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Mission analysis of higher education institutions in Kazakhstan

Abstract. *A well-established mission statement is important for implementing and evaluating the strategic management of any organization. Each higher education organization has its own direction, unique aim, and reason for existing. Hence it establishes a mission statement reflecting this uniqueness. This research aims to examine the mission statements of Kazakhstani higher educational institutions by identifying characteristics based on the principles of strategic management. In particular, based on the mission model proposed by Pearce this paper presents a content analysis of the mission statements of one hundred – two (102) higher educational institutions. The results show that such components as product/service, consumer, market, and society are the most frequent elements found and that none of the one hundred – two mission statements analyzed featured all elements of the “ideal” mission model. The results of the current scientific paper can be used by managers of higher educational institutions to develop the formulation of their mission statements and strengthen their effective use as strategy drivers.*
Keywords: *strategy, mission statements; mission components, higher educational institutions, management.*

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Introduction

The success of strategic planning begins with properly defined and approved mission and vision statements. Ozdem G. considers that these fundamental concepts also facilitate the formation of the institutional identity and distinction of any organization. The mission statement presents the organization to the community and differentiates it from other organizations, highlighting its distinctive characteristics. Similarly, each higher education organization has its own direction, unique purpose, and reason for existing. Hence, it establishes a mission statement reflecting this uniqueness. The mission sets a general guideline for the development of universities, designed for a long-term nature. Often, the mission is formulated at the philosophical and value levels. Previous studies on mission statements have

analyzed the content of mission statements of high educational organizations in different countries like Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, etc. (Olshannikova N. [1], Kamran A. Siddiqui [2], Sundaram Nataraja, Mostafa M. Kamel, Zia Ul-Haq Paracha [3], Emelyanova I. [4], Julián D. Cortés [5]). However, we have not found any similar works on the study of current themes in Kazakhstan. This research attempts to examine the mission statements of Kazakhstani high educational organizations (HEIs) by identifying characteristics based on the principles of strategic management.

Literary review

Many authors of books on business strategy point out that the mission statement provides the basis for the company and it is an effective tool

for determining the goals, values, directions, and activities of the organization. Universities are no different, although, of course, the statements about the mission of universities are most likely very different from the statements of private businesses [1]. Chernyavskaya, V. emphasizes that the mission is a model and at the same time a scenario of those actions that will lead to the realization of the appropriate development of the university [6]. Palmer and Short have outlined three main missions that universities and colleges need to accomplish through their strategic management, which include research, teaching, and public service [7]. Mazurek, G. argues that the HEIs, nowadays, exist in a highly competitive environment, where innovation, as well as economic, social, and political impact, forces the universities to reshape their perception of themselves and adopt new strategies in order to compete and be able to provide a needed value

and “product”, hence, knowledge to the students, as well as efficiently manage its capacities [8].

Ozdem, G. points out that a study of mission and vision statements regarding the strategic plans of Turkish state universities shows that universities with diverse histories and sizes use similar mission and vision statements. Moreover, all universities established in different regions and in different conditions have an analogous mission and vision of development. The author notes that universities should determine their unique characteristics and underline them in their mission and vision statements. [9].

According to David, Fred R. the mission statement should be informative, encouraging, sustainable, and serve to stimulate stakeholders to action. Estimation of a mission statement regarding the inclusion of the nine components is only the initial stage of the process to assess the overall effectiveness of the statement.

Table 1. Components of Mission Statements

Component	Main Question	Keywords
Customers	who are the consumers of the university's services?	students, alumni
Products or services	what are the major products or services offered by the university?	programs, training, teaching, research, degree, undergraduate, graduate
Location (Markets)	geographically, where the university carry out their activities?	local, regional, global and international
Technology	does the college of modern technology?	technology usage
Concern for survival, growth and profitability	does the university strive for growth and financial sustainability?	growth, efficiency, resources, sustainable development
Philosophy	what are the main beliefs, values, ambitions, and ethical priorities of the university?	beliefs, values, desires, and philosophical priorities
Self-concept	what is the distinctive competence of the university or its main competitive advantage?	competitive advantages, unique selling points, and university image
Concern for the public image	does the university respond to social and environmental problems?	society, community, public
Employee Concerns	are employees a valuable asset of the university?	staff, faculty, employees, personnel
Note: Compiled according to [10]		

The author points out that a good mission statement should disclose (1) the organization's customers; (2) products or services; (3) markets; (4) technologies; (5) concern for survival, growth, and profitability; (6) philosophy; (7) Self-concept; (8) concern for public image and (9) concern for employees. These main nine components serve as a practical basis for evaluating and writing a mission for any organization. As the first step in strategic management, the vision and mission provide direction for all planning activities [10].

Methodology

All Kazakhstani universities with available mission statements were included in this study. Their mission statements were collected from the questionnaire and their official websites. The questionnaire contained questions about the existence of a mission for the organization (it was necessary to specify the text of the mission) and the date of its approval. There was conducted online survey among universities. The list of universities was prepared based on the data of the Nomenclature of economic activities of the Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

This study employs content analysis as it is a commonly used technique in contemporary business studies. In the literature content analysis has been extensively used in analyzing mission statements in different spheres, including academia. Kamran Ahmed Siddiqui analyzed Saudi universities, Sundaram Nataraja, Mostafa M. Kamel, Zia Ul-Haq Paracha, Olshannikova N., Emelyanova I. world and Russian HEIs, Julián D. Cortés MS of universities worldwide.

There was carried out an assessment of the mission statements of universities in accordance with the recommendations for the organization, outlined by Fred R. David in the book "Strategic Management: Concepts and Examples" [10]. Thus, the assessment is based on the analysis of the mission statements of 102 educational organizations and was carried out on the basis of the mentioned components in Table 1.

Fred R. David writes that the description of the mission statement should be extensive.

It should not include monetary sums, figures, percentages, coefficients, or goals, contain less than 250 words, be inspiring and determine the usefulness of the organization's products, and indicate that the organization is socially and environmentally responsible. Table 2 presents the characteristics of mission statements and their possible explanations for universities.

This study provides three sets of analyses including (1) an Examination of components and characteristics of mission statements; (2) Frequently used keywords in mission statements and word clouds; (3) Major themes in mission statements.

Discussion

Analysis of Mission Statements

Analysis of the structure of the mission statements on the presence of 9 possible components determined that 3 universities in their mission have only 1 component out of 9 specified, 29 universities – 2 components, 52 universities – 3 components, and 14 universities – 4 components. No university has a mission statement that contains 5 or more elements according to the principles of strategic management by Fred R. David. The data collected shows that only a few established mission statements appear to be effective, defined as having at least 40% of the required mission components.

We have found that such components as product/service and consumer, market and society are mostly contained in the missions of universities. So, technology, philosophy, and self-concept are less frequently mentioned components. Two components – care for survival, growth, and profitability, and caring for employees are missing from the studied mission statements.

We also discovered that

- 85 out of 102 mission statements of the selected universities included an obvious concern for customers in the statement. Some examples are:

'... to form human resources - competitive and in-demand specialists' (Al-Farabi Kazakh National University)

‘To train highly professional and competitive specialists’ (Kurmangazy Kazakh National Conservatory)

‘... development of a competitive personality ...’ (L.N. Gumilyov ENU).

- 99 out of 104 mission statements of the studied universities included clear mention of the type of products and services offered. Some examples are:

‘To create, preserve and disseminate knowledge...’ (Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan)

‘To provide world-class education and endow our graduates with the skills...’ world (KIMEP)

‘Training of highly qualified and competitive specialists...’ (West Kazakhstan University of Innovation and Technology).

- 44 out of 102 mission statements of selected high educational institutions included direct mention of the location (market) of the organizations’ services. Some examples are:

‘Generation of new knowledge and innovations in the Eurasian space ...’ (L.N. Gumilyov ENU)

‘Training of competitive specialists in demand in the labor market of the Western region and the country as a whole ...’ (K.Zhubanov Aktobe Regional State University)

‘...promoting the innovative development of Northern Kazakhstan’ (M.Kozybayev NKSU).

- 21 out of 102 mission statements of researched high educational institutions mention technology or innovation. Examples include:

‘... integration of research potential with innovative activity ...’ (Shakarim University)

‘... create conditions for the development of science, technology, generation of new ideas...’ (Academy of Civil Aviation)

‘... improving healthcare through the integration of advanced educational, scientific and medical technologies’ (National Medical University).

- only 6 out of 104 mission statements of the selected universities included philosophy of operations. Some examples are:

‘We build relationships with students and partners on the principles of honest and open work, ...’ (Kostanay University of Engineering and Economics)

‘.. the principle of "education for all throughout life" ... in the interests of the individual, society, and the state’ (Astana Medical University).

- 5 out of 102 mission statements of selected high educational institutions included an indication of self-concept, that is the universities’ view of its specific strong sides. For example:

‘KEUK, being one of the leading universities of Kazakhstan...’ (Karaganda Economic University of Kazpotrebsoyuz)

‘.. being the educational dominant of the region... (Ibray Altynsarin Arkalyk State Pedagogical Institute)

Table 2. Assessment of Components of Mission Statements

Component	National	Public and private	Total
Consumers	9	76	85
Products or services	10	89	99
Markets	3	41	44
Technology	2	19	21
Care for survival, growth and profitability	0	0	0
Philosophy	0	6	6
Self-concept	0	5	5
Concern for the public image	6	31	37
Caring for employees	0	0	0
Note: Authors own investigation			

Table 3. Most Frequently Used Keywords in Mission Statements

#	National		Public and private		Combined	
	Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency
1	development	6	education	56	training	63
2	training	5	training	58	education	61
3	education	5	specialist	44	specialist	48
4	competitive	4	development	41	development	47
5	area	4	competitive	35	competitive	39
6	specialist	4	workforce	30	innovation	38
7	culture	4	Kazakhstan	27	providing	34
8	art	4	science	26	workforce	27
9	professional	4	knowledge	25	science	26
10	workforce	3	region	23	knowledge	25

Note: Authors own investigation

'... be the driving force of innovative development of society... (Zhansugurov Zhetysu State University)

'MUA is one of the leaders in the system of medical education...' (Astana Medical University).

- 37 out of 102 chosen mission statements of studied high educational institutions included gratitude for their social responsibility or concern for public image. For instance:

'Culture, education, and science for the benefit of society (Turan University)

'Contribute to global well-being...' (Satpayev University)

'...to serve the country and humanity (Caspian University).

The mission statements practically do not reflect the desire for survival, growth, and profitability, which is explained by the fact that universities do not set their main goal to achieve independent financial stability and high profits. Table 2 shows the assessment of components of mission statements.

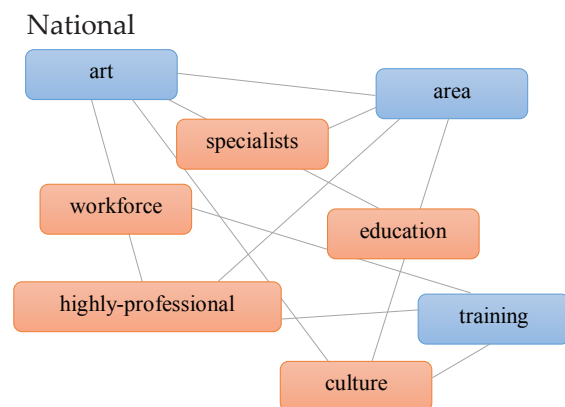
The missions of 51.5% of universities (52) were approved in the period from 2016 to 2019. Changes were made in the missions of 44.5% (45) of universities. This means that universities try to be flexible in order to keep up with rapidly changing social demands.

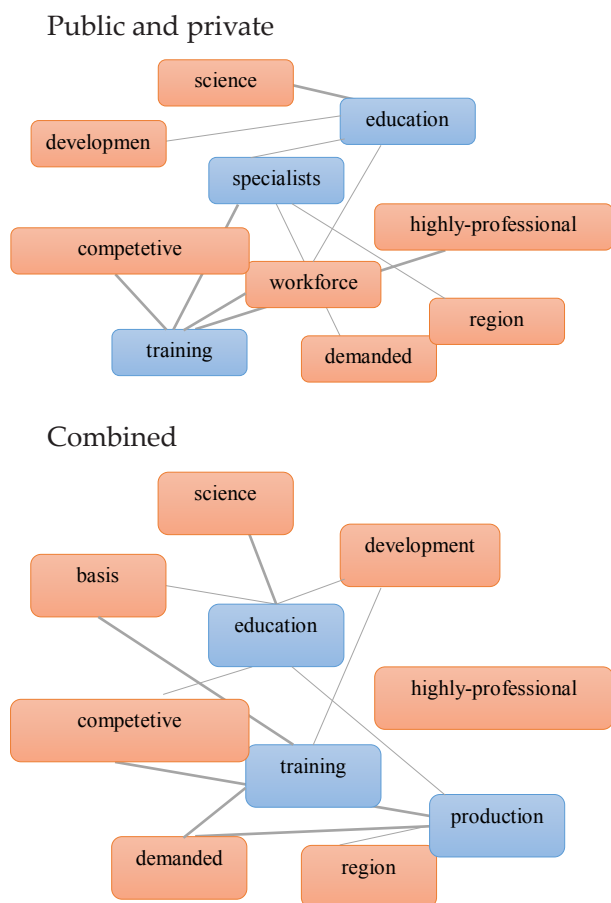
Frequently used keywords

Table 3 shows frequently used keywords in mission statements. Out of the top ten most frequent keywords, five keywords were common in mission statements of both categories of universities and include Training, Education, Development, Specialist, and Competitive as frequently used keywords in mission statements. Figures 1-3 show collocation graphs of all mission statements of Kazakhstani universities (N=102). It was processed through Voyant Tools. This approach has been used in early studies focused on analyzing mission statements of high education institutions by Khaled A. Al Falah, et al [2, 12].

Word Clouds

Figure 1-3. Word Cloud of Mission Statements of Kazakhstan Universities

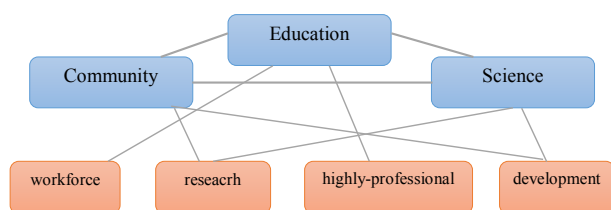




Note: Authors own investigation

Major Themes Observed

Processing the most frequently used keywords lead to identification of major themes in mission statements. These themes were achieved by combining the similar meaning (synonyms) words in keywords observed in the mission statements. For example, training, specialist, knowledge, alumni mean education so named as “Education”. Similarly, community, society, country, market and social means community so clustered as “Community”.



Note: Authors own investigation

Figure 4. Major Themes Observed in Mission Statements of Kazakhstan Universities

Furthermore, innovation, technology, research, academia means science so categorized as “Science”. Resultantly three themes emerged from the data including “Education”, “Community”, and “Science”. Figure 4 presents graphical representation of major themes observed in mission statements.

Results

Analysis of the mission statements of 102 Kazakhstani universities revealed a discrepancy in the content of mission statements with the requirements in accordance with the strategic planning proposed by Fred R. David. Analyzing the structure of mission statements for nine possible components is defined as 3 universities in their mission have only one component out of nine specified, 29 universities – two components, 52 universities – three components, 14 universities – four components. No university has a mission statement that contains five or more elements according to the principles of strategic management. The data collected shows that only a few established mission statements appear to be effective, defined as having at least 40% of the required mission components.

In addition, the results showed that the formulation of the mission statements is general. The timing of its implementation and the specialization of a particular university are not defined. For example, if the university specializes in the field of oil and gas, the mission should reflect this specificity of the university. Many universities define the scope of their activities by their mission, without specifying a way to achieve the goal. The mission should be clear and contain a call to action.

Finally, this paper as well suggests recommendations for further research on mission statements. Certainly, it recommends the development of individual criteria to evaluate mission statements for high educational institutions. For example, components of mission statements must include students, graduates, alumni, and employers as “Customers”; bachelor, masters, doctoral, etc. programs as their “Services”; local, regional, national, and

international as “Market”. From this, we can conclude that there is a need for a more mature model for writing policy statements for higher education institutions. In addition, universities are recommended to pay attention to word count (there were statements with more than 110 words, while it could be more punctual and shorter if redundant claims are omitted (i.e., “the mission of this university, is...”), readability, clarity, and consideration of their activities, national policies, and global trends when drafting their missions.

Conclusion

Thus, on the basis of the study, we can conclude that university missions are often formulated not according to the standards of strategic planning. The missions of universities contain general system errors, the main of which is the generalization of mission statements, their duplication, and confusion.

The aim of this article was to examine the mission statements of Kazakhstani HEIs. The discussion of this research identified that the three components most widespread in the

universities’ mission statements were Products or services (97%), Consumers (83%), Market (43%), and Concern for Public Image (36%). It was found that such components as Technology (20,5%), Philosophy (5,9%), and Self-concept (5%) are less frequently mentioned components. Two components – care for survival, growth, and profitability, and caring for employees are missing from the studied mission statements of universities. A content analysis of the mission statement of all universities in Kazakhstan (N = 102) shows there are three main themes that have emerged from the data including “Education”, “Community”, and “Science”. Five keywords were common in the mission statements of both categories of universities and include Training, Education, Development, Specialist, and Competitive as frequently used keywords in mission statements. These topics coincide with the main directions of development of higher education and science as defined by the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. This analysis can be applied by university managers to make managerial decisions on their further detailing.

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Қазақстан жоғары оқу орындарының миссия тұжырымдарын талдау

Аннотация. Миссияның дұрыс тұжырымдалуы кез-келген ұйымның басқару стратегиясын жүзеге асыру және бағалау үшін өте маңызды. Әрбір жоғары білім беру ұйымының өзіндік бағыты мен ерекше мақсаты болады және сол ерекшеліктеріне сәйкес миссия мәлімдемесін де қалыптастырады. Мақала қазақстандық жоғары оқу орындарының миссия мәлімдемелерін стратегиялық менеджмент қағидаттарына негізделген сипаттамаларына сәйкестігін анықтау арқылы талдауға бағытталған. Осы зерттеуде талдаудың үш тобы ұсынылған, оның ішінде (1) миссия мәлімдемелерінің компоненттері мен сипаттамаларын талдау; (2) миссия мәлімдемелерінде жиі қолданылатын түйінді сөздерді анықтау; (3) миссия туралы мәлімдемелердегі негізгі тақырыптарды айқындау. Атап айтқанда, Пирс ұсынған миссияның «идеалды» моделіне сүйене отырып жүз екі жоғары оқу орындарының миссия мәлімдемелеріне мазмұнды талдау жасалып отыр. Нәтижелер өнім/қызмет, тұтынушы, нарық және қоғам сияқты компоненттер жиі кездесетінін көрсетеді. Жұмыс нәтижелерін жоғары оқу орындарының менеджерлері өздерінің миссия мәлімдемелерін дұрыс құруға және оларды стратегияның қозғаушы күші ретінде тиімді пайдалануды күшейту үшін қолдана алады.

Түйін сөздер: стратегия, миссия тұжырымдары, миссия компоненттері, жоғары оқу орындары, басқару.

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Анализ миссий высших учебных заведений Казахстана

Аннотация. Грамотно сформулированная миссия важна для реализации и оценки стратегии управления любой организации. Каждая организация высшего образования имеет свое собственное направление, уникальную цель и причину существования, следовательно, устанавливает формулировку миссии, отражающую эту уникальность. Данное исследование направлено на анализ заявлений о миссии казахстанских высших учебных заведений путем выявления характеристик, основанных на принципах стратегического менеджмента. В частности, на основе модели миссии, предложенной Пирсом, в данной работе представлен контент-анализ заявлений о миссии ста двух высших учебных заведений. Результаты показывают, что наиболее часто встречаются такие компоненты, как продукт/услуга, потребитель, рынок и общество, и что ни в одном из ста двух проанализированных заявлений о миссии не присутствуют все элементы концептуальной «идеальной» модели. Результаты работы могут быть использованы менеджерами высших учебных заведений для разработки формулировок своих миссионерских заявлений и усиления их эффективного использования в качестве движущих сил стратегии.

Ключевые слова: миссия, формулировки миссии, компоненты миссии, высшие учебные заведения, управление.

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