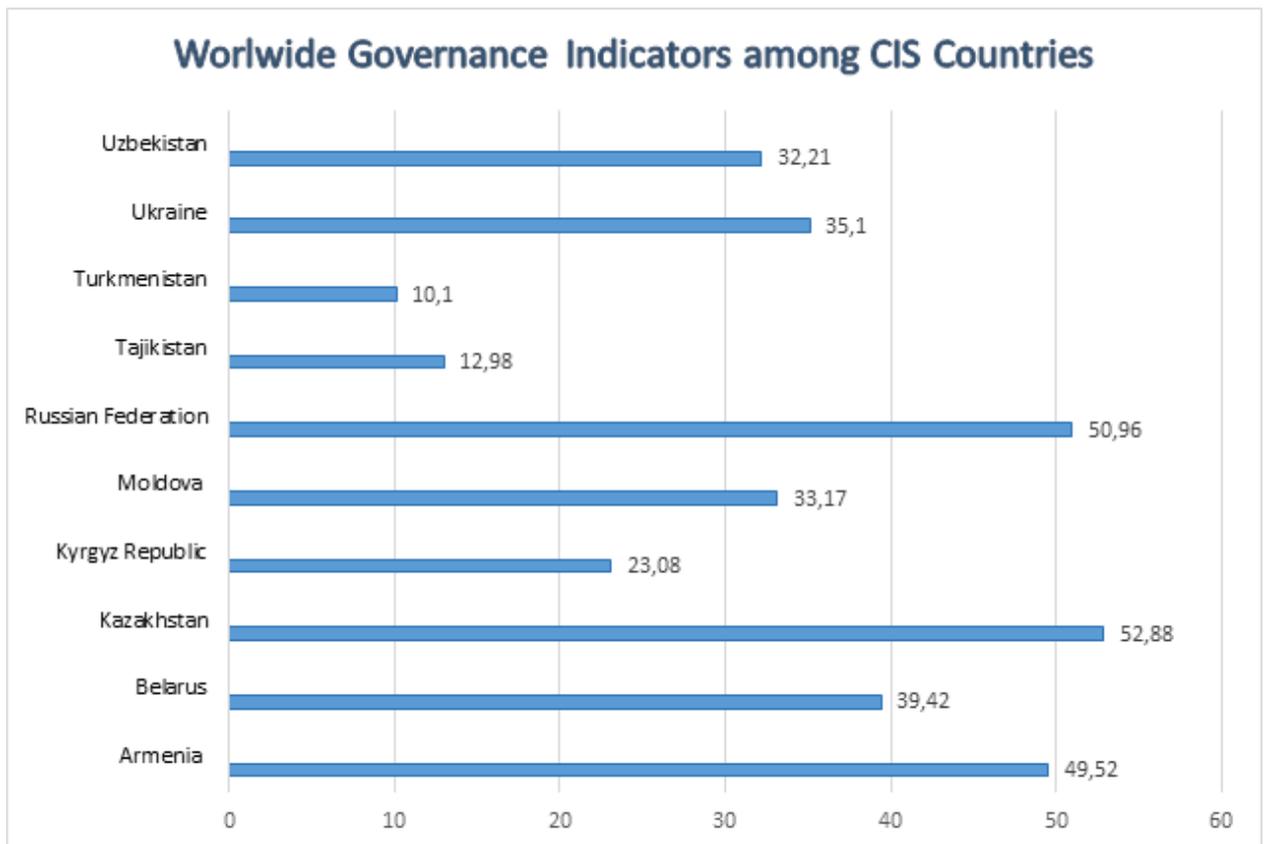


Figure 1. Government effectiveness indicators (World Bank, 2017)

Moreover, recent political events (June elections, boycotts, strong expression of civil views on social media) have reinforced the fact that the society is becoming more aware, brave and justice seeking; demanding trust, truth and transformations. The smart Government, therefore, ought to understand that the activities they do for the public good need to become more transparent, effective and accountable with greater force.

In general, talks about transparency have become omnipresent (Roberts, n.d., p. 337). Terms such as open government, globalization and digitalisation are no longer unfamiliar. The latter is supposed to be a vaccine for “bureaucratic inertia” (Robert, n.d., p. 344), which Kazakhstan, as one of the former Soviet Union members, is known to possess. In fact, what the new generation (young adults now) experience in their daily jobs (or simply, professional interactions) is red tape and bureaucracy left behind from the ruins of the Soviet Union regime. In other words, we are still somewhat living in “the culture of strict subordination” (Ibrayeva & Nezhdina, n.d., p. 56). However, as mentioned before, the Government of Kazakhstan is hugely significant in transitioning the civil works towards “digital democracy” (Kassen, 2017, p.6). According to Maxat Kassen (2016), digitisation of public services will demand “large-scale changes” not only on the electronic level but also changes in the “political culture”. The Government will need to acknowledge that the surface of their service delivery will be scratched,

requiring “transparent and open governance in a new digital” context (Kassen, 2016, p.6). It will become historical if the Kazakh Government, just as in the United States, could dedicate the same amount of effort and budget to “increase operational efficiencies at reduced costs, improve services and support mission needs, to safeguard personal information and to increase public access to valuable government information” by creating a Digital Government Strategy (“Digital Government Strategy”, n.d.).

Thus, somewhat similar to the “Digital Government Strategy”, the “Digital Kazakhstan” state programme had been released for the purpose of improving the reputation in the international arena, economy and well-being of the country citizens.

As the Chairman of the Zerde National Infocommunication Holding Ruslan Yensebayev (2018) stated, the “Digital Kazakhstan” promises to digitise five major areas of the state, which are - the economy (to enhance the competitiveness), Silk Road (i.e. development of secure digital infrastructure), human capital development, ecosystem (to hone the digital literacy of the population) and government (to optimize public services). The latter, speaking more broadly, indicates the “automation of administrative processes”, which is hoped to turn public administration into a smooth and efficient process (Lindgren et al., 2019). Moreover, according to the Sumy State University scholars Boronos et al. (2018), apart from the public administration, education and science are ideal for the digital innovation creativity; in addition, digital developments in the latter areas are critical to further expansion of digital technologies.

However, some authors argue that the definition of public services vary from one country to another, specifically in the case of Kazakhstan. According to Knox and Janenova (2018), while “public services” have a broader definition that covers such “human services” as health, education and social welfare, a public service in Kazakhstan is deemed simply as a provision of paper-proving documents such as address registration (“adresnaya spravka”), birth/death and marriage certificates as such. Therefore, annual performance indicators may demonstrate greater results for Kazakhstan; however, it will be notably different from what the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries expect, which is the digitisation of, if not the whole, but the majority of the services of a specific sector.

Kazakhstan is among those countries, which aims to develop the national economy through the digital ecosystem; thereby, digitisation strategies are significant for enhancing the competitiveness of Kazakhstan on a global scale. The technological modernization of the economy, industries, health and education sectors were put as one of the five key priorities of the first President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev’s Address to the Nation of Kazakhstan - “Third Modernization of Kazakhstan: Global Competitiveness”. The Government was assigned to introduce and implement the state program “Digital Kazakhstan” based on the address “The Third

Modernization of Kazakhstan: Global Competitiveness” on December 12th, 2017, in order to achieve ambitious development goals.

The Program aims to accelerate the pace of economic growth of the country and improve the quality of life by using digitised technology and to transfer to a new level of economic development, which ensures the formation of the digital economy in a five-year period from 2018-2022. The development of education, health and investment sectors are planned to be noticeable in the long term. This program covers a number of various industries such as energy, transportation, agriculture, trade, finance and banking services, as well as activities of state authorities, educational institutions, healthcare, and state-to-citizens, state-to-business processes.

The above-mentioned five major areas of state development, once improved, are believed to upgrade living standards, ensuring Government with efficiency and transparency, creating local employment opportunities, improving the quality of healthcare services and education, supporting the investment climate, labor efficiency, and small to medium businesses. Thus, the transition to the digital government is of significant importance as it aims to support government operations, support businesses, the fields of education and science, to simplify the business procedures, and to reduce transaction costs in interactions of businesses and other branches of the Government.

According to the data provided in the State Program “Digital Kazakhstan”, basic infrastructure created for the “E-government” has been improved since 2017 (“Digital Kazakhstan”, n.d.). More than 740 services were transferred into electronic services, and 83 mobile services were implemented as applying for re-issuance of birth certificate, payment of taxes and other compulsory charges to the budget, issuance of certificates from antituberculous organization and many others. In addition, several problems are mentioned in the program as a lack of openness and customer-orientation capacity (“Digital Kazakhstan”, 2017). As of today, some of the government’s area of administrative operations are automated, however, some sectors remain “undigitised”, e.g. budgeting in organisations, hard mailing between ministries, submission of hard copies of documents for archiving etc.

Moreover, the creation of 300 000 work places are anticipated by 2022 by means of digitisation, which shall improve the quality of life of the population in the long run (“Digital Kazakhstan”, 2017). According to Andersen and Bjorn-Andersen (2001) the Danish Government aimed to adopt an e-commerce strategy with a view to promoting the welfare of the people, the quality of society’s life, to better scientific achievements, healthcare, education services, easier access to public services. In fact, digital services facilitate workflow, thereby reducing the number of unnecessary paperwork and improving people's quality of life. The Danish Government believes that enhanced e-services help people to decrease their stress level by exempting their personal time from routine work so that people will have time for individual development. According to the

Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) report 2018, which shows a country's development in digital technologies and services, Denmark is ranked the 1st among 28 EU countries. Denmark is the leading country in terms of digitisation in the world, which performs best in online public service delivery (Scupola, 2018). Scupola states that there is a connection between people's well-being and digitisation in Denmark. Comparatively, Kazakhstan is also trying to achieve its goals set in the "Digital Kazakhstan" programme and it was on the 52nd place among 175 countries in 2017 (51st place in 2016), according to the Information and Communication Technologies Development Index. In addition, Kazakhstan has been nominated a "catching-up" country in terms of digitisation level. ("Digital Kazakhstan", 2017).

Also, 2 650 Kazakhstani IT companies were registered as of 2016 ("Digital Kazakhstan", 2017). Technoparks can provide relevant support for the development of the IT sphere as world experience shows; however, technoparks in Kazakhstan are not well developed and of low efficiency. Besides, e-government is directly dependent on the capacity of IT services, which cannot progress because of very limited capacity. Accordingly, the program is focused on the gradual introduction of measures in the fields of finance, industry, electricity, transport, logistics, e-trade, ICT and so on. Implementation of the State Programme "Digital Kazakhstan" will lead to an increase of labor productivity to the level of top-30 world countries, competitive export production, capitalization of Kazakhstani large companies at the new level, developed local e-trade, and a decrease of the shadow economy. More importantly, the development of educational and healthcare services, also the investment environment should be noticeable by the end of the programme in 2022. By 2022, it is expected that digital innovations will boost economic growth, quality of life and active civic participation (Boronos et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, there is criticism of e-government in Kazakhstan by Knox and Janenova (2019). They assert that Kazakhstan's Government makes good attempts towards digitisation, however Kazakhstan as the leading country in Central Asia in terms of digitisation does not benefit from all the advantages of digitisation. They name this concept "e-government paradox", when the Government's inputs into the digitisation progress did not result in significant outcomes as better quality public services, improved social services or limited impact on corruption. The Government of Kazakhstan missed the important points of digitisation while pursuing international organizations' requirements (Knox & Janenova, 2019). This suggests that digitisation of processes cannot be a solution for the easing of bureaucratic processes. Proper application of digitisation can only be considered as an improvement of services quality in particular.

In the following section we will be discussing about the methodology of our research, the research question and our hypothesis which will reflect the expectations from the data and analysis.

Research Methodology

This master project focuses on identifying the relationship between digitisation and administrative procedures of the Nazarbayev University, specifically how digitisation eases the workload of the institution's staff.

Hence, our research question is concerned with the following:

How does digitization optimise the administrative procedures in Nazarbayev University?

The hypothesis of this study is that digitisation is not being integrated fully in order to optimise the administrative procedures. In addition, we suggest that the administrative staff are overwhelmed by paper-work and are neither aware nor trained to deploy electronic variants in to their daily professional routine.

Thus, the purpose of this research is to see the effect of digitisation on the administrative processes of Nazarbayev University. However, let us define the scope of "digitisation" in the context of the aforementioned educational institution prior to proceeding to the next paragraph. We had taken into account the electronic services within the institution which have been integrated recently or existed from the beginning, for the purposes of optimisation of the administrative paperwork. Further, "electronic services" here presume electronic mail, electronic documentation management system titled "Directum", Google Drive, and the shared network area.

Following this, we propose the following variables:

The dependent variable is the administrative procedures of the Nazarbayev University (with a particular focus on the works of the School of Sciences and Humanities).

The independent variable is the digitisation and its implications on the administrative procedures.

In this study, we took a qualitative approach to identify the advantages and flaws of the current "digitised" paperwork in the documentation system of the Nazarbayev University. We have collected our primary data by conducting 15 interviews with a selection of key stakeholders, which involved staff who deal with marketing (1 manager, 1 specialist), student affairs (1 senior manager, 1 manager), research grant assistance (1 senior manager) and human resources staff (3 managers, 1 specialist), finance manager (1 senior manager), and 5 faculty members (1 senior academician, 2 professors, 1 associate professor and 1 assistant professor) of the School of Sciences and Humanities; as well as inspecting archived paper, looking into reports and going

from our own experience. The interviews were carried out in English and in the face-to-face format. The full list of questions is provided in Annex 1.

The Nazarbayev University Case

Technological progress may influence an organization's work positively, so it may optimise business processes of the organisation, save personnel's time from trivial work and boost productivity, simplify bureaucratic procedures by ensuring a convenient and intelligent way of accomplishing tasks. According to Lindgren and Van Veenstra, digitisation of processes is a facilitator or even a driver of transformation (Lindgren & Van Veenstra, 2018). Today Nazarbayev University looks for new and innovative methods of streamlining a number of business processes, which covers interactions between all parties within and outside the University. Basically, workflows at Nazarbayev University are done electronically through the digital system "Directum", and simultaneously they must be done on paper. Documentation processes are initiated electronically in order to be corrected and/or approved by relevant departments online, which is found to be convenient for all sides. At the same time, the same document has to be processed on paper, because there is a requirement at the University's Administration level that those files must be kept on file for future use. Those filed documents are transferred to the archive and after several years later they can be eliminated. This is usual practice when decisions at the University are implemented after having passed all the electronic and paper-based processes, which can last a minimum of five business days and a maximum of three weeks. This sort of processes must be started beforehand in order to meet deadlines, and their risks of missing deadlines or making mistakes are not always avoidable. Each document goes through electronic and/or paper-based approval of related departments and can be pending the approval or comments of each department up to five business days. After passing through all related hierarchical levels, a document is approved by top management in the end. These aforesaid procedures are applied to all business processes at the University ranging from daily operational issues to broad strategic decisions. Moreover, it is still unclear why some of the hard copies of the documents are kept within the School, and some, in the documentation department – could these not be centralised at least? Thus far the University administration is attempting to facilitate the processes by consulting with the schools' administration about optimising business processes. The results are still awaited.

While the above-mentioned processes are being presented in the present state, it is the matter of another subject when it comes to archiving these documents. Certainly, as mentioned before, there might be some electronic processes which can be terminated after a few years, however, there are electronic "papers" which need to be stored and the number of which will

gradually increase in the coming years. The University, as any other academic institution, will have an invaluable amount of data in the long run, and the storage of such information will require new innovations for documentation managers. Hence, if administrative managers are struggling to keep up with the submission of hard and electronic copies of the same file, what would such an overlap create thereafter? According to K.V.Shkred (2018), in the Analytics management scientific-methodological seminar on the theme of “Digitisation of national archives”, reported that firstly, digitisation of processes is an expensive and complicated process. Secondly, such overlapping processes will likely lead to depreciation of the “pile of files” and difficult to recognize what can be digitised and what can go into the recycle bin. In addition to that, documentation managers will have to work twice as hard, since these files will be expected to be sorted not only in their “hard” forms. Thirdly, digitisation of files requires storage in the server areas, on speaking on digital forms, in the “clouds”, which in turn demands sufficient allocation of budget; as it can be noted, archived files cannot be kept in computers only. And lastly, once all the files are “in the cloud”, how accessible it will be to end-users is another question. Taking into account all these critical factors, it would have been easier to cease the current administrative filing of documents at the University and establish efficient processes aimed at total digital improvement.

It can certainly be claimed that digital optimisation is a long-term process, which needs to be revised carefully by identifying the necessity and importance of the work proceedings. Further in the research methodology part, we will be studying the administrative procedures at Nazarbayev University in order to find out the level of paper-based and digitised workflow at the University.

Modernisation theorists believe that the digitalisation is aimed to bring in the whole fresh look on the administrative process – one of them being to “shrink” the time and space which is spent on service provision (Lindgren et al., 2019). However, is it the same at Nazarbayev University as it is assumed to be?

Primary data collection and analysis

We have chosen the School of Sciences and Humanities for a case study, as it is the largest School in the University with 197 faculty from 35 countries, 1913 students of undergraduate, graduate and PhD programs. As for today, 25 administrative staff handle the administrative work of the School. Administrative staff of the School interacts with the following departments in the Administration on a daily basis: Finance Department, Legal Department, Department of

International Cooperation, Human Resources Department, Marketing Department, Office of the Registrar, Admissions Department, Bursar's Office, Department of Documentation.

As there is a large-volume of workflow, high turnover and a big amount of allocated budget in the School, operations at the School of Sciences and Humanities can be comprehensive examples for the case study. The currently used administrative procedures within the School can give us a broad opportunity to collect information for the research. In addition, there are three cases for the analysis, which were chosen based on their difficulty to implement by the administrative staff and number of complaints from the faculty that the processes constrain their academic-related and activities. For maintaining objectivity upon providing interview answers, a consent form was read out to respondents upon proceeding to the interview questions (Annex 2). The form reads that the respondent answers will not be recorded and their names will not be given out to third parties. In addition, the consent form includes that no material rewards will be granted upon completion of the interview. And finally, respondents were instructed that by signing the form, they agree to consent to the terms and conditions.

The general overview of the paper documentation at Nazarbayev University is that it has to be performed in three languages – English since it is an English-taught institution, Kazakh – being the official state language, and Russian – as the widely spoken, understood and convenient language of communication. While this may seem like a reasonable way of documenting paper for all involved actors, in practice, the staff observes it to be time-consuming and inefficient.

According to Forbes Kazakhstan report in 2019, the state is placed number 15 among other 155 countries in relation to literacy rate. Although the report does not demonstrate the level of Kazakh language spoken/learnt by the citizens, the every-day practice shows that the Russian language remains popular as the main mean of communication. Therefore, it can be said that the most time-consuming and inefficient activity of documenting work is the translation of this work into the Kazakh language, which is perceived by others as if the paperwork in the Kazakh language is only done for a “check” mark.

Findings

Following the interviews, we have identified several themes, which were repetitive in the responses of interviewees; Specifically, the procedures have been described as “overly-bureaucratized”, “complicated”, “difficult to follow”, “time-consuming”, “unstructured”,

“inefficient” and “inflexible”. In fact, some of the procedural steps are simply inconvenient to accomplish within the space of a specific period of time. In addition, administrative staff are placed a large burden on their duties, causing them to burn out quickly and quit altogether. Incidentally, the latter statement can also be served as a reason for high turnover rate in the School.

One of the proud assets of the University are the international faculty with the academic experiences from the top-leading universities. The expectation of the faculty is that the documentation requirements are similar to what they had been required in their past job positions at the previous work places. Hence, (foreign) professors are caught by surprise and slight shock by the amount of the detailed documentation proves they are asked to supply. In some cases, there are resistant professors who do not wish to follow the instructions and again, it is the administrative middleman, i.e. manager, who suffers and is stuck between academics and administration.

One of our interviewees has noted that it seems as if the main idea of having documents on paper is “the actual approval of signature”:

“Almost everything is paper-based. Even if you do something electronically, it has to be backed up with the paper version. Even if I emailed the document, but in the end we still have to have those paper documents and paper signatures on paper! So I think even though we do something electronically, that does not mean that it will reduce the paper work at all.”

In fact, almost all the paper-based documentation is considered valid if they have physical signatures on them. Many respondents argued that Directum, an electronic system of document management, which serves parallel to the paper administrative procedures, should be sufficient for the documentation approval. However, in reality, administrative staff do the duplicates of the work by approving the documentation on paper and electronically.

Furthermore, as it was mentioned by several interviewees, Nazarbayev University is an Autonomous Organization, which is supposed to meet high standards of western-style universities, but in reality, the University’s procedures do not differ much of those which are “state bodies”. The following paragraphs depict these “state of body” procedural areas, which can also be classified as a matter of concerns. We have categorized these areas in to three themes and backed them up with cases reported by respondents. These themes are “Duplication”, “Multiple layers” and “Report submissions”.

Duplication

The “duplication” area implies completing an administrative procedure, which needs to be executed both in the electronic version and in hard copy in parallel. Essentially, “Duplication” is an inseparable feature of the administrative procedures of Nazarbayev University. Numerous documentation processes are requested to be accomplished electronically and in hard-copy formats. Such documentation processes include event organization, student admission, agreements, home leave allowances and service contracts – the list is extensive. These procedures are deemed, as reported by interviewees, overly bureaucratized, requiring high labour input and considerable amount of time.

We propose to use the documentation process (titled “Dean’s Decision”) for event organization. Normally, the School organizes events (mainly conferences) two-three times per year. Conferences are essentially coordinated by a faculty member and a school manager. The faculty member must provide detailed information to the manager 3-4 months in advance about the requested conference, including such specifics as numbers of speakers, approximate number of expected guests, and additional attributes if need be, e.g. coffee-breaks, dinners, accommodation and transportation.

When the manager has the necessary information on the conference and contacts of speakers, the communication and coordination processes take off, primarily via email correspondence. The most important action here is to purchase travel itineraries well in advance, which suit the speakers and confine with the budget well provided by the administration.

Whilst coordinating the travel itineraries simultaneously with the administration (namely finance department), travel agency and the speaker him/herself, the manager must send a Note (titled “Memo”) through the Directum to the University Provost, requesting permission to hold the conference with detailed justification on how this exact conference will benefit the community, be it internal (NU academics and students) or external (invited academics and students from other institutions and organisations).

Once the memo, passed through a few approvers, finally reaches the Directum inbox of the Office of the Provost, the latter (ideally) conveys a (positive) resolution on the conference execution. In parallel this same Memo must be printed and delivered to the Office of the Provost so he signs the actual document with an attached resolution on it.

Positive resolution implies the School may start organisation processes, i.e. initiate the document titled “Dean’s Decision on the representative expenses of the School”. The document must contain information on the representative expenses, which will have been incurred, i.e. calculations of the (including but not limited to) itineraries, accommodation, coffee breaks,

dinners, branded University souvenirs and visa costs. The more information the Decision is populated with, the better; since missing a detail means initiating another document via Directum. This means that all the smallest expenses the School will bear needs to be reflected in the documents.

Once the Decision is ready in English, the document must then be translated in to Russian and Kazakh languages. And only then, when all three versions are prepared, the Decision is sent via Directum and passes through the following departments, requiring their electronic endorsements and approvals: Finance Manager and the Executive Director of the School, Finance Department Manager, Finance Department Director, Provost and the Translator. When all six approved, the document's three versions must be printed and signed by the Dean of the School. Thereafter the document is assigned a registration number from Directum and stamped as a proof of validity. Only then, the Manager can purchase tickets and perform other needed operations. It has to be noted that the electronic and hard copy operations need to be carried out as fast as possible so to manage to purchase tickets before the prices increase. If they do and the allocated sum for purchase in the Decision is lower, the whole process must be re-initiated.

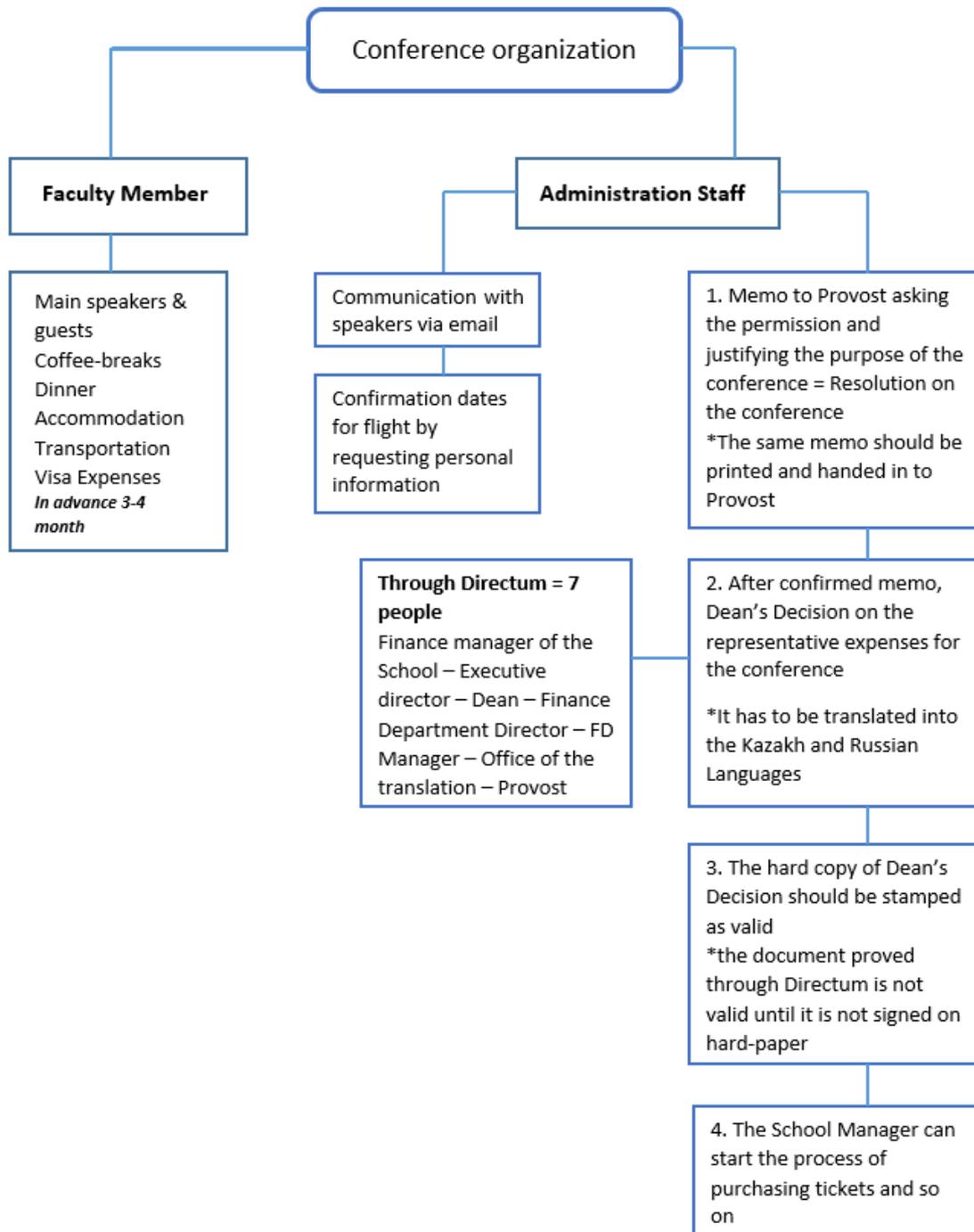


Figure 2. Conference Organisation Procedure

Multiple layers

As the name implies, multiple layers refer to a number of, sometimes unnecessary (as it has been reported), proofs on a certain activity a University professor carries out within the framework of the institution budget. In this category of administrative procedure, we will review the processing of home leave requests, which are essentially travel requests (flight itineraries) by

faculty to their home country for the periods of summer and winter breaks. The home leave policy entitles internationally hired staff to travel home twice per year. This procedure has been recognized as one of the longest administrative operations, which must be confirmed by several School staff and University departments. In fact, the processing steps are quite extensive, therefore we will consider one part of the whole operation (the full operation depiction can be found in Annex 3):

Collecting documentation for home leave:

- Manager collects “International leave” forms. Dates should be agreed and signed **by the Employee, School HR, Department Chair, Dean and Finance Department;**
- Manager collects “Home leave travel allowance authorization” forms before October 20 for travels during winter break, March 20 for travels during summer break or 2 months prior for the leaves other than summer and winter breaks. Manager also needs to ensure personal limits, family members’ limits, and requested amounts;
- **Then the forms must be signed by the Employee, Dean or Executive director;**
- Manager makes copies of “Leave” forms, attaches to the original signed authorization forms (must not be stapled, but clipped) and **signs with the executor in the Department of International Cooperation (DIC) and Director of the DIC;**
- Manager scans signed authorization forms and sends them to DIC;
- Manager prepares payment orders for each employee, **signs with the School finance manager, then the Executive director;**
- Manager **submits 3 forms in total per each employee** (Payment order, Original Authorization form, Copy of Leave Order) **to Finance Department;**

Faculty receives their allowance;

Reporting stage:

Here, the “multiple layers” issue is concerned with confirming (through signing) one form by a number of School staff and University departments. The documents must in essence be signed by involved stakeholders electronically in Directum, requiring each to review, confirm or reject with comments if need be. As it can be noted, this requires some time in order to have everyone approve the forms. Respondents noted that this factor hinders efficient implementation.

At the initiation stage of the process by the School Manager, the document must be signed by five employees, including the requestor him/herself. Then an authorization form is prepared by and must be signed by the requestor, Executive Director and Dean. Following this, copies of “international leave” forms and original signed “authorization” forms must be signed by the Manager and Director of DIC. In addition, these forms must be scanned and sent to DIC. Upon completion of these operations, the Manager proceeds to the payment stage, which is a completely separate and long procedure.

Payment forms must be signed by the Finance Manager and Executive Director of the School. In the end, in order to transfer the payment, the payment form itself, original authorization and international leave forms should be handed in to the Finance Department.

Home leave travel requests are one of the complicated and intricate administrative procedures. This is a long and tedious operation, due to its multiple layered nature. The manager spends one-two work days on the watch for each stakeholder’s signature, meaning it takes approximately one week to process travel requests at this pace. It may not look as burdensome as it is in reality, however given the fact the School has the largest number of faculty, working on each request turns into an overload for a Manager. Interviewees have also expressed their views on several departments being part of the “approving bodies” and confessed that the amount of involved staff does affect the efficiency of the process:

“The amount of approvers is unnecessarily long; it creates a thick layer of bureaucracy before the decision on request is made”;

“Requests are being approved for long, because many irrelevant departments participate in document’s approval. It can be that two managers in the same department consider the same document. And their points may contradict each other...”;

“... Those comments have to be addressed regardless of whether they make any sense. Everybody should comment, even if they do not understand anything”;

“The most bureaucratic is a number of approving departments, if there are less department involved we would process requests faster. We need less people who delegate the work to each other. Because the Legal Department’s Director assume the work to the Senior Manager, the Senior Manager to Manager. In the end the Manager should work with the document, and send it back through the same hierarchy. It really hinders the work and we do extra work”.

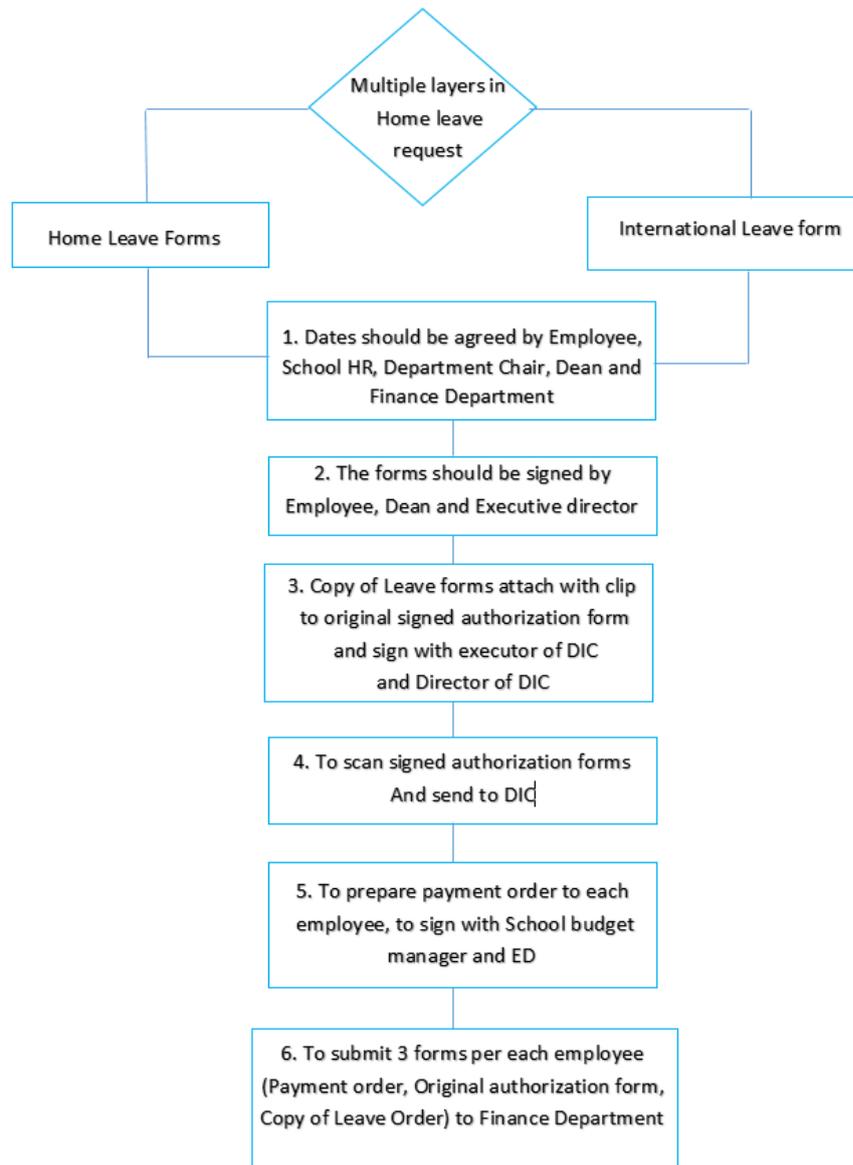


Figure 3. Home Leave Requesting Procedure

On the other side, the University regulations require participation of several units in decision-making processes of the School. Each department should check the document's section related to their responsibility, but sometimes arguments between sections arise, as their points may contradict each other.

Another type of "multiple layers" problem may happen within the School, when documents are approved by several employees of the School. This, as it can be expected, is not an effective way of having the job accomplished. According to response from the Manager, dealing with requests on a daily basis, it would have been far more productive if the list of approvers within the

School could be limited at least to “Manager-Director” only, without two other approving bodies on Directum.

Reporting

We are going to use “a business trip report” submission to showcase how much of a paper burden it places on all involved stakeholders. This type of report is essentially requested from the faculty after they return from academic travels, such as attending a conference abroad. The University Administration requires quite a few paper justifications to prove the spent amount of money for a certain academic purpose. Interview respondents have expressed concerns that such demands pressure them into disclosing some of their confidential information; and somehow demonstrate Administration’s severe mistrust into academics work. The following are one of the answers from the School Manager and Faculty on the reporting procedures.

“In fact, the University pays for the faculty’s travel expenses. Nonetheless, Finance Department requires faculty’s own bank details. Whilst I can negotiate this matter with our academics, it is really hard to explain the procedure to visiting professors, who come to teach for a few days. In addition, this is an extra work for the person, who we are cordially inviting to provide a lecture, and yet requiring so much data from him. In practice, we add the bank details to the contract only. I attempted to point out the issue of visiting professors not wishing to share their bank details to our Administration, but to no avail; We need to find a better or another way of requesting such sensitive information or eliminate it altogether,”

said a marketing specialist of the school, who is always struggling with explaining the reasons for requesting personal information. Here is one more comment of the faculty member on reporting procedure, which she finds very uncomfortable:

“I find it strange that we need to provide our personal details during business trip reporting. In my past work experiences, receipts would well be accepted as a proof of my travel expenses. Never have I had to demonstrate my bank sending a guarantee letter stating that I did spend that money. I am working full-time for the University devoting time and energy for its prosperity in research, and yet I am being questioned a lot on spending funds on things in order to deliver results. I also find it ironic that local banks, such

as Altyn, are used to such demands and provide letters easily upon requests. Whilst the latter may send it within the space of one day, foreign banks (which most of the foreign professors have accounts in), unused to such requests, end up sending the whole bank statements demonstrating expenses I do not wish to disclose, such as how much I spent on a recent shopping and how much funds I currently have in my account”.

For other faculty members it is still very complicated and unclear, they resent:

“This is too much reporting for a single business trip. The administration requires the smallest details as to what I did during my business trip. Do they really read our reports? Tight deadlines on reporting can also be stressful. If I have to go on my second trip, it is difficult for me to collect the paperwork on my first trip, while juggling things in my second visit. I can picture how much stress it imposes on Managers having to deal with many of us.

“I participate in a conference, I return with a participation certificate. Why complicate things? Why so much of red tape?”.

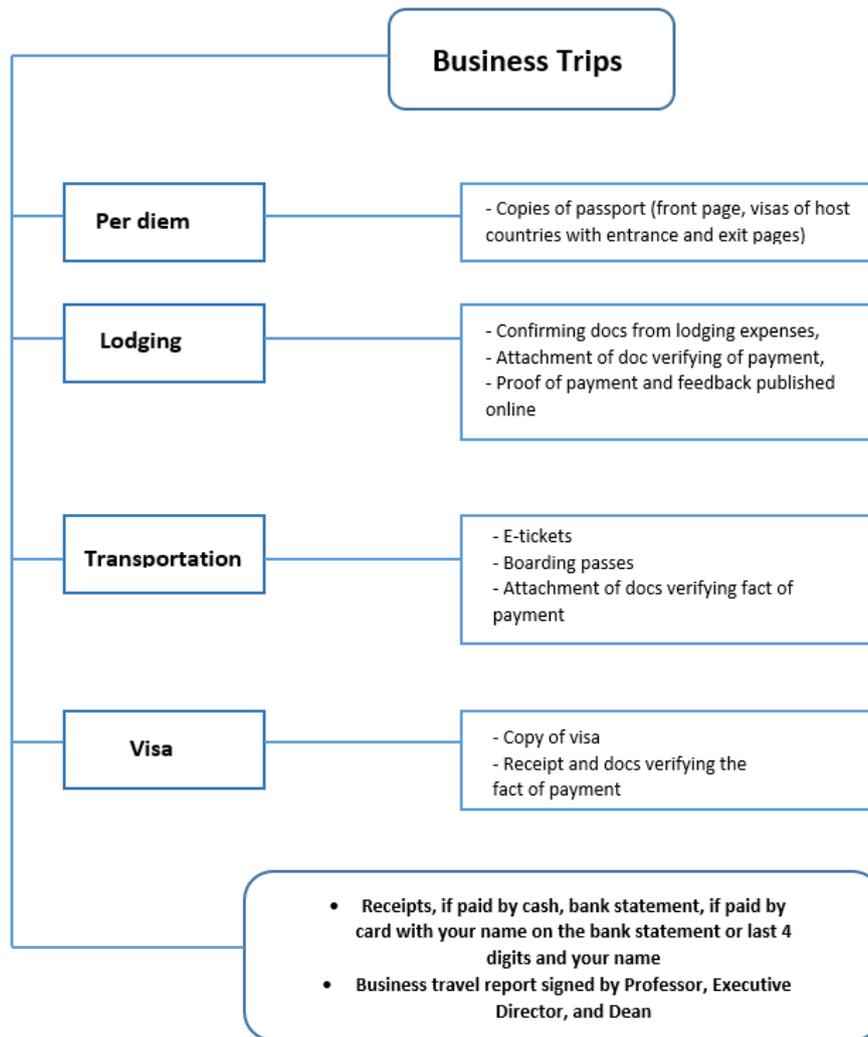


Figure 4. Business Trip Reporting Procedure

As it can be observed, there are quite a few paper justifications required from the Administration side. This causes a large paper-burden and time-consumption on Administrative Staff and irritation from Faculty. In addition, there are some cases when justification cannot be proved with a proof of receipt, certificate or anything else. One of the professors confessed: “As part of my social policy grant, I went to Hungary and spent 20+ days in total. I decided to use the local library to collect research and meet with colleagues to discuss progress. I was asked to prove that I was in the library. In the end, apart from doing research and meeting colleagues, I was taking images of me working in that library”. This example may lead to presume that any expense must be verified to the Finance Department. The latter requires pre- and post-approval steps, which need to conform to traveller’s upcoming expenses and the actual spending respectively. This can certainly be identified as the fraud prevention and ensuring transparency, however the

effectiveness of these mechanisms are somewhat elusive, as they are complex and constrain work of the administrative staff and faculty.

The main issues we identified here are:

Lack of trust;

Absence of the common rule on the expenditure allowances;

Incompatibility between the local and international procedures.

See Figure 5 for a summary.

Other examples of the three categories can be found in Annex 3.

Discussion and recommendations

Following the discussions in the literature review, it can be claimed that the “digital” situation in Kazakhstan is still in its early stage, and it has yet a long time ahead for the perfect optimisation and implementation of its services. One of the reasons for slow implementation of innovative practices could be the presence of the Soviet legacy in the governance (but not limited to) of running a state, which subsequently affects all stakeholders involved in the process. Implications of poor implementation are thus the consequential lack of trust and transparency, centralisation and control, segregation of duties (i.e. holding a large number of stakeholders accountable for a certain operation within a department).

In addition, governments spend large budgets on such optimisation programmes, however, in the case of Kazakhstan, it seems as if the digital initiative has just been another tick-in-the box to be achieved.

The leading role in the e-government development at the international level is given the top priority by the government of Kazakhstan. Its policymakers strive to achieve the highest positions in the United Nations E-government Development and E-participation Indexes. Certainly, these goals are the matters of great importance, however, considering the country’s democracy level in 2018, which was 6.71 (1=most democratic, 7=least democratic) according to the Freedom House’s Data, the effectiveness of the e-government policies’ implementation is called into question (freedomhouse.org, 2018). Beyond that, Kazakhstan is aiming for a place at the world’s top 30 developed economies by 2050, therefore, the rather pressing steps into the development of the country’s economic development might invertedly impact the quality of policy implementation. In addition, a sufficiently large sum of funding of the state is spent on the development of e-government and e-participation programmes (Knox and Janenova, 2019). However, the outcomes of these programmes are quite fragmented and some of the standard public

services remain poorly established. For example, some of the rural areas still do not have Internet access, even though Internet provision is in one of the government's policies.

In addition, the e-government programme is considered for the provision of public services through the use of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT). This technology is designed to serve as a digital tool for enhancing the transparency and efficiency, and strengthening the accountability and civil participation. Therefore, such digital policies are implemented to implicitly influence regular interaction of citizens and the government (with the services they provide) in terms of paper documentation.

Academic researchers Knox and Janenova (2019) yet challenge the e-government programmes of Kazakhstan by calling it "The e-government paradox", which in their view, have an unsubstantial effect on the resolution of public service issues. Whilst the ICT tool optimises the procurement of public services in the digital format, it cannot be regarded as the panacea for other existing issues in the public service sector. The issues vary in many types and scales. For example, one of the reasons can be the Soviet legacy, which still appears here and there in the government policies, at the same time the rising "individualistic" and "un-Soviet" moves in the form of modernization plans. However, given the current political and economic situation, one could presume that the Soviet legacy outweighs the smaller scale (positive) institutional changes, leaving a thought that the country is slightly far from breaking off the Soviet system.

All these "Digital Kazakhstan", "Strategy 2050", "100 concrete steps" state programmes are certainly something to be proud of, but as it turns out, they have only been good for the implementation of a few out of many areas for innovative development. It would be legitimate to admit that to day Kazakhstani citizens have access to a number of "digital" services: online payments, confirmation documents ("*sertifikaty*"), and tracking the queue of a place in a kindergarten among others; however, many other services remain unoptimised, leaving large room for public organisations and institutions to improve. As an example, there are still paper-based systems in numerous organizations, which are not seeking to integrate to the electronic ones completely.

This is why we had chosen Nazarbayev University for the case study, since, as it was stated by Boronos et al. (2018), the field of education and science are ideally suited to adopt the digitisation and innovation. The results obtained from the conducted interviews helped us to identify three main areas of problematic issues within the administrative procedures of Nazarbayev University. For example, we discovered that Nazarbayev University has a high potential to become a digitised organisation for education with the presence of electronic and software assets, a serving IT organisation with well-educated professionals, but the administrative procedures of the University, are not fully digitized. And it is because of the attitude of employees toward the

documentation processes - even though they are trained on how to use the electronic systems, they are not trained on minimizing bureaucracy within the organizations. Employees still adhere to the old-fashioned paper-work style, which is invoked as a security or guarantee of a carried out work. The existence of mistrust, no unified rules, lack of autonomy, segregation of duties as shown below are the roots of the recurring issues in the administrative procedures of the University (Figure 5). Previously, we mentioned Maxat Kassen's statement that the effectiveness of the organisation are dependent not only on the large-scale electronic changes, but on the political culture as well (2016). Therefore, we have to come to realise, that prior to digitisation of procedures, administrative processes of Nazarbayev University should be **optimised (simplified)** first, by changing the course towards the strategic goals of the University, which is aimed to facilitate the work of faculty and administrative staff by means of digitisation.

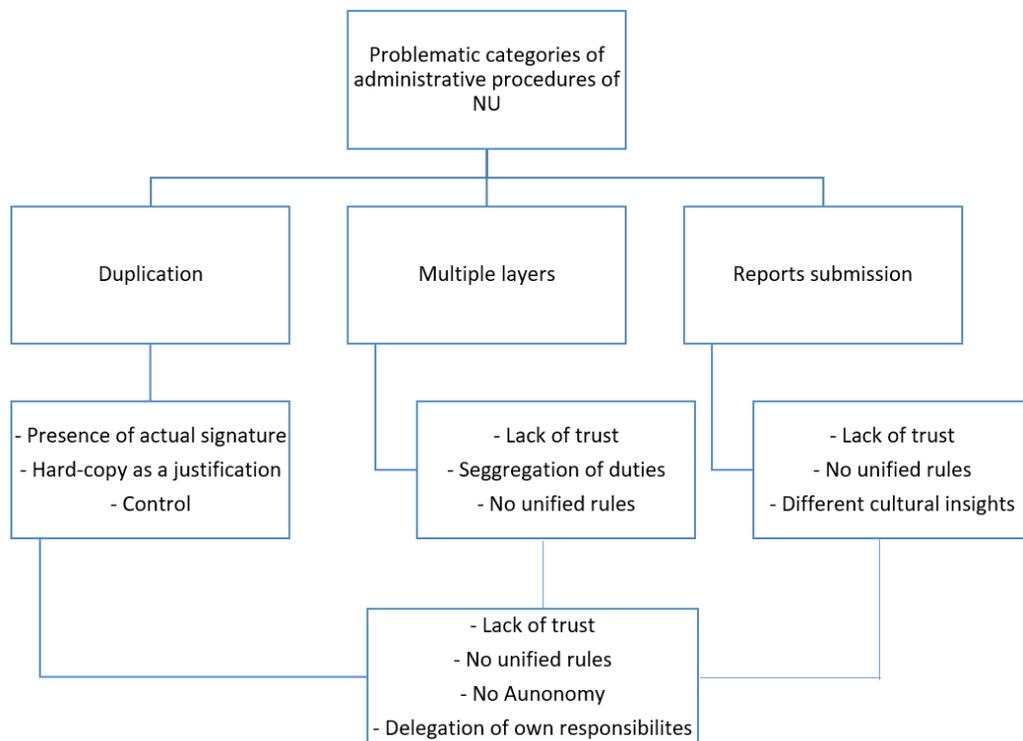


Figure 5. Identified problems of administrative procedures within Nazarbayev University

In essence, it has to be admitted that the administrative procedures at the University are diverse and complex. A new member of staff would need some time in order to comprehend the process mechanisms for a certain procedure completion. To-date, even existing members of staff find it difficult to follow the sequence of procedures, since, as it has been reported, something new is often required during the next file submission.

Having analysed our work experience with various departments, responses from both the academic and administrative staff of the University, we have come up with the following recommendations which could be taken into account during the policy-making or deployed at the implementation stage of digitising the administrative procedures:

1. Integration of 1C and Directum - Implement the ERP system. (ERP - enterprise resource planning, electronic system that would bring together all the budget, hiring, staffing, finance, risk, strategic planning, and student processes into an electronic system and allow to do most of the electronic processes online).

2. Adopting electronic signatures – moving towards digitisation as much possible

3. Adopt providing some sort of certificates through online tools as telegram bots. For instance, certificates about actual address are given through egov telegram bot. At NU we can implement such practices in terms of employment certificates. So that employees can receive these documents online and quickly.

4. We need to try to change the way of administering globally beginning from laws.

5. Decreasing the number of involved departments and employees in the approval of the documents. Documents should be signed by the responsible party only.

6. Reporting should be simplified. The number of documents should be reduced. Rationalize the justifications. Submit documents for justification as absolutely necessary.

7. Directum should be set online on phones, so that staff can access tasks via their smartphones.

8. General rules on spending the budget that will allow school employees and faculty to plan the budget without any pre-approval. The necessity of permission from the administration will simply omit if we have those rules.

9. We have to think about improving our external reputation. Many administrative processes affect the quality of services provided by the school. The University shall support the school's activities by mitigating some rigid processes, which bring income to the University.

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Annex 1

Interview questions

1. *How would you describe the administrative processes of Nazarbayev University?*
2. *Please, describe the paper-based administrative procedures of Nazarbayev University.*
3. *Please, describe the electronic administrative procedures of Nazarbayev University.*
4. *Do you think the administrative procedures of Nazarbayev University are efficient or vice-versa? Please, explain why or give some examples.*
5. *What do you find most bureaucratic during the whole documentation processing/submission process?*
6. *Do you think there are some steps in the documentation process that could be eliminated? If so, which?*
7. *Do you think there are some steps that reduce the documentation process? If yes, what would you recommend?*
8. *How long does it take you to submit a report to the administration? Do you think imposed deadlines put you under a lot of pressure?*
9. *Which one of the reporting/documentation processes is faster to implement? Digital or hard paper?*
10. *What is the most bureaucratic administrative procedure in HR and operations (research, student affairs) of the School? Why?*
11. *Which documentation needs the largest number of approvals?*
12. *Is there any administrative procedure, which takes an unreasonably long time? If so, which?*

13. *Which documentation needs to be approved on paper and electronically?*
14. *Do you find it efficient/inefficient approving documents in both ways? Please explain.*
15. *Which documentation processes in HR/Operations/Research/Student affairs can be done electronically only?*
16. *Are there any recommendations for improving reporting processes?*
17. *Is there any documentation, which is less significant when reporting?*

Annex 2

Oral consent script

Introduction:

Hello. I'm Meruyert and I am conducting a survey about "Digitisation to optimise administrative procedures: a case study of Nazarbayev University". I'm conducting this as part of research for master's program at Nazarbayev University's Graduate School of Public Policy, Master of Public Administration programme.

I located your name as we are colleagues and we work together at Nazarbayev University. Also, I strongly believe you know the area of administrative procedures at Nazarbayev University sufficiently, so I conduct a survey with you.

Study procedures:

I'm inviting you to do a survey that will take about 15-20 minutes. During the survey I will ask you such questions about administrative procedures at Nazarbayev University as linked to the areas of human resources, student affairs and research grants as such. The questions will comprise (included but not limited to): (1.) how would you describe the administrative processes of Nazarbayev University? (2.) describe the paper-based administrative procedures of Nazarbayev University, (3.) describe the electronic administrative procedures of Nazarbayev University.

Risks:

There are no potential risks.

You do not need to answer questions that you wish not to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. You may also withdraw at any time prior or during the interview.

Now I am going to describe the following steps , which I will bear to protect your privacy.

Benefits:

It is unlikely that there will be direct benefits to you, however, by better understanding the "Digitisation to optimise administrative procedures: a case study of Nazarbayev University",

administrative and operations managers, strategic decision-makers, academics and any one who is involved in the day-to-day interactions within the NU territory, will be able to identify shortcomings and discover potential ideas for improvement.

I will keep the information you share with me during the interview confidential. Information, which will be used in the report will not include your personal details, nor will be shared beyond the research team unless you grant your permission. In addition, any data from this research, shared and published, will be the end-product of combined data of all participants. This implies that the report will use a generic response approach, rather than on the basis of answers of each respondent. This means it will be reported for the whole group not for individual persons.

Voluntary participation:

- Your participation in this study is voluntary;
- You can decide to stop at any time, even part-way through the questionnaire for whatever reason;
- If you decide to stop participating, there will be no consequences to you;
- If you decide to stop, we will ask you how you would like us to handle the data collected up to that point;
- This could include returning it to you, destroying it or using the data collected up to that point;
- If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study;
- No material awards are granted upon completion of the interview;
- If you have any questions about this study or would like more information you can call or send an email to Meruyert Turarkyzy at +7 775 999 5522, meruyert.turarkyzy@nu.edu.kz

This study has been reviewed and cleared by the Nazarbayev University Institutional Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, you may contact:

Nazarbayev University Institutional Research Ethics Committee

E-mail: resethics@nu.edu.kz

Consent questions:

- Do you have any questions or would like any additional details?
- Do you agree to participate in this study knowing that you can withdraw at any point with no consequences to you?

Annex 3

Marketing manager's documentation procedure on organising a coffee break (duplication):

Request for coffee break received (ideally with all the needed details in the form of specific date, time, amount, type)

“Dean’s Decision” (hereinafter – Decision) is being prepared – along with populating the official hard paper template, the programme needs to be provided, listing all the expected visitors at the event.

Decision is initiated via Directum (the electronic document management system), approval requested from the documentation, legal, and finance departments; along with confirmations from the Dean himself and the executive director of the School.

Reports on rendered services during the event.

Student affairs manager is Admission to Graduate Programmes Meeting Minutes documentation procedure (multiple layers):

Collection of applications is initiated by the Admissions Department; documents are simultaneously shared with the manager

Screening of applications is done by the Admissions Department, who automatically reject applications which do not pass the minimum level of requirement

Review of applications, shortlist and 1st round of minutes are then done electronically via School committee members and are sent to the manager

Manager contact interviewees and organizes all interview logistics, whilst working on brushing up the paper document of admission minutes

Interviews are held, after which, committee members gather feedback, evaluate and conclude with a list of admitted, declined, conditional and applicants that should be sent to waiting list

Manager collects new information from committee members, and electronic formatting of meeting minutes containing decision gets into full processing

When formatting is done, manager translates minutes (each containing from 4-8 pages each) into Russian and Kazakh languages

All 3 versions are then sent to Admissions Manager for check and approval

All 3 versions are then sent to the Chair of the Committee (normally the Graduate Program Director him\herself) for check and approval

After final approval, collection of hard signatures begins

After present committee members sign all protocols, these hard copies are sent to External Committee members

Upon receiving hard copies from committee members based abroad, the document is stamped, scanned and sewn, then the hard copy is given to the Admissions Department

The whole process takes approximately 5 months or more, when ideally it should be done within 2-3 months.

Student affairs manager's procedures of processing student agreements both for bachelor and master programmes (combination of three patterns):

2 copies of a document are printed per student

Filling in the details correctly, as well each document page being endorsed by each student needs to be supervised by the manager at all times. If done incorrectly, more time is needed to print another copy and filled in again

Upon checking the document (and in most of the cases students make simple mistakes), manager needs to endorse the document at the end of the page

Upon collecting all signed agreements by students, Manager takes all the papers to the Dean\E.D. for signing at the last page.

Files are then taken to the Finance Department for stamping

One copy of the agreement is taken and stored with the Office of the Registrar

Distribution of the 2nd copy of the agreement takes place. Oftentimes students do not come back to the School Office to collect their copies. Copies of old agreements are still left in the shelves of the School Office.

Thus, it is hard to calculate the time period spent from the initial print of the document to the final stage where students pick up their copies of the document

Manager's procedures of processing reports on rendered services by visiting professors (reporting):

In order to invite an external professor for delivering a lecture at the University, the school administration should sign the service contract with a visiting professor according to University regulations. The legal basis of the contract is that the service has to be provided by the visiting professor and the University will cover the necessary expenses. This process is tedious which takes considerable time of a visiting professor, administrative staff and the school faculty according to the answers of respondents.

1. After the visiting professor arrived and delivered a lecture, he/she has to meet with the school employee in order to sign the contract. Also he has to submit the original boarding passes to the school employee.

2. The visiting professor is requested to provide with the report on delivered services. Usually it is prepared by inviting faculty or school employee.

3. Meanwhile, school employee prepares all the necessary documentation for processing the payment for expenditures.

4. School employee requests the following documentation from the visiting professor:

- Passport copy
- CV
- Bio or diploma of higher education
- Report signed by the visiting Professor
- Original of boarding passes (scans of boarding passes for return tickets)
- Screenshot of the payment confirmation for air tickets
- Memo for requesting the reimbursement
- Bank statement details

5. After receiving these documents, the service is deemed to be fulfilled.

This part of reporting is needed to justify that the visiting Professor has arrived at the University and delivered the lecture. The first half of documents as a passport, CV, Bio or Diploma of higher education are needed to prove the eligibility of the visiting professor to conduct a lecture on the certain topic. A signed report is required to justify that the required topic was indeed delivered to the students. Original of boarding passes or scans of boarding passes for return tickets, screenshot of the payment confirmation of air tickets are necessary to provide with the actual cost and route of the tickets. In some cases the visiting professor can purchase the air tickets himself/herself, so that he may request to reimburse the expenses. This case requires additional information on a bank statement details and a memo requesting the reimbursement from the visiting professor. It might be slightly sensitive to ask the visiting professor to provide with the bank details and diploma of higher education. But the school employee has to request these as it was required by the University regulations.

The whole administrative process of having visiting professors in the School takes approximately 5-6 weeks. The process starts from launching the contract on paid services, which should be signed by both sides. But in this section we will consider the part after the services are delivered, particularly the part for submission of reports on rendered services. This process is commonly found for procedures related to payments, reimbursements, allowances and so forth.

The step-by-step implementation of the Admission to Graduate Programmes Meeting Minutes documentation procedure (multiple layers):

1. Collection of applications is initiated by the Admissions Department, documents are simultaneously shared with the manager
2. Screening of applications is done by the Admissions Department, who automatically reject applications which do not pass the minimum level of requirement
3. Review of applications, shortlist and 1st round of minutes are then done electronically via School committee members and are sent to the manager
4. Manager contact interviewees and organizes all interview logistics, whilst working on brushing up the paper document of admission minutes
5. Interviews are held, after which, committee members gather feedback, evaluate and conclude with a list of admitted, declined, conditional and applicants that should be sent to waiting list
6. Manager collects new information from committee members, and electronic formatting of meeting minutes containing decision gets into full processing
7. When formatting is done, manager translates minutes (each containing from 4-8 pages each) into Russian and Kazakh languages
8. All 3 versions are then sent to Admissions Manager for check and approval
9. All 3 versions are then sent to the Chair of the Committee (normally the Graduate Program Director him\herself) for check and approval
10. After final approval, collection of hard signatures begins
11. After present committee members sign all protocols, these hard copies are sent to External Committee members
12. Upon receiving hard copies from committee members based abroad, the document is stamped, scanned and sewn, then the hard copy is given to the Admissions Department

The whole process takes approximately 5 months or more, when ideally it should be done within 2-3 months.