

Exploring School Autonomy Frontiers
in the Post-Soviet Republics of Central Asia –
Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

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Abstract

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This study provides an empirical picture of the ways in which the New Public Management doctrine has been implemented in the context of post-Soviet states in Central Asia. Specifically, the data present evidence on the extent of school autonomy along six dimensions in the three states. The implications of the shift towards education decentralisation have been studied and explained. Based on a mixed method this evidence is drawn from three sources: surveys, interviews, and legislative analysis. With the research limitations in mind, based on the analysis undertaken, it is possible to identify some important messages regarding academic theory and education management practice.

The first message is that neo-institutional theory, particularly historical institutionalism, has been supported by the evidence from the post-Soviet states. Despite quite diverse trajectories of the countries' political, economic and public sectors development over the last two decades, the policies promoted in education appear to be converging in both outputs and outcomes across the region. The three countries demonstrated persistent path-dependency through their inability to overcome institutional inertia, so that operational policy and structure dimensions have not been decentralized, combined with the effect of declining fiscal and bureaucratic capacity at the centre, so that managerial matters have been delegated to a school level. This trend was regional.

The second message is that, the patterns observed in the three post-Soviet states displayed similarities to the patterns observed in education systems of the developed western democracies. Hence, the view that the structure of the post-communist welfare states is problematic, and that the particularities of their transition with budget cuts on top of the communist legacy and a hodge-podge of different approaches do not allow these states to be classified (*cf.* Orenstein 2008), has not been supported by the evidence. Education institutions in the three post-Soviet countries investigated conformed to a general West European pattern, although for different reasons.

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List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CA	Central Asia
CEEC	Central and Eastern European Countries
DFID	Department for International Development
EFA	Education For All
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KG	Kyrgyzstan
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NPM	New Public Management
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
SABER	(World Bank's) Systems Approach for Better Education Results
TJ	Tajikistan
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UZ	Uzbekistan
WB	World Bank

Chapter 1 | The New Public Management Movement: Context of Administrative Reform

[New Public Management] is often portrayed as a global phenomenon - a core element in the process of convergence between states, overriding distinct political and cultural characteristics.
(Clarke & Newman 1997, ix cited in Larbi 1999, p.34)

1.1. The New Public Management Reform

Since the late 1970s public administration reforms conducted under the rubric of the New Public Management (NPM) have led to significant changes in both the structures of governance and the delivery of social services (Tolofari 2005, p.75). NPM seeks to apply private sector principles to the management of public services. According to Hood (2001) there are five main tenets of NPM: placing the customer at the centre of state activities; decentralising responsibilities to the level closest to the field of operation; making government officials accountable to the community; emphasising the quality of services and efficiency of bureaucracy and, finally, replacing controls via procedural input controls with controls via outcome evaluations.

The implementation of NPM in education was, in part, a response to the increasing portrayal of western educational systems as highly inefficient. Paul Krugman, a Nobel Prize winner in Economics wrote: “for the past 30 years our political scene has been dominated by the view that any and all government spending is a waste of taxpayer dollars... [e]ducation, as one of the largest” (2009). Educational institutions have been blamed for not being able to meet the requirements of a rapidly changing society, not producing the quality of education required to be competitive in a globalized knowledge

economy (Cole 1998 cited in Hudson 2007, p. 269). Many critics of the educational status quo have expressed the view that educators in the civil service are more interested in maintaining their professional positions than in delivering an effective national education (Tolofari 2005, p.84). The importance of education for economic growth lent impetus to the reform movement and the rise of NPM (*cf.* Hanushek & Woessmann 2008). NPM was seen as a way to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of educational provisions through the application of a market-oriented approach to management.

NPM has led to numerous structural changes at the school level. First, roles and relationships both within the school and between the school and its environment have changed. In fact, according to the NPM the role of the central government was “to steer more and to row less”; to ensure a course was maintained rather than getting behind the oars to power the boat (Osborne & Gaebler 1992, p.32). For instance, school administration turned into school management as the managerial responsibilities to allocate resources, raise extra-budget funds, and the like have been devolved to the school level. School staff participation in decision making in the new atmosphere of local management of schools depends heavily on the headteacher’s style of leadership. Many countries have noted that non-governmental entities may be involved in establishing a framework for decisions taken at lower levels; thus, teachers’ unions, parents and parents’ organisations have been able to exercise some degree of influence on decision making (see OECD 2012). Under the NPM schools have started to engage more with all stakeholders (Ferlie et al 1996, Arnott 2000 and Raab 2000 cited in Tolofari 2005, p.85).

Second, the NPM has altered patterns of governance, including the strategies and mechanisms of control. The NPM has led to the delegation of increasing local influence over planning and budgeting, resource allocation, the hiring and firing of teaching and

non-teaching staff, as well as evaluation and monitoring. Educational decentralisation often coincided with political decentralisation – some responsibilities for school management were delegated to local authorities (*cf.* Hudson 2007). Consequently, ‘decentralisation’ started to refer to ‘a variety of organisational forms which differ in their rationales and in their implications for the distribution of authority on different agencies, groups and stake holders’ (Lauglo 1995, p.6).

Third, the NPM has placed increasing emphasis on the school’s accountability to parents and other stakeholders along with the implementation of performance and output measures (*ibid.*, p.18).

Fourth, the NPM has been accompanied by efforts to increase the diversification of funding sources. In many countries the size of a school’s budget is determined by the number of pupils it enrolls (*i.e.* per capita scheme of funding; see Chapter 5). Schools therefore potentially compete with each other to attract pupils. Under decentralisation, decisions about the allocation of resources that were once made by regional or national governments are increasingly delegated to schools along with the delegation of authority to seek funds from other sources.

The NPM approach to providing schools with financial autonomy was aimed at increasing the efficiency of school management in the belief that decisions taken at the level closest to operations would guarantee the best use of public resources (Eurydice 2008, p.12). The extent and impact of these various changes advanced by the NPM remain unclear. Research on these developments has been limited. Findings from a descriptive analysis from the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), concluded that the NPM approach, particularly decentralized decision-making, is a common

characteristic of countries with strong educational performance measured in terms of results (OECD 2004, p.16).

Through these developments initiated under the NPM the state seemed to step back and allow other parties to play a greater role in education policy formulation and service provision (Hudson 2007, p.266). However, from a broad international perspective the picture is somewhat mixed. In the USA changes in educational policy could be described on the one hand as moving towards increased centralisation. That is, the 'No Child Left Behind Act 2001' (NCLB) implemented by the Bush Administration represented a strong 'step-in' undertaken by the federal government. NCLB mandated that all states and schools were to receive federal aid and that testing requirements to be put in place to determine if schools were meeting the federal standards (Farnsworth 2010, p.7); thus, the federal level of government imposed tighter controls over output, but allowed the states to set and administer standards (*ibid.*). On the other hand, over the last decade there has been increasing movement in the USA toward decentralisation through the use of vouchers and local charter schools.

Similarly, the British case was also mixed. There has been a strong emphasis on decentralisation of decision-making to local schools, involving parents and quasi-market mechanisms. Yet this had been accompanied by a reinforcement of central control through the introduction of a National Curriculum for England and Wales under the 1988 Education Reform Act. Furthermore, under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 the government decided to introduce a national scheme of inspections through the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (see Rothenthal 2004). Ofsted has been established as an independent, non-ministerial government department reporting directly to Parliament. This is responsible for inspecting and regulating educational service providers in England,

including schools. Similar bodies carry out the same functions as Ofsted elsewhere in the UK: Estyn in Wales; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland; and the Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland.¹

Referring to the Nordic countries, Hudson (2007) reports a decline in the state monopoly on the ownership of education along with a drastic reduction in the state's ability to govern through detailed legal norms and mandates (p. 269). Thus, in Sweden the educational system has become more decentralised with responsibilities for schools shifted to local government and to the schools themselves (Ronnberg 2007, p.215). In Finland, although the local authorities are formally responsible for most educational policy decisions, in practice many of these decisions are delegated to schools, particularly those related to staffing (OECD 2012, p.502).

Following the lead from western European countries, educational reforms in the Post-Communist Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) have adopted the NPM approach. In the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and the Baltic states, the rejection of the highly-centralized Soviet ideology provided an opportunity for the states to adopt decentralized school management (Eurydice 2008, p.12). Meyer-Sahling *et al.* (2012) suggest that the adoption of the NPM- approach by the civil service was a regional trend that applied across CEECs (p.113).

An interesting feature of the NPM movement in European countries was that schools themselves did not necessarily seek autonomy; typically, provision for the transfer of new duties to the school level were legislated without schools' agreement (Eurydice 2007,

¹ <http://www.politics.co.uk/reference/ofsted>.

p.15). Furthermore, Karlsen (2000) states that decentralisation reforms have been met with passivity and even resistance at the local level. From the perspective of central government, he continues, decentralisation might help prevent a threat to central legitimacy and actually consolidate the central power (*ibid.*, p.530). Given this background, it is not surprising that the school autonomy process was initiated through central legislation and regulation.

1.2. Ambiguity of the 'New Paradigm'

In the mid-1970s, according to Boix (1998), Western governments became concerned about the quality of public education because of the need to boost human capital, in response to the economic crisis, and improvements in technology, which made international trade easier, promoted globalized markets, and made manufacturing cheaper in developing economies such as India and China (pp. 3, 39). Under these circumstances, Western governments were faced with two realities: the need to ensure effective use of resources committed to the public sector, and the need to emphasize quality rather than quantity in its workforce, given that manufacturing could now be provided cheaper elsewhere.

Governments were no longer satisfied with the traditional Weberian bureaucratic management of public services, which emphasized fixed and official rules, firmly ordered hierarchies, impersonal authority, advancement and promotion based on professional criteria in order to ensure individuals were treated equally before the bureaucracy and to thereby prevent corruption (Weber 1948 cited in Lynn 2001, p.146). Within education, Weberian bureaucracies in practice meant governments were dominant in determining how schools operated in terms of provision and how admissions processes worked, while teaching and curricula standards were left to schools and local government. The

traditional bureaucratic paradigm seemed deficient amidst the economic crisis, globalization and the emerging emphasis on quality assurance.

Moreover, as Stokes (1996) observed, the search for a new paradigm of public sector management had been demand-driven by the public perception that government was in various respects too expensive, inefficient and unresponsive. For Friedman, public schools- at least with reference to his native United States- had become “*lazy public monopolies*”; guaranteed money by public revenues and insulated from competition through the high costs of private education and/or moving to another neighbourhood. Public schools therefore had little incentive to keep costs low and standards high. In order for schools to be effective, Friedman argued, their survival had to be linked to performance, with parents having an effective exit option should schools not fulfil their expectations (Friedman 1955). On the basis of these beliefs three goals emerged as central drivers for reform: cost containment, public support and performance improvement (Dawson and Dargie 1999, p.460).

This perception was reflected in the recommendation of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The OECD saw two public sector reform strategies required as a response to public pressures: “a closer focus on results And replacement of highly centralized hierarchical structures with decentralised management environments” (OECD 1996, 15). Thus, in response to similar challenges, similar movements were found in different parts of the world, particularly countries with a strong tradition of a large state-controlled public sector, including New Zealand, Australia, the UK, and Sweden (McKevitt 1998 cited in Dawson and Dargie 1999, p.461). Even in the USA, with a much smaller provision of public goods by the state, there was a claim that government needed to reinvent itself to become more entrepreneurial and able to secure

more or less as stated by Osborne and Gaebler in *Reinventing Government* in 1992. Nevertheless, there was no single best model of public management recommended, but it was suggested that reforms must take into account national differences and local circumstances (OECD 1996, 17).

Although there seemed to be a general consensus that the core of the new public management movement would mirror practices and models of private sector management and organization, this begged the questions whether these principles could be replicated in public sector and if replicated with what effect.

Thus, Dawson and Dargie (1999) emphasised two constraints to the introduction of quasi-markets in the public sector, which were rarely operative in the private sector. First, funds in the market were determined on an annual basis by government decree and, hence, even the most successful supplier could not increase the size of the total market. Second, the activities in which the created organizations could engage were carefully circumscribed by the state. For example, under local management of schools regulations, school could not decide to diversify into educational publishing and to seek to develop other lucrative businesses. These would have contributed to curtailing of powers and responsibilities of new public managers, who were exhorted to be like their private sector counterparts.

Furthermore, NPM drew upon two competing conceptual frameworks, according to Dawson and Dargie (1999). On the one hand, the introduction of private sector practices included centralizing tendencies that involved managing professionals, introducing performance measures and devising incentive reward systems. On the other hand the emphasis on market-oriented processes involved competition, consumer choice, and innovation that was somewhat at odds with the centralizing managerial tendencies (p.463).

The introduction of market-oriented operations that promote competition, efficiency, privatization, innovation and consumer choice, assumes that consumers make (rational) choices in selecting the combination of features and prices they prefer, which leads to economic efficiency. Efficiency here is defined in terms of individuals acting rationally to maximize their own welfare (or utility) (Mathiasen 1999, p. 97). A big difficulty with this model of market behaviour is, as Daniel Kahneman (2011), a winner of a Nobel Prize stated, that people do not always make rational choices. In educational policy, decentralization of decision-making is aimed at making the education system more responsive to parental and student demand. However, it is hardly ever explicitly explained how increased parental choice would affect the math and science skills of students.

Furthermore, NPM may simply be rejected as incompatible with national values. For instance under the French legal tradition, the state is not impinging on freedom of an individual but protecting the rights of citizens. *“Major public policies as in the field of education are as highly resistant to external pressures as they are embedded in a corporatist decision making process. Some ministries, such as the national education ministry or the finance ministry are commonly designated as “fortresses”... Radical political changes have little impact on these organizations because, regardless of political party, the government needs them in order to maintain social peace and, by extension, its own life* (Rouban 1993 cited in Mathiasen 1999, p. 105). Nevertheless, France has made substantial reforms over the last decades – in governing the system of education in particular – liberalizing the school catchment area, a new policy based on Education Action Zones programmes, and in teachers’ methods. (Bezes et al. 2012, p. e27).

In addition to the introduction of markets and competition into the public sector, NPM altered values with respect to the role of professionals and modes of accountability. Gray and Jenkins (1995, pp. 81-82) pointed out that professionals lost influence or position in the new public management, while responsibility and performance started to be defined individually in NPM, and no longer as 'public good' or 'public interest'. (p.647-8). In relation to accountability NPM transforms control mechanisms that start to depend less on a bureaucratic order and more on assessing activities and individuals. According to Bezes et al., (2012, p. e27) this can create pressures to perform and be efficient that have negative side-effects, such as "teaching to the test," rather than promoting critical thinking and intellectual imagination; in fact insistence on outcomes may prevents a new professionalism from emerging (*ibid.*).

In the light of new demands to government and public sector, Osborne and Plastrik (1997, 15) stated that the emergence of NPM in the late 20th century represented "an inevitable historic shift from one paradigm to another". This led them to argue that governments around the world have converged on the principles of the NPM because they are useful in virtually any political setting, geographic region, or policy area. This understanding of NPM appears to be consistent with the theory of a discontinuous change, that occurs when a crisis prompts reformers to abandon old concepts and practices in favour of new ones, which solve pressing problems more effectively (i.e. 'punctuated equilibrium' coined by Gersick 1991).

Meanwhile, another group of theorists sees reforms of the last three decades as building directly on historic traditions of public administration, as reformers have been making successive decisions among a limited array of historically contingent options (i.e. incremental changes) (cf. Mahoney and Thelen 2010). Page (2005) summarises sceptics'

opinions and suggests that NPM is “less a discontinuous departure from past traditions than an incremental evolution of thinking and practice that varies across governments and policy areas” (p.714).

Nevertheless, Catlaw and Chapman (2005) in their comment on Page’s *“What’s new about the New Public Management”* state that the practices that are called NPM emerged independently of academic theorising; they came from entrepreneurial experimentation within existing bureaucracies (p.341). The true importance of NPM, Catlaw and Chapman continued, is that it looks forward as one theoretical basis for attempting to solve these difficult managerial problems (ibid.).

NPM does not represent so much a coherent system for improving public sector management as a wide spectrum of private-sector management techniques including competition between service providers, decentralization, and choice for citizens, benchmarking and output measurements, performance contracts, etc. (Stark 2002, p.137). In contrast, a leading critic of NPM, Minzberg (1996 cited in Stark 2002) wrote that “business can learn from government no less than government can learn from business” (p.138). Similarly, Osborne and Gaebler (1992) stated *“Those ... [who] believe business is always superior to government – are selling the American people snake oil ... Business does some things better than government, but government does some things better than business”* (p.45). And even when the tools of NMP have been applied, the governments choose not to withdraw. Whilst government can devolve responsibility to locally managed organizations (e.g. locally managed schools), when an organization fails its consumers, the public, it becomes a central government matter.

Thus, some scholars conclude that NPM embodies “radically different, indeed conflicting goals” (Kettl 1995, 14). One example is, when some scholars believe that NPM provides public managers with discretion, another identifies NPM with the discretion limitation of public servants (Kaboolian 1998, Barberis 1988 cited in Stark 2002, p. 137). This particular phenomenon is considered in detail further in the thesis.

1.3. Administrative Reform Towards Decentralisation

The NPM movement has produced variations among countries in the degree and dimensions of responsibility delegated from central government to the local schools. That is the process of decentralisation was not uniform. Instead it resulted in the development of a variety of models of school autonomy (see Eurydice 2007, PISA 2009, OECD 2012). At the same time many countries adopting the NPM approach shared some general characteristics in the ways in which education started to be governed. Thus, for example, based on data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the OECD observed a widely spread pattern of state vs. local control: “There is typically a division between a central state that defines broad objectives and monitors outcomes, and local control over school processes, particularly budgets.” (OECD 2004, p. 16).

Furthermore, data from the OECD countries show that there is a large difference in the extent of school autonomy between managerial and policy domains. Decision-making authority delegated from the centre concerning the choice and use of inputs (*e.g.* financial, human, time inputs), afford schools a degree of *managerial autonomy*. This is the domain where the greatest level of autonomy among countries can be observed (Eurydice 2007).

The domain of *policy autonomy* encompasses the extent to which schools have the authority to make a range of decisions about processes and procedures that are necessary

to produce the educational services prescribed by central government (Verhoest *et al.* 2004). The *policy* dimension is generally the least decentralised area in education across the countries (OECD 2008). The curriculum in particular is an area of education in which governments jealously guard their power. When the central government retains the authority to decide about policy issues, it can significantly influence the utilization of authority delegated to the schools in other domains (*cf.* Karlsen 2000).

Measuring decentralisation in terms of the degree and domain of autonomy granted to schools poses conceptual and definitional issues. Fukuyama (2013) argues that autonomy refers to the manner in which the political principal (the central government or ministry) issues mandates to the bureaucrats who act as its agents (school headteachers in the education case) (p.356). He continues: ‘No bureaucracy has the authority to define its own mandates, regardless of whether the regime is democratic or authoritarian’ (*ibid.*). In this regard, the classification of the decision-making mode described as ‘the decisions taken at the school level made in full autonomy’, within an OECD framework seems to be ambiguous (see OECD Indicator D ‘Who makes key decisions in education systems?’, OECD 2012, p.507) . Fukuyama suggests that the fewer and more general the mandates, the greater the autonomy the bureaucracy possesses (2013, p.357).

Another conceptual ambiguity appears when one chooses what domains to decentralize (or centralize) in public service provision. Gilbert (1983) reminds us that the administrations which go through decentralisation (or centralisation) transformation are relative to both the social systems in which they operate (*e.g.* schools and educational administrations) and the levels from which they are perceived in those systems (*e.g.* central government, parents, community); arrangements which appear decentralized looked at from a higher administrative level may seem extremely centralized from below

(Gilbert 1983, p.177). This raises a question about the perceived and the actual level of autonomy in schools and what factors may have impact on the level of utilization of competences delegated to the school level.

Although governments are adopting the NPM approach in the administration of the public social services, there have been few systematic studies of how this approach has been implemented and its implications for the functioning of the public sector (Verhoest *et al.* 2010, p.276), particularly education. And there have been no empirical studies of the efforts to adopt this approach in the reform of educational systems in the post-Soviet states of Central Asia. The objective of this study is to contribute to filling this gap with a comparative analysis of the implementation of reforms designed to increase school autonomy in three post-Soviet states of Central Asia.

1.4. Post-Soviet Central Asia: Reform of Bureaucratic Centralism

Two decades ago, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, emerged as newly independent states in the territory of post-Soviet Central Asia. Before 1991 these countries might have served as remarkable examples of an ideal type of ‘bureaucratic centralism’, which traditionally characterized the public services in the Soviet republics. The concept of ‘centralized’ authority means ‘concentrating in a central or top authority, decision making on a wide range of matters, leaving only tightly programmed routine implementation to lower levels in the organisation’ (Lauglo 2007, p.6). Thus, with regard to Soviet education, the All Union Ministry of Education located in Moscow would make decisions in considerable detail about all aspects of education service: aims and objectives, the structure of provision, curriculum and teaching materials, in classroom methods, appointments of staff and their job descriptions, admission of students, assessment and

certification, finance and budgets and inspections/evaluations to monitor performance (*cf.* Walder 1994, Heyneman 2000).

In 1991, consistently ‘strong’ central control from Moscow came to an end. During the 1990s these countries transformed themselves from constituent republics of the Soviet Union into independent states. They replaced their command centralised economies with economies governed primarily by the rules of the market, and their communist one-party political regimes with political systems that were meant to provide a basis of democracy and freedom (see Hedlund 2005). This transformational process was accompanied by the *reform* of national education systems in all former Soviet states.

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan all shared a similar starting point after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, with a well-established network of institutions, well educated population and a virtually universal literacy rate (see Ofer 2012, Roland 2012). The 1990s was the period when Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan came under political and economic pressure – to launch institutional reforms in education. These Central Asian countries not only shared a common history as Soviet Socialist republics, but faced similar obstacles after gaining independence: their schools suffered dramatic cut in funding and the outflow of Russian-speaking professionals. It was during this period that the strategy of decentralisation that had dominated the political efforts in the developed democracies since the beginning of the 1980s, was recommended for implementation in the post-Soviet states of Central Asia. All three states were subject to similar external influences, “which came most visibly in the form of foreign aid” (Silova & Steiner-Khamisi 2008, p. 16).

For most post-Soviet countries, reforms were driven more by external pressure and less by internal political leadership and ideology. Larbi (1999) argued: “The factors driving reforms were, in particular, structural adjustment lending conditions, which pointed toward market and private sector approaches to public sector management under the guise of new public management” (p.12). Supranational organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank came into the region offering assistance and recommending reforms; the World Bank was by far the most influential of them (see Silova & Steiner-Khamsi 2008).

In 1995 the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, a structural unit of the World Bank, developed a policy paper ‘Priorities and Strategies for Education’, which stipulated the key reforms to address educational challenges in developing countries, whether low- or middle-income (including former Soviet states). The document notes:

The quality of education can benefit when schools have the autonomy to use instructional inputs according to local school and community conditions... Fully autonomous institutions have authority to allocate their resources (not necessarily to raise them), and they are able to create an educational environment adapted to local conditions inside and outside the school (p. 12).

Furthermore, ‘Priorities and Strategies for Education’, labelled by Samoff as ‘the World Bank’s main education policy document’ (1996, p. 249) recommended ‘radical’ and ‘comprehensive educational reforms’ for Eastern and Central European countries (including countries of Central Asia):

Radical reforms – including new curricula and innovative methods of instruction – are required in the management, financing, and structure of education to restore these countries to political and economic health. Comprehensive educational reforms will

accelerate recovery, provide a long-term foundation for growth and support development of democratic political and social institutions (WB 1995, p. 142).

Based on these ideas the World Bank announced its major policy recommendation for countries with low and medium income levels, including the Central Asian ex-Soviet republics, four years after these countries had gained their independence.

Shortly after the publication of ‘Priorities and Strategies for Education’, the World Bank published another paper that was less familiar to policy-makers in the Central Asian region (interviews with policy-makers 2011), but influential for policy implementation in countries receiving aid across the world. In the World Bank’s paper “Beyond the Washington Consensus, Institutions Matter” Burki and Perry (1998) claimed that there was a growing demand in societies for *institutional* reform and that good institutions were critical for macroeconomic stability in today’s globalised world (p. 3). The research conducted for that report also revealed that there was still much that was unknown about the determinants of institutional change (1998, p. 2).

1.5. Empirical Puzzle

Orenstein (2008) perceptively stated that post-communist Europe and Euroasia could be labelled a *natural laboratory* for social-science research (p.80). In fact, before 1991 there had been a coherent and, in general terms, similar system of welfare policy and service provision across all the countries of the USSR (Deacon, 2000, p. 147). Under this high degree of centralisation and conformity almost universal education was delivered by the Soviet regime. For instance, illiteracy among Central Asian population had been virtually eliminated (Zajda 1980); enrolment rates were high compared with other countries at

similar levels of development (Gannicott 1998, p. 119); a vast network of public schools provided universal coverage and free access to basic education (Noah, 1966).

Bob Deacon and others, however, suggested that the Soviet education had significant pitfalls, *e.g.* there was too much focus on the production of academically and professionally qualified people and the lack of attention to meeting industry's needs for skilled personnel (Deacon, 1997). In fact, the Soviet educational system was designed to respond to the needs of the central state in a command economy (Maier, 2005, p. 139). Once the assumptions of the political regime and the economy changed in the 1990s, the system collapsed. The education systems in the newly emerging states in Central Asia had lost their administrative compass – no longer receiving direct instructions from Moscow, they appeared institutionally and structurally incapable of satisfying the requirements of the new economic order (*ibid.*). This was a 'critical juncture', *i.e.* a situation when minimal structural constraints existed on political actors over their choice of policy (Capoccia & Kelemen 2007: 343, Mahoney 2000: 513). This opened a real possibility for a profound shift from centralism to educational decentralisation and school autonomy.

In line with the World Bank's recommendations it might be anticipated that the educational systems of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan would appear radically reconfigured according to the free market principles following the 'shock-therapy' reforms (see Hedlund, 2005). An overall aspiration to suppress centralisation practices was depicted by Heyneman (1997 cited in Bray and Borevskaya, 2001, p. 355) as follows: "Freeing education from central control was interpreted as a requirement to prevent such control from being reinstated: break it quickly and thoroughly so it cannot be put back together" (p. 334).

In fact, across all three states the private sector was introduced into education alongside the public sector. Educational decentralisation coincided with political decentralisation – new institutions of public administration, municipalities and village self-management bodies were put in charge of supporting public schooling alongside the state governments².

Furthermore, in order to support the argument for the possibility of educational transformation towards decentralisation in the post-Soviet states, one might point to the cases of successful institutional transformation from centralisation to decentralisation in, for instance health (Ovseiko, 2008) and education (Cerych, 1996) in the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In these countries educational organisations were governed by independent religious or voluntary organisations in pre-Soviet era and became centralised under the Soviet regime; thus they reverted back towards the previous level of decentralisation in the post-Soviet period. This transformation is often explained by organisational memory related to the “environment of past experiences” (Argyris and Schon, 1996).

Finally, policy decentralisation might be possible because a government wished to avoid blame, particularly in a period of financial austerity when hard decisions had to be made about allocating resources (Hood 2002). Hood argues that “selection of institutional arrangements to minimize or avoid blame” is attractive to politicians, because it enables them to avoid responsibility for any mishaps (Hood 2002, p. 17). In fact fiscal crises was a common driving force for decentralisation reforms in both developed and developing countries (Larbi 1999, p.11), but the depth of crises in the context of developing

² Kyrgyzstan – Law on Local Self-Governance and Local State Administration, March 1992 then updated in 2008 and the latest version in 2011; Tajikistan – Law on Local Self-Government Bodies in Villages and Municipalities, Dec 1994; Uzbekistan – Law on the Self-Government Bodies of Citizens, April 1999.

economies (post-Soviet in particular) was devastating. For instance, the decline in Kyrgyzstan were greater than the cumulative decline of production in the United States during the Great Depression (Mertaugh 2004). Educational decentralisation, under these conditions, could simply be a convenient way for government to extricate itself from the burdensome process of providing services, with control over input making it liable for failures in policy. So it might be keen to pass their responsibilities downwards to the local level.

However, at the same time that governments may have various reasons to delegate greater autonomy to schools, they also tended to be reluctant to surrender control of this important social institution (*cf.* Gewirtz & Cribb 2007). Rather than surrendering decision-making authority, the state tends to seek other channels to regulate education (Hudson, p270). Thus, in the design of administrative reforms, the government is unlikely to withdraw entirely but rather seeks alternative options to maintain a degree of control over school management. In analysing efforts to decentralize education in the Central Asian countries it is important to distinguish what elements of control are at stake in the alternative domains of autonomy as well as the degree of autonomy delegated in these areas.

Although recommendations from external funding sources as well internal political pressures offer reasons to anticipate the implementation of NPM-oriented educational reforms in the three post-Soviet Central-Asian countries, these lines of influence have to deal with the social forces for maintaining the status quo. For example, a theoretical premise speculates: ‘Holding environmental pressures constant, the more individuals’ (e.g. teachers) basic self-definitions are determined by a given institutional structure, the more difficult it will be for that institution to change” (Krasner 2004, p.74). Seymour Sarason (1990) repeatedly pointed out the “intractability” of schools despite many efforts

to introduce change in them. In the same vein, historians such as Tyack and Tobin (1994) have observed that the organisational framework that shapes schooling has remained remarkably durable over time (p. 456). This may well be explained by the personnel employed in educational organisations. Fullan (1993) in *Change Forces* states that the way teachers are trained, along with the other factors results in a system that is more likely to retain the status quo than to change. The majority of teachers in the three states were trained under the Soviet regime in the traditions of conformity, conservatism and inertia; this might hamper decentralisation efforts in those countries.

In a similar vein, Archie Brown's *The Rise and Fall of Communism* listed a number of factors, which caused the collapse of communism. Under social change he discussed a major factor – a high proportion of highly educated people (p. 589).³ The more educated the population became, the more they were inclined to seek information denied to them by the single party leaders. Meanwhile, despite the development of critical-thinking within the 'intelligentsia', this was not widely spread among the majority of the population⁴. Party leaders were closed to fresh ideas and innovations. In other words, it was embedded deeply in the organisational culture and historical context that changes would be initiated from the top down within the system. Brown wrote that 'only change at the apex of the political hierarchy could determine whether fresh and critical thinking would remain a mere intellectual diversion or whether it would influence the real world

³ "In the Soviet Union of 1939, only 11 per cent of the population had received more than an elementary education. By 1984 the percentage who had attended at least secondary school had risen to 87 per cent. ... In 1954 just a little over 1 per cent of the population had completed higher education. By 1984 there were well over five million students currently in higher education and a half million people who had completed such an education" (Brown 2009, p.588).

⁴ A saying "An initiative deserves punishment" is a stock phrase well-known and used across the generations in the former Soviet states until the present time.

of politics' (2009, p. 594). This may cause us not to expect the emergence of an “advocacy coalition” (Sabatier, 1988), ready to support institutional reforms in education. As Krasner (2004) argued the institutions were more likely to collapse having failed to adapt to changed environmental circumstances, than to be undermined by their own members (p.74). Furthermore, in case of a change, teachers appear to be the most disadvantaged group, and are likely to resist the change until the benefits of the change become evident and/or can be persuasively demonstrated (Hannan & Freeman 1977, p.931 cited in Krasner 2004, p.85). The lack of incentives for actors (*e.g.* teachers) at all levels to take the steps required to implement reforms would – at the least – dampen the mood for collective action (Hall, 2010, p. 208).

Finally, in contrast to the post-Soviet countries of Central and Eastern Europe, schools in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan could not go back to pre-Soviet decentralisation practices. This is simply because basic education in the Central Asian region was first established under the Soviet regime and was state-owned, state-managed and state-centred from its birth. Thus there was no institutional memory of decentralisation in these countries. This makes the context of educational change in the Central Asian region unique and attractive for research.

1.6. Research Questions and Comparison of Similar Cases

This study is empirically driven, and contributes to the body of literature seeking to explore and explain institutional transformation in public school management. The study focuses on the patterns of educational reform implemented in three former Soviet countries in Central Asia: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The primary objective of this study is to gain a substantive understanding of the form and degree of decentralisation implemented in these countries by analyzing and comparing their formal

policies for educational reform and the patterns that emerged on six dimensions of schools autonomy in response to these policies. These findings are explored from the analytic perspective of institutional theory to help explain the educational changes and accountability patterns observed. ‘Transformation’ is defined here as changes occurring over the last two decades in public schooling of the former Soviet states that led to the restructuring of core processes, norms and procedures in public schools in these countries.

This thesis seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent have public schools in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan achieved autonomy along the six main dimensions suggested by Verhoest *et al.* (2004)?
2. Are policies towards school autonomy converging (or diverging) in the countries concerned? And what implications of these policies for the patterns of accountability in schools?
3. What institutional elements may inform our understanding of the changes (or persistence) observed in management of public schools in these countries?

The NPM movement in education is based, in part, on the widely held view that increased school autonomy actually contributes to the enhancement of academic performance. The extent to which increased autonomy is associated with higher levels of performance in school is an important question, which requires careful study to inform the future course of NPM policies. It is an issue that needs to be examined in different cultural contexts and with a firm conceptual grasp on what is meant by school autonomy. This thesis lays the analytic foundation for future research on the consequences of educational autonomy in Central Asian countries by providing insight into the conceptualisation of school

autonomy, how it operates along different dimensions in practice, and the institutional factors that influence the implementation of this approach to school management.

The OECD Ministerial Symposium on the Future of Public Services insisted that *“Whatever the textbooks might say about decentralization, about taking risks, and better public management, the fact was that most of the pressures on politicians worked in the opposite direction – pushing towards centralization of decision-making and risk aversion”* (Waterford 1996). Yet, there is little empirical support for this assumption (and other discussed in the thesis) of NPM policies replication in the post-Soviet states where public administration has been undergoing reform since 1991. To address this gap in the literature, this study draws on an extensive investigation of the patterns of school autonomy in the three post-Soviet republics of Central Asia – Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

These three similar cases were chosen for both practical and theoretical reasons. Practically, the researcher’s previous job experience in the region provided formal and informal access to subjects and materials that would not be available to most outsiders. Also, given the constraints of time and resources, three countries were about as many as could be studied for this project. Theoretically, the three cases chosen are thought to be broadly comparable to each other and have been at the forefront of public governance reform since 1991. Because of similar historical and cultural backgrounds and almost identical institutional structures across the three countries one would expect to find similar outcomes in their implementation of educational reforms or any differences found in the replication of the school autonomy model could not be firmly attributed to factors such as culture and historical background. Difference in reform outcomes among

the countries could be seen as influenced by other factors such as the diverse political regimes that emerged in the three states over the last two decades.

Chapter 2 | Unpacking the Concepts of Educational Decentralisation and School Autonomy

Like peace, freedom and the family, no modern politician dare
express a dislike of decentralisation.
(Goldsmith & Newton 1988, p. 359)

2.1. Decentralisation as a Part of New Public Management

Having been on the political agenda since the 1970s, decentralisation has become a worldwide trend (Karlsen 2000, p.525). Decentralisation has been one of the main government strategies for different sectors of society and education in particular. In the post-Soviet countries concerned decentralisation became a governmental strategy in large-scale educational reforms (see above). Decentralisation has been evident in Western societies as well as in developing countries (Rondinelli *et al.* 1983).

Education decentralisation reforms vary widely in their content, goals, areas of decision-making, and levels of educational responsibility (McGinn and Welsh 1999). As is the case in Western countries, the former Soviet countries of Central and Eastern Europe have attempted to improve school performance through increased school autonomy and educational decentralisation (Koucky, 1996; Cerych, 1997).

The three Central Asian cases of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan appear to be rather “late adopters” of educational decentralisation reforms (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). Whether these three post-Soviet countries – the so-called ‘reform laggards – have been

able to benefit from “the advantage of being backward and learn from the mistakes of their predecessors” (see Popov 2009) is explored further in the thesis. At this point a good place to start is a discussion of the characteristics of educational decentralisation and school autonomy as one of the characteristics of the New Public Management (NPM) doctrine.

This new paradigm announced a new era in public administration, where the principles of the free market and the values of the public sector would be combined (*ibid.*). This was a doctrine that related to organisational leadership, policy and strategy, people and resource management, processes, measurements of objectives and results, and the functioning of government (Boston et al, 1996; Yamamoto, 2003; Tolofari 2005).

The literature is replete with a variety of NPM characteristics. This may serve as evidence of the widespread use of NPM reforms around the world. Tolofari (2005, p.83) summarized the key characteristics of NPM as follows:

1. **Large-scale privatisation, corporatisation and commercialisation** (Boston *et al.* 1996; Ferlie *et al.* 1996), by which governments reallocated some aspects of their commitments to the private sector, or allowed autonomous programmes run by agencies in the private sector; in education this characteristic was evident in launching voucher system and expanded private education.
2. **The processes of managerialism and marketisation** (Boston *et al.* 1996; Ferlie *et al.* 1996; Larbi, 1999; Yamamoto, 2003) involved hiring administrators with business sector management backgrounds, who could exercise discretionary powers and use business tools such as ‘mission statements’, ‘development plans’, performance based labour contracts, etc. In education school administration was

replaced with school management; the school headteacher's role was assumed to be that of a 'school leader' or a 'manager' (not leading administrator or principal administrator).

3. **Parsimony**: cutting costs and aiming to use resources more effectively and efficiently (Ferlie *et al.* 1996; Yamamoto, 2003 cited in Larbi, 1999).
4. **Shift from input controls to output and outcome controls** (Larbi 1999). Resources are allocated on the basis of an assessment of satisfactory outcomes; the result must justify the expense. In education the school budget would depend directly on the number of enrolled students, irrespective of class size, size of the building, etc.
5. **Greater competition** (Ferlie *et al.* 1996; Yamamoto, 2003 cited in Larbi, 1999) attempts to emphasis the centrality of a customer as well as accountability for results. Thus schools were supposed to compete for students (or their parents), who would bring money to the school as public funding would follow a student (see Item 5 above); at the same time schools would be held accountable for the quality of education they provided to their 'customers' and the state.
6. **Devolution/decentralisation** (Larbi 1999), involved the delegation or spreading of management authority and the institution of new forms of governance structures, *e.g.* boards of governors at the school level.
7. **Tighter performance specification** (Boston *et al.* 1996), which is manifested in widespread employment of contracts between principals and agents that specify in detail their respective obligations. In education this meant the use of performance indicators and league tables, etc.

As has been indicated above, decentralisation constituted only one of the multiple characteristics of NPM and involved the delegation of decision-making authority from

central government to lower level or the delivery organisations themselves. The structure of governance in those organisations was altered and could not include the representatives of governmental and non-governmental entities, for instance, parents and other community members (Boston *et al.* 1996).

Thus, decentralisation usually refers to a movement from the centre to the periphery, but this concept does not give any information about the strength of the movement or what exact dimensions actually changed (Karlsen 2010, p.526). Naidoo (2002) reported that educational decentralisation may be defined in terms of a) a form or functional activity (*e.g.* staffing, fiscal, curriculum, etc.); b) level (national, sub-national, local); and finally c) the nature or degree of power that is transferred (de-concentration, delegation, devolution). Naidoo suggested that decentralisation or autonomisation of an educational organisation happens if the transfer of some form and some degree of authority from central governments to sub-national units and/or an organisation itself takes place. As many as three types of educational decentralisation might be observed (*ibid.*):

1. De-concentration – when the national ministries of education put provincial, state or regional entities in charge;
2. Delegation – when management decision powers are delegated to the municipal county or district governments;
3. Devolution – applies when substantial decision-making power is given to head teachers or governing bodies of schools.

In this sense, de-concentration may not necessarily mean a real shift of power, and, hence the local agencies would be only the executives of the decisions made at central level.

Meanwhile, ‘decentralisation as devolution’ implies the transmission of some authority and real responsibility from central to local bodies (see McGinn 1992).

2.2. The Motives for Education Decentralisation

Researchers have tried to summarize the motives for decentralisation policy in education. Weiler (1990) proposed three main categories. The first category is decentralisation as the *redistribution of authority* from central to local levels. Central governments may pursue different purposes by this; for instance, they may try to ‘avoid blame’ for troubles in education provision, or they may sincerely wish to strengthen democracy and bring the decision-making process closer to local people. It is significant that in the newly emerged states decentralisation may help compensate for ‘the erosion of legitimacy’. Having suffered a five-year civil war, Tajikistan may have been seeking the possibility of enhancing its legitimacy and thereby maintain power through the implementation of decentralisation policies in education and beyond. In fact, in spite of the diversity of purposes different governments may pursue, decentralisation as a strategy appears to represent an apparent ‘democratic value’ in its own right (Goldsmith & Newton 1988, p.363). Thus, for instance, decentralisation presupposes the development of platforms and frameworks for making decisions by people at the local organisation or community level.

The second category is decentralisation as a strategy of obtaining greater efficiency in the educational sector. The assumption is that decentralisation will mobilize local resources and the use of available resources in a more efficient and effective way. This may be particularly true in the states with the large budget deficits. In Kyrgyzstan, as in the other two countries concerned in this study, one of the first acts adopted in the newly independent states was legislation to decentralise financial responsibility for primary and secondary education to regional or local governments. It is argued by Mertaugh (2004),

that ‘decentralisation was motivated both by necessity (falling budget revenues at the republic level) and by ideology (the centrifugal pressures for local self-government)’.

The third category focuses on the role of decentralisation in the culture of learning at school level. Thus, it is believed that decentralisation will give more room for local variance and relevance and, through this, motivate teachers to exercise their professional expertise and be responsive to students’ needs (Cribb & Gewirtz 2007, p.206).

Nonetheless, Weiler (1990) emphasised the tension between these decentralisation efforts and the continuing need for central control. After studying several educational systems, he concludes that decentralisation seldom actually occurs, but seems instead to be absorbed into the existing centralized or semi-centralised structure of educational governance. But, countries’ institutional structures and cultural experiences could still have some impact on the way decentralisation is implemented. For instance, the ‘socialist heritage’ shared by states concerned in this study appeared to be persistent and may have had an impact on education decentralisation processes in the three states. Thus, inherited human capital and its high innovative potential were positive factors in the transitional process, while state interference and the lack of an adequate legal framework and/or its effective implementation might seriously hamper further development (Berglof *et al.* 2012). This is explained further in the thesis.

Is Decentralisation Appropriate for Education?

Furthermore, the question that needs to be asked is whether or not education is the type of public service, and schools the type of institution, that lend themselves well to decentralisation, autonomisation and even to privatisation. Ressides (1993) suggests that three main characteristics enable a judgment to be made regarding which services may be

predisposed for greater autonomy. They are a) “externability”: the smaller the quantity and types of external effects and geographic spill-overs of the service, the easier it is to decentralise, *i.e.* services within important networks and subject to spill-over effects are not easy targets for decentralisation; b) “chargeability”: the greater the ability to charge for a service, the easier it is to decentralise the sector; and c) “technicity”, *i.e.* connection to technology, – the lower the technicity of a service, the easier it is to decentralise. Taking these three characteristics into account, the author placed education with the value “7” toward the upper end of his scale where “1” refers to “not easy to decentralise” and the value of “10” is “very easy to decentralise” (*ibid.*). Thus, education does not appear to be fully predisposed for decentralisation. In fact, there are functions which are more suitable for central government such as monitoring and auditing. First, central government has the expertise, second, the independence and, third, the performance objectives that make monitoring effective and worthwhile (Prud’homme, 1995).

Moreover, decentralisation of education finance may lead to inequity caused by whatever disparities in resources exist between different parts of the country and may reduce effectiveness by restricting mobility of resources to where they are most needed. Commentators (cited in UNESCO, 2005) believe that “central governments would be freed of responsibility over local administrations and “communities” (associations, enterprises, etc.) without providing adequate resources to the poorest or most disadvantaged regions.” In this regard, centralisation may ensure greater equality through compensation and control over resource allocation. It may also offer a more solid form of democratic control than that provided by local authorities, which are more easily influenced by local pressures or specific local interest groups (*ibid.*).

According to Freinkman & Plekhanov (2010), in general terms decentralized provision of public services could have four main advantages. First, local governments may have superior knowledge of local preferences and needs and thus can be able to target public spending better (Oates, 1972). Second, decentralisation may affect public services provision through its impact on the incentive structure and accountability of governments and public services providers (World Bank, 2004). Third, local governments are more likely to be held accountable for their performance by local populations. A shorter distance between decision-makers and taxpayers could by itself increase the accountability of government (Seabright, 1996), but in practice this need not always be the case, since local governments may be captured by the local elites and special interests with greater ease than central or regional governments (*ibid.*)

However, the critical question is not whether or not an education system should be completely decentralised; but, rather, to identify what functions may be delegated to provide better quality local services, and how different levels of government can cooperate to achieve this goal (Prud'homme, 1995). Consideration of the policies applied in European countries over the past few years reveals some convergence towards systems of greater shared responsibility. Some federal countries like Germany seek to introduce more central regulatory mechanisms, while countries with strong centralised traditions, such as France, have introduced some elements of decentralisation (UNESCO 2005, p. 18).

The Dynamics of Decentralisation Process

A body of research has examined the implications and interconnections between decentralisation and centralisation in education systems across the world. In 'Organizing

Public Sector Agencies: Challenges and Reflections' (2010, p.276), Verhoest *et al.* argue that there are parallel processes of decentralisation and centralisation and of regulation and de-regulation at work, while an unstable balance between autonomy and steering of the central agency is a central characteristic of recent changes in public administration (*ibid.*). Liu *et al.* (2009) offer a comprehensive overview of previous research, one that suggests four major aspects of the “centralisation-decentralisation nexus” that may be observed in education systems over the last three decades. They are:

1. Ongoing oscillations between decentralising and centralising tendencies;
2. A counterbalance between decentralisation and centralisation;
3. Aspects of education management tend to be affected by both centralised and local decision-making within the same country;
4. Any single area of education management (centralised or decentralised) tends to be influenced by how other aspects of education are managed.

First, in the realm of “ongoing oscillations” between decentralisation and centralisation Liu *et al.* (2009) refer to cases where local resources raised for funding schools cause increases in holding local authorities and teachers to account over the cost and quality of education. Meanwhile, central government may still be unwilling to relinquish full control in order to prevent inequalities in the distribution of educational resource inputs or other problems associated with local abuses of resources, *e.g.* corruption. In such cases the policies towards centralisation may be reinforced (Hawkins, 2000; Tatto, 1999, p. 280; Winkler and Gershberg, 2000, cited in Liu *et al.*, 2009).

Furthermore, partial transfer of responsibilities and oscillations along the “decentralise – not to decentralise” continuum often reflect a desire to ensure that national educational development goals, above all equity, remain under the control of the central authority. In particular, in cases where it is acknowledged that the primary mode of decentralisation is

administrative and the devolution of power is largely rhetorical, the centre continues to play a significant role both in policy-setting and in discharging routine functions.

Regarding the second type of interaction suggested by Liu *et al.* (2009), cases exist where the dynamics of decentralisation and centralisation enable and counterbalance each other. This involves state schools and other institutions being given more autonomy to manage their own affairs, while, at the same time, often being subjected to greater government regulation and surveillance. There may even be a global trend under way, since educators all over the world are experiencing the paradoxical blend of devolution and centralisation associated with what Guy Neave calls the rise of the “evaluative state”. Indeed Weiler (1990) argues that centralisation itself may be a prerequisite for enabling, co-ordinating and monitoring innovations. England after the 1988 education reforms is a good example of that.

Meanwhile, central state reforms can often be implemented effectively only if they are interpreted creatively at the point of delivery and adapted to local conditions (Winkler and Gershberg, 2000, p. 20). Holmes (1977) also suggested that ‘borrowed’ policies can be successfully transplanted only if the ethos or the so-called ‘living spirit’ under-pinning reforms in the country of origin follows them into the beneficiary country. The modality of state control over the implementation of reforms, however, shifts from the detailed prescription of how schools should operate, to the setting and monitoring of performance targets that they have to meet. This is the stage when strong and effective school leaders are particularly important as they communicate reforms to schools and communities, as well as developing a vision using support, information, local knowledge and incentives (Winkler & Gershberg, 2000).

Third, any dimension of education management may be affected by both centralised and local decision-making *e.g.* teacher remuneration. Often remuneration is determined centrally, based on years of teaching experience; at the same time as enjoying delegated responsibility for staffing, headteachers and school governing boards may experiment with teachers' short-term rewards and bonuses, making them dependent on students' exam scores or any other achievements demonstrated (Vegas, 2007 cited in Liu *et al.*, 2009). Finally, Hanushek, 2007; Weiler, 1990; Winkler and Gershberg, 2000 claim that decentralisation or recentralisation in any specific area of education management such as finance, personnel management or the curriculum is likely to influence how other aspects are managed. In particular, the devolution of power over finance allocation to the local level has a significant impact on the staffing, procurement and maintenance aspects of school management.

2.3. School Autonomy

Often decentralisation policies in education may account for the devolved management of schools, *i.e.* greater school autonomy. This involves, according to Raab (2000, p. 19 cited in Tolofari 2005, p.84), 'changes in the exercise of power and leadership within schools and the relationship of schools to the wider system of management and control'.

The concept of autonomy is complex and its definition may vary. However, the concept of autonomy is often perceived as *freedom of action* – to what degree schools can decide their own course of action and to what degree they are compelled to follow a course chosen for them by the central government (Ronnberg 2007, p.217). Thus, the focus of this study is on the autonomy of a school from the responsible ministry. In this sense of the word, education policy of the governments in the three post-Soviet states may well be labelled decentralisation/deregulation aimed at an increased autonomy for lower levels of

the hierarchy, whilst centralist regulatory policies of the Soviet period worked in the opposite direction.

Lundgren suggests (2001) that the governing ('steering') of an educational system can be described along two dimensions. On the one hand, it is a question of where the power is; on the other hand, it is a question of who has the power. He illustrates these two dimensions in a graphic scheme in the following way (Figure 2.1). He states that the various principals, *e.g.* central government, municipality or community, can be placed on a 'centre-local'-axis; meanwhile, the 'professional-political'-axis indicates whether the decision-making power belongs to professionals (*e.g.* teachers, headteachers, expert boards, etc.) or political nominees, *i.e.* bureaucrats not necessarily with training in education.

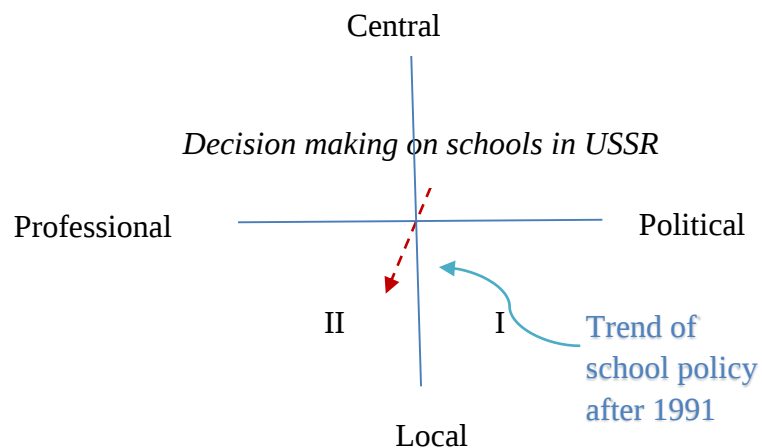


Figure 2.1 Dimensions of education system 'steering' and making decisions about schools in Soviet times and after 1991.

Source: Modified from Lundgren (2001), p.7.

The member republics of the USSR had a minimal role in decision-making in education. A highly centralised government bureaucracy would steer public schooling across all fifteen former Soviet states through a pyramid-like structure (Zajda, 1980). The most significant role of educational management was given to the Communist Party, which

penetrated the layers of educational administration from top to bottom and exercised tight control at all levels. Nonetheless, professionals were given a part in decision-making too. Thus, Heyneman (2000) observes,

The entire system of education under the party/state was predicated on the assumption of a fixed logic of behaviour, a logic carefully developed in the ideological branch of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences in Moscow and supposedly enforced with vigour [by bureaucracy] within every school, in every subject and at every grade level (p. 178).

Hence this kind of steering of an education system by party leaders with consultations coming from a centralized professional body (the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences in Moscow) might be depicted in the left- and right-top quadrants I and II (see Fig. 2.1). The developments of the last two decades in education systems of the newly emerged states might be illustrated by the schematic move towards the ‘local – professional’ quadrant, since a number of responsibilities appeared to be delegated to the lower level where professionals (teachers and headteachers in schools) might have exercised their autonomy. The domains and the mode of this transformation in state education policies in the three post-Soviet states have been explored in the present research.

2.4. Capacity and Autonomy

Francis Fukuyama (2013) focused on decentralisation and bureaucratic autonomy as one of the measurements of good governance in a modern state (p.347). He also described and explained the conundrum of why low-income countries are advised to reduce bureaucratic autonomy, while high-income ones seek to increase it (*ibid.*). Thus, it appears that the debate develops beyond the point where autonomy is seen as good for a

public agency, but rather how to insure an optimal level of autonomy for an agency with a given level of capacity.

“A high degree of autonomy is what permits innovation, experimentation, and the risk taking in a bureaucracy,” – wrote Francis Fukuyama (2013, p.359). However, even having a range of decision-making competences delegated to the school level, it cannot be guaranteed that these competences will be used there. Therefore, the concept of autonomy needs to include the capacity for action, that the ‘autonomous’ actor actually has the *capacity* to act according to his/her own discretion (Lundquist 1987 cited in Ronnberg 2007, p.218). It appears that Fukuyama supports Lundquist’s argument about the importance of the agency’s ‘capacity’ in order to accommodate autonomy granted to it by the central government. He states that autonomy can be a good or bad thing depending on how much underlying capacity a bureaucracy (*e.g.* school staff) has: “In very low capacity countries ... [o]ne would want to circumscribe the behavior of government officials with more rather than fewer rules because one could not trust them to exercise good judgment or refrain from corrupt behaviour” (2013, p.360).

In fact decentralisation may increase the freedom of action, for instance, at the school level, but it does not automatically result in a higher capacity for action by that school (Ronnberg 2007, p.218). If a school is full of professionals with graduate degrees from recognized universities, the central government might not only feel safer granting greater school autonomy, but would actually want to reduce any boundaries in the hope that this should stimulate teachers’ innovative and creative behaviour (*cf.* Fukuyama 2013). Thus, for instance, the entry requirement for permanent employment as a teacher in all Finnish basic and high schools today is a master’s degree; preschool and kindergarten teachers

must have a bachelor's degree; finally, among all categories of teacher education, about 5,000 teachers are selected from about 20,000 applicants (Sahlberg 2010).

Almost by definition, developing countries and their institutions are weak and vulnerable. Such countries' bureaucracies are, as a rule, poorly educated, poorly paid and poorly motivated. A country's decision making competence may also be affected by the presence of international organisations with their own multiple agendas. Countries in which such organisations operate are likely to be bereft of financial and human resources - these are not the characteristics of a country with a well-equipped capacity to implement policies of decentralisation and school autonomy. Yet the concept of "good enough governance" by Grindle (2007) suggests that the interventions are still possible and policies towards decentralisation in education might well contribute to the ends of economic and political development in countries even with poor resources and with hostile environments. Grindle (2004) wrote:

“... a good enough governance agenda would be based on ‘a more nuanced understanding of the evolution of institutions and government capabilities; being explicit about trade-offs and priorities in a world in which all good things cannot be pursued at once; learning about what’s working rather than focusing solely on governance gaps; taking the role of government in poverty alleviation seriously, and grounding action in the contextual realities of each country’ (p.525)”.

The latter suggests that not all government deficits can be tackled at once and that capacity-building is always time consuming. In other words there are two options, which developing countries with limited governance capacity face: continue to be confronted with long lists of ‘things to be done’ to achieve good governance or adopt the concept of ‘good enough governance’ and use it “to target fewer, more useful, and more feasible interventions” (Grindle 2007, p.571).

May there be ‘too much’ autonomy?

There is a general belief that the negative effect of excessive micromanagement on public agency's performance is always greater than that posed by excessive autonomy (Fukuyama 2013). In the future it would be interesting to research what the optimal level of autonomy countries concerned - Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – might be granted. Meanwhile, the perceptions of an agency or country's 'optimal autonomy' by Lundquist (1987) and Fukuyama (2013) have been compared. For comparison purposes, the terminology used by both scholars has been adjusted. Thus, 'capacity for action' in Lundquist (1987) might well correspond to 'the quality of government' in Fukuyama's work, and 'freedom for action' to 'bureaucratic autonomy'.

Lundquist suggests that autonomy is a function of both increased scope as well as increased ability for action; in his perception autonomy appears to be a line that tends to infinity (see Figure 2.3). Meanwhile, Fukuyama, operating with the same dimensions of an agency's autonomy (*i.e.* freedom for action and capacity/quality), presents it as an inverted U (see Figure 2.2). This so-called 'optimal autonomy curve' would differ for three hypothetical countries with different levels of capacity. For each, the curve slopes downward at the extremes of 'freedom to act' x-axis. This leads to the conclusion that every bureaucracy can have too much or too little autonomy. Furthermore, the lower-capacity countries have their inflection points shifted to the left (more subordination), while they shift to the right (greater freedom of action) for higher-capacity countries (2013, p.360).

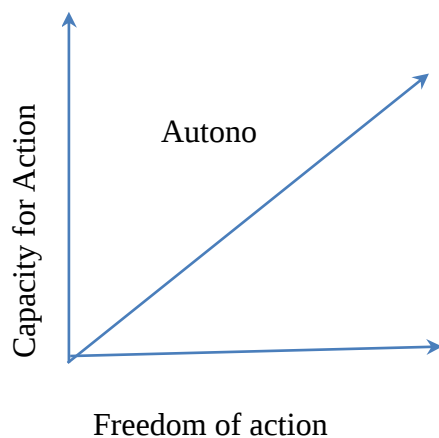


Figure 2.3 Autonomy

Source: Lundquist, 1987, p.39

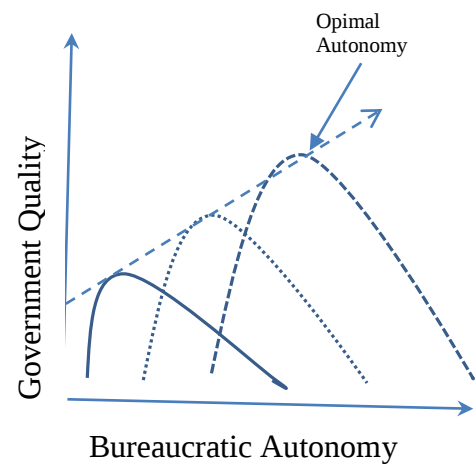


Figure 2.2 Different Levels of Autonomy for Different Levels of Capacity

Source: Fukuyama 2013, p.361

To put it differently, reforms, which are needed to be undertaken to achieve success in education or any other public sphere, may vary across the countries with different backgrounds (Popov 2009, p.7) and different capacities. As Goldsmith and Newton (1988) put it, different means are required in different countries to achieve essentially the same ends, because of different political structures and institutions in those countries (p.363). However, all modern states face some common pressures, for instance, the lack of funding and the need to enhance the quality of education, and, hence, there is a general pattern established with greater autonomy granted to schools. The exercise of higher degree of autonomy by schools will depend on the capacity of school staff and, hence, sometimes there may be too much autonomy granted. In order to prevent that, it could be crucial to know how to measure autonomy; this is discussed in the next section.

2.5. Measuring School Autonomy

As the analysis of the literature shows, there are three main methodologies adopted to measure school autonomy in the World Bank, OECD and European Committee studies. The World Bank's most recent initiative is titled Systems Approach for Better Education Results (WB SABER), where School Autonomy and Accountability (SAA) is a division (further in the thesis WB SABER). WB SABER documents and analyses school-based management policies aimed at increasing autonomy and accountability at the school level and within the education system, in both developing and developed countries. According to the WB SABER's approach autonomy does not operate in isolation from school accountability; they are interlinked, through the assessment of teachers and learning at the school, through the use of information and school councils.

The second study is the OECD annual *Education at a Glance* report, which incorporates an indicator (D6) (OECD 2012, p.500) that shows the percentage of decisions about diverse aspects of lower secondary education taken at the school level or any other level of education administration. This concept has two dimensions: the locus of decision making, that is, the level of decision making authority in the system; and the mode of decision making, which relates to the degree of autonomous or "shared" decision making (*ibid.*, p.510). Data for this indicator are usually derived from the 'Survey on Locus of Decision Making' administered across the OECD countries. The survey is completed largely at national level, where statements are made on whether decisions are taken nationally, locally or at school level or may be shared in some way.

The other initiative of the OECD is the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) that measures school autonomy and accountability in order to investigate their association with better students' performance in OECD and partner countries (OECD

2011). Kyrgyzstan is the only country concerned in this study that took part in the PISA study in 2006 and 2009.

Finally, the study of the European Committee ‘Eurydice 2007’ provides an overview of the wide diversity of policies in each European country aimed at increasing the autonomy of schools, in a way which allows the policies’ main elements to be compared.

Despite exploring the same phenomena – school autonomy and accountability – the indicators employed in the studies vary. The main similarity is that all four studies are concerned with Human Resource Management (HRM) and Financial Resource Management (FRM) as two principal dimensions of school autonomy. Eurydice explores the use of public and private funds analysing separate indicators. Here the striking similarities end. Assessment of performance appears to vary across the studies, and is incorporated into different indicators: ‘Planning and Structures’ in the OECD study, as a separately standing indicator, and a part of ‘Accountability to stakeholders’ in the WB SABER study, and excluded in Eurydice’s framework of indicators.

Table 2.1 Indicators of School Autonomy Adopted in the Three Principal Studies

OECD	WB SABER	Eurydice
Resource management (capital and operating expenditures, professional development of heads and teachers, etc.)	Budget planning and approval (management of operational budget, management of teaching, non-teaching staff and teachers’ salaries; authority to raise private funds, etc.)	Use of public funds (managing capital and operational expenditures)
Personnel management (hiring and dismissal of headteacher and staff, salary scales, influence over staff careers, etc.)	Personnel management (incl. teacher appointment and dismissal, headteacher hiring and firing, teacher tenure and transfer, etc.)	Human resources (selection and dismissal, duties specification, disciplining of (head)teachers, setting additional salaries, etc.)

OECD	WB SABER	Eurydice
Planning and structures (incl. design of programmes for study, choice of subjects, definition of course content, assessment, examination, accreditation, etc.)	Assessment (frequency of school assessment, frequency of student standardised assessment, use of school assessment for school adjustments, use of student assessment for pedagogical adjustments, publication of school and student assessment)	Raising and use of private funds (seeking donors or sponsors, letting school facilities, loans, using funds to purchase (im)movables or to hire (non)teaching staff)
Organisation of instruction (incl. grouping of students, instruction time, choice of textbooks, teaching methods, in-class student assessment, etc.)	Participation of school councils and school finance (incl. council participation in budget preparation, budget approval, budget implementation, etc.)	Accountability (as a separate phenomenon; accountability models studied diversity and constraints)
	Accountability to stakeholders (incl. guidelines for the use of school/student assessment for use by school council, comparison of students and schools performance, school council to perform financial audit, manual for the participation of the school councils in school audits)	

Source: Based on OECD 2012, WB SABER 2012, Eurydice 2007.

Furthermore, items (or decisions in the case of the OECD study) included within the indicators are numerous. Thus, there are some 46 general decisions included in the survey administered for the OECD study. The lack of theoretical justification for mixing items within the indicators is striking. For instance, under ‘budget formation and implementation’ in SABER study there are items related to both public and private funds, which seem important enough to be separated for the purposes of school autonomy measurement (see Verhoest *et al.* (2004) below). Some indicators appear to be quite “static” and do not reflect the actual power re-allocation. This is particularly true about

the WB SABER's methodology. For instance, such items under School accountability as '*Guidelines for the use of school and student assessment by the school council*' and '*Manual for participation of the school councils in school audits*', which may be present but could be shelved at schools, would not necessarily lead to any actual increase in autonomy in student assessment and/or any increase in public participation in a school audit. Eurydice methodology omits items on educational content, which might include the selection of programmes of study, textbooks, teaching methods, etc. and could contribute to the understanding of the actual autonomy schools have in education delivering.

Furthermore, the WB SABER's methodology applied for the indicator of 'Budget planning and approval' appears to be quite one-sided. It includes an item on the power (*i.e.* authority) to raise private funds delegated to school but does not include an item about the amount raised by a school, if any, and its proportion in the overall annual school budget. If one investigates only the issue of formal authority to raise private funds, one may acquire knowledge about "theoretical autonomy", while actual school autonomy depends on having financial resources available. Thus, Berlin (1958) inquires: "What is freedom to those who cannot make use of it? Without adequate conditions for the use of freedom, what is the value of freedom?" (p. 4).

Table 2.2 Scales Used for Measuring Autonomy in Three Studies

OECD	WB SABER	Eurydice
As percentage of decisions taken in ...	Status:	Score:
a) Full autonomy	a) Latent (low autonomy)	a) 1 – Full (or relative) autonomy
b) After consultation with other level	b) Emerging	b) 2 – Limited autonomy
c) Within a framework prescribed	c) Established	c) 3 – No autonomy
d) By other level with school consultation	d) Mature (full autonomy)	d) 4 – Discretionary delegation
e) Other		

Source: Based on OECD 2012, WB SABER 2012, Eurydice 2007.

Table 2.2 shows the scales used in the three studies for measuring the extent of school autonomy. The decision-making mode described as ‘per cent of decisions taken [at the school level] in full autonomy’, within an OECD scale seems to be ambiguous (OECD 2012, p.507). Fukuyama argues that autonomy refers to the manner in which the political principal (the central government or ministry) issues mandates to the bureaucrats who act as its agents (school heads here) (2013, p.356). Hence, no school has the authority to define its own mandates, *i.e.* to make decisions in full autonomy, independently of any upper levels of authority.

Pitfalls in the methodologies employed in the studies discussed above appear to be overcome in the analytical framework suggested by Verhoest *et al.* (2004) to measure the autonomy of a public agency.

2.6. Analytical Framework

Autonomy is defined by Verhoest *et al.* (2004) as the level of decision-making competences delegated to an agency. Verhoest and his colleagues distinguish between

managerial autonomy (the choice and use of financial, human and other resources) and policy autonomy (objectives, targets, policy instruments, quantity and quality of outputs, issuing of general regulations, processes and procedures). However, Verhoest *et al.* argue that autonomy is also the extent to which this agency is shielded from a central ministry's constraints on the actual use of these competences (Verhoest *et al.* 2004). Verhoest *et al.* define this second category of autonomy as *the exemption from constraints on the actual use of decision-making power*. Here autonomy of the public agency refers to the level of independence of the agency/school vis-à-vis central government intervention in its actual use of delegated decision-making competences.

As analysed in the literature, the process of increased autonomy in public education involves *both* a multi-dimensional change in the agency's freedoms to undertake specific capacities *and* a corresponding change in the level of control exercised by central government (see Verhoest *et al.*, 2004, p. 106). Control is defined by them as the mechanisms and instruments used by the government to influence the decisions and the behaviour of the agency in order to achieve governmental goals (White, 1991, p. 189 cited in Verhoest *et al.*, 2004, p. 106). This approach is helpful in explaining the so-called "paradox of autonomisation", in which greater autonomy of public agencies implies stricter control by government (*e.g.* more managerial autonomy and less policy autonomy – "centralised decentralisation"). This supports the point made by Gustav Karlsen that "the decentralisation of tasks and administrative responsibility does not necessarily mean a shift of power from a higher to a lower level" (2000, p. 533). Since there is always an interplay between freedom and control, the extent of an agency's autonomy cannot be identified without studying the locus of control and coordination functions in its environment. In *Public Institutions Coordination* (2010) Verhoest *et al.* suggest that modern mechanisms of public institution coordination (including education) can be

hierarchical, market- or network-driven; they should be employed when the specific coordination instruments are analysed⁵.

Verhoest *et al.* (2004) define institutional autonomy as, first, the level of decision-making competences; and, second, autonomy as the exemption from constraints on the actual use of such competences. This approach presents a solid foundation for exploring school autonomy, since it is unlikely that central governments will withdraw from education provision completely. Despite granting schools greater autonomy, governments are not necessarily deemed to have abandoned their control function (*cf.* Gewirtz & Cribb 2007). Rather than retreating, states look for new ways to regulate education (Hudson, p. 270). Hence, if the government is not likely to withdraw but rather seeks alternative options of school management, then it is crucial to investigate the link between the concept of autonomy and another important concept, namely the control of agency behaviour by government (Verhoest *et al.* 2004, p. 106).

There are six dimensions of autonomy, suggested by Verhoest *et al.* (2004), which I have adapted for the purposes of the present research to measure school autonomy (to be explored in Chapters 4-8). These six dimensions of school autonomy are:

1. **Human Resource Management Autonomy** – whether the agency enjoys managerial autonomy with respect to human resources management;
2. **Structural Autonomy** – the extent to which the agency is shielded from influence by the government through lines of hierarchy and accountability;
3. **Financial Resource Management Autonomy** – whether the agency enjoys managerial autonomy with respect to financial management;

⁵ This is explored in Chapter 8, which is devoted to the patterns of accountability.

4. **Fundraising Autonomy** – the extent to which the agency depends on governmental funding or on its own revenues;
5. **Policy Autonomy** – to what extent the agency itself can take decisions about processes and procedures it must conduct to perform externally prescribed services;
6. **Autonomy from Intervention** – how free the agency is from *ex-post* reporting requirements, evaluation and audit provisions with respect to decisions made.

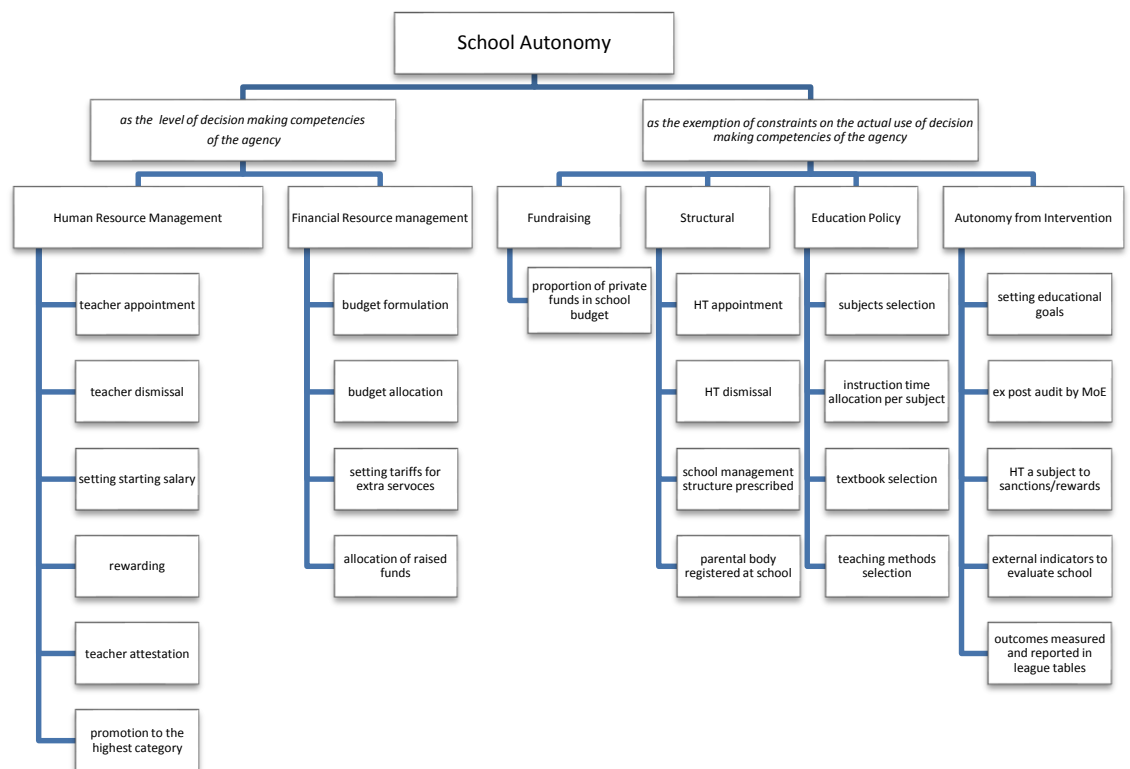


Figure 2.4 Structure of School Autonomy. *Source:* Adjusted from Verhoest *et al.* 2004.

The detailed list of variables included in each dimension is provided in Appendix 1. The framework was employed to analyse the original survey data collected from 122 schools in the three countries to help answer the principal research questions: to what extent has decision-making power been delegated to schools? what are the differences/similarities

in the types and degrees of school autonomy and accountability among the three countries?
What factors help explain the patterns of autonomy and accountability observed?

2.7. Accountability and Autonomy

School decentralisation – as investigated in the empirical chapters on the three post-Soviet republics – has been advocated by politicians and international organisations worldwide. In 2009, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) appraised school autonomy as follows:

Many of the world's best-performing education systems have moved from bureaucratic 'command and control' environments towards school systems in which the people at the frontline have much more control of the way resources are used, people are deployed, the work is organized and the way in which the work gets done. They provide considerable discretion to school heads and school faculties in determining how resources are allocated, a factor which the report shows to be closely related to school performance when combined with effective accountability systems. (PISA 2009, p.4; thesis author's emphasis).

The issue of autonomy in any public agency and a school in particular is complicated by the need for accountability since services are often publicly funded. The accountability of public agencies, particularly schools, is a topic of considerable interest to social policy researchers, as reflected in a growing body of scholarly literature (Mattei 2009, 2012, Bovens 2007, Baker *et al.* 2002, Adams & Kirst 1999).

One common theme in recent literature concerns the increasing emphasis on the exercise of accountability through regulation of outcomes rather than the more traditional regulation of inputs. Recent regulations in education may leave the means of production to the discretion of the producer, but nonetheless hold them accountable for the results

(Hanushek & Rymond, 2001). Furthermore, literature from the last decade indicates a shift from vertical (political) accountability to horizontal (social) accountability of public agencies driven by market mechanisms of client choice and competition (Meijer & Schillemans 2013). Following this trend, I examined the relationship between school autonomy in the three post-Soviet countries and the methods of accountability there.

Before forms of school accountability are elaborated further, it is important to note that, according to Freedom House (2005), the Central Asian nations are the least democratic of the former socialist bloc. Based on its 1-7 rating system, where 1 represents the highest and 7 the lowest level of democratic development, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan scored 5.64, 5.79 and 6.43, respectively.

School Accountability under Conditions of Autonomy

Having adapted the framework of public agency autonomy offered by Verhoest *et al.* (2004) to the case of state funded school education, it is important to note that, even where schools pursue their own objectives, they do so at public expense. Moreover, state funded schools operate within a national educational system, and the nation-forming role of education cannot be underestimated (see Chapter 6). If schools are given greater freedom to make decisions, then the need arises to hold them responsible using mechanisms of accountability. In *Education Accountability: An analytic overview*, Kogan (1986) starts by observing that accountability is seen as a problem in education, because institutions are difficult to supervise yet supported by public funds (p.17). Nonetheless, some level of reporting and monitoring is usually seen as necessary. Kogan offers a definition of accountability: “....a condition in which individual role holders are liable to review and

the application of sanctions if their actions fail to satisfy those with whom they are in an accountability relationship” (p.25).

It seems that he believes that accountability cannot exist without a process of review, while, in his definition, sanctions have negative connotations⁶. Thus, to take one side of the argument, less accountability might benefit schooling, since schools would be released from the fear of sanctions and can then concentrate fully on educational requirements (methods of teaching, child-centred environment, etc.). The latter can be promoted in a context of greater school autonomy. According to Gilardi (2002), the delegation of regulatory competences to institutions that are not democratically accountable, and hence are insulated from political influence, is one of the main trends in an emerging regulatory state⁷. However, reforms in Finland contrast high-stake strict accountability with low-to-moderate stakes accountability (Sahlberg 2007). Thus, Finland adopts ‘intelligent accountability policies and gradually builds a culture of trust within the education system that values teachers’ and principals’ professionalism in judging what is best for students and in reporting their learning progress’ (*ibid.*). Differences between some aspects of global education reform trends and education policy principles in Finland since the 1980s are presented in Figure 2.5.

Yet greater school autonomy could also result in a loss of public accountability and central political control. Relevant theoretical frameworks such as public choice theory and agency theory – from economic and political sciences – refer to agency loss and

⁶ For further discussion see Daniel Brown’s Decentralisation and school-based management (1990).

⁷ It is fair to note that Gilardi (2002) in his article Policy credibility and delegation.... refers primarily to non-majoritarian institutions in newly liberalised markets such as telecommunications, and in monetary policy (e.g. central banks). Nonetheless, I claim that the trend emphasised in his article is relevant to education policy in economies undergoing transformation.

bureaucratic drift (Waterman & Meier, 1998). In this view, the trend of centralisation stands out, observed in the Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders) – and even in the UK (Verhoest *et al.* 2004). Moreover, Mattei (2012), in a recent empirical study of market accountability in four European countries, has claimed that ‘despite some evidence of convergence between different education systems, England remains the outlier and continental European countries have been much more reluctant to adopt choice and competition policies’ (p. 247).

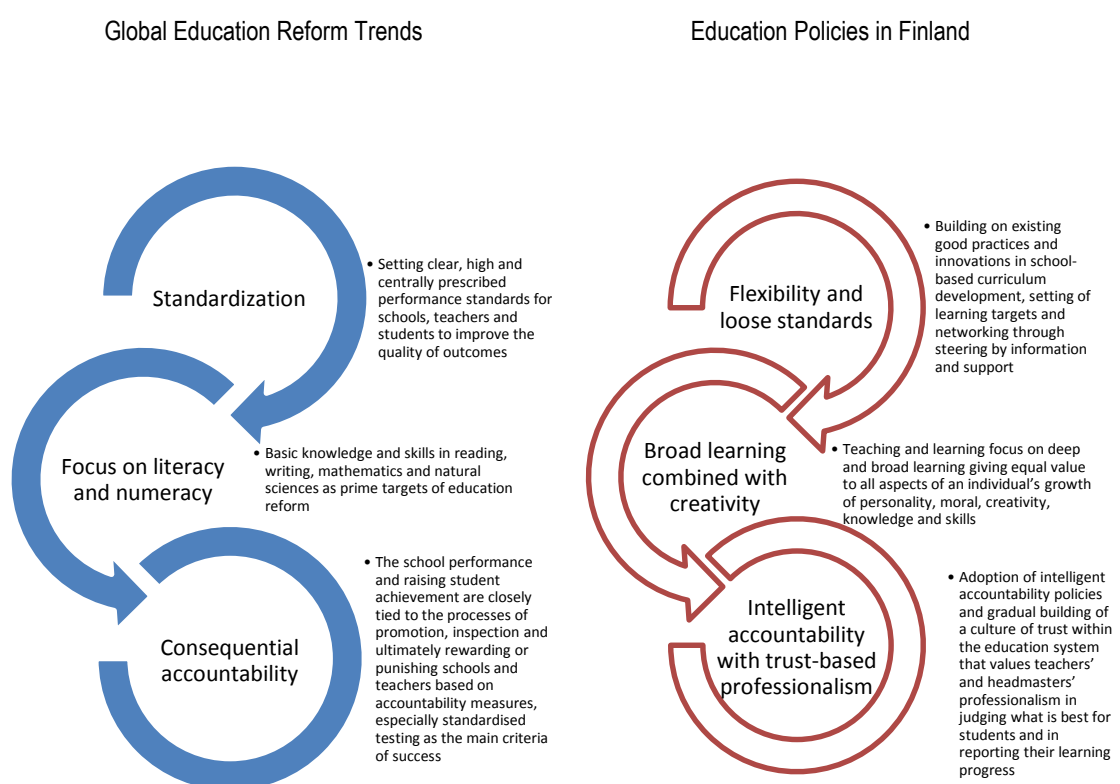


Figure 2.5 Some aspects of global education reform trends and education policy principles in Finland since the 1980s.

Source: Sahlberg 2007, p.152.

An alternative viewpoint on accountability and autonomy exists, one that sees them as being interrelated parts of the same picture, and that is the perspective taken in this thesis. Ideally, both school accountability and school autonomy have the same objective, the

overall enhancement of performance. Moreover, one is the logical counterpart to the other: too little autonomy leaves no room for local innovations and initiatives; similarly, too little accountability leaves no one responsible for the outcomes of such efforts.

Leithwood and Earl (2000) note that the underpinning of arguments for greater accountability consists of two assumptions about its consequences: (1) a closer alignment between public aspirations and the purposes schools strive to achieve; and (2) improved performance on the part of schools, typically still defined by traditional achievement criteria (*i.e.* a 'better fit' and a 'higher bar') (p.1).

Bovens (2007) elaborates on five types of accountability based on the various types of forums an actor must report to. He sees *political accountability* as built on a chain of accountability, *i.e.* the voters delegate their sovereignty to popular representatives in elected bodies, who further delegate authority to the cabinet and the civil service. Thus political accountability at the central level can include accountability to the minister or the cabinet within the executive branch as well as to the parliament, but also to the municipal council on the local level (Mulgan 2003).

Administrative accountability traditionally entails a superior holding a subordinate accountable for following appropriate processes and procedures when carrying out delegated duties and tasks. A range of external scrutiny bodies or quasi-legal forums may also carry out independent administrative and financial supervision and control of ministries or agencies. Managerial accountability, reflected in modern reforms, is about monitoring output and results and making those with delegated authority answerable for carrying out tasks according to agreed performance criteria (Day and Klein 1987). This

is different from traditional administrative accountability, which concentrates on monitoring the process or procedures, whereby input is transformed into output.

According to Bovens, *legal accountability* is becoming increasingly important in public institutions as a result of the increasing formalization of social relations and because there may be greater trust in the courts than in parliaments. Legal accountability is also increasingly important because of the internal dimension, *i.e.* securing individual rights and fair treatment of users or citizens.

Professional accountability denotes the importance of professional peers or peer review. Particularly in professional public organisations, such as schools, hospitals and other educational/health organisations, staff are constrained by professional codes of conduct in a system marked by deference to expertise (Mulgan 2000).

Social accountability arises out of a lack of trust in government and the existence of several potential social stakeholders in the environment. This produces pressure on public organisations to account for their activities vis-à-vis the public at large, stake-holders, or (civil) interest groups and patients' organisations, via public reporting, public panels, information on the internet or through the media (Malena *et al.* 2004).

Thus, in order to make autonomy work in education for quality improvement, schools should be held accountable for their performance. As Raab (2000, p.28 cited in Tolofari 2005, p.85) argues, a school 'may only be as autonomous...as it is allowed to be by the organs of the state that establish, finance and regulate it.'

2.8. Possible Theoretical Explanations of the Findings

This study's analysis of NPM implementation in the educational system of the post-Soviet states of Central Asia is focused through the wide lens of neo-institutional theory, which provides several perspectives on institutional change. Specifically, the study's approach draws upon four perspectives on neo-institutional theory, which seek to understand change in relation to: individual preferences, environmental pressures, social norms and rules, and historical legacies.

One perspective suggests that institutions are to some degree shaped by the preferences and capabilities of individual actors (Moe 1998, pp. 276-277). This perspective, Rational Choice Institutionalism, focuses on the impact of rational goal-behavior of actors within the institutional limits (Hall and Taylor 1996). Drawing on this perspective, the study analyses the extent to which the NPM ideas and goals were 'taken on board' by practitioners (*i.e.* school headteachers) in state schools.

Another perspective on neo-institutionalism focuses more on the socio-political environment surrounding organisations than on the preferences and choices of individuals within the institution. The analysis here suggests that changes in their 'technical environment' (Verhoest *et al.* 2010) might lead to the changes in actors' behavior (Krasner 1988, pp.68-69).

This study examines how the environment of the three Post-Soviet republics was altered by dramatic changes in 1991, which included the fall of communism and the crisis of the planned economy, along with the collapse of political, economic and social structures within the countries, including extreme cases of the civil war (Tajikistan) and civil upheavals (Kyrgyzstan). In education these led to institutional transformations. The study

also analyses the recent pressures from the environment generated by the army of professional reformers, which entered the region, including international organisations like the World Bank, IMF, ADB, DFID, USAID, etc. Their mission was “to encourage ‘laggard’ countries to catch up with the most up-to-date ‘best practice’ of the vanguard” (Hood 1998, p.4). ‘Western values’, international concepts, new ideologies, ideas and myths about how to organize the public sector and education in particular appeared as a form of ideological pressure (Cibulka 1996, p.8-9). This pressure was backed by financial incentives.

The conventional sociological view on neo-institutionalism focuses on the impact of norms and rules, suggesting that “organisations embrace specific institutional norms or practices because the latter are widely valued within a broader cultural environment” (Hall and Taylor, 1996, p. 949) Based on legislative analysis this study explores how the practice of decentralization were formulated and gained normative support from the policy-makers of the countries concerned.

From the neo-institutional perspective there are at least two reasons, why the ability of an organisation to adopt new practices cannot be fully understood in terms of the preferences of actors (*e.g.* school heads). First, the very nature of actors’ preferences should be understood as part of some larger institutional framework, that shapes their identities (Hall and Taylor 1996, p. 948).; second, the possible change options available to actors at any point in time are constrained by available institutional capabilities, and the latter is a product of choices made during some earlier period (Mahoney and Thelen (2010)). Therefore, the fourth perspective, Historical Institutionalism, stresses continuity over change.

According to Historical Institutionalism, radical policy changes can happen, but only when conditions are such that minimal structural constraints affect political actors in choosing a new policy. Consequently, incremental changes are more probable than radical reforms.

Krasner (1988) suggests several historical explanations for institutional inertia; that is decisions would be made in accordance with the previous experience, which proved to work in the past and the persistence of established informal networks and personal relationships.

In addressing the questions raised from these theoretical perspectives on neo-institutionalism, the conceptual framework developed by Verhoest *et al.* (2004) (see Chapters 4-8) was adapted to collect and analyse empirical evidence on the extent to which the NPM was implemented in the three Post-Soviet republics.

2.9. Organisation of the Thesis

The previous Chapter 1 (Introduction) has covered the discussion of the background to the research, the empirical puzzle and research questions. The present Chapter 2 contributes an overview of the literature on educational decentralisation, school autonomy and accountability. This continued with the analytical framework employed in the present study and theoretical implications, which were called to explain the findings of the empirical part of my study. Chapter 3 provides information on the research design and research limitations, which should not be underestimated when generalisations are made based on the data analysis. The empirical part of the thesis, based on the framework suggested by Verhoest *et al.* (2004) starts with Chapter 4 ‘Human Resource Management Autonomy and Structural Autonomy’. This chapter, in its first part, is concerned with

decision-making competences delegated from the centre to schools in managing human resources; the second part of the heading implies the extent to which the agency is shielded from influence by the government through lines of hierarchy (*e.g.* whether a school head is appointed by the government and can be dismissed by the oversight ministry are a couple of items explored).

The thesis continues with Chapter 5 that explores two more dimensions of school autonomy adopted from the framework of Verhoest *et al.* (2004). They are Financial Resource Management Autonomy and Fundraising Autonomy. The former is concerned with decision-making competences delegated from the centre to schools in managing financial inputs. The investigation of this domain is supported with the study of Fundraising Autonomy, that is, whether there is any proportion of privately raised funds in a school budget. This indicates the extent to which the agency depends on governmental funding or on its own revenues (Verhoest *et al.*, 2004, p. 106).

Chapter 6 explores the level of school autonomy in the policy dimension, which covers, according to Verhoest *et al.* (2004), the extent to which “the agency itself can take decisions about how to produce the services externally prescribed in the best possible way”. This dimension includes such items as whether a school has the right to decide: what subjects to teach; how many hours to teach per subject; what textbooks will be used; and internally to negotiate the methods of teaching in the classroom.

The following Chapter 7 ‘Autonomy from Intervention’ explores whether schools are shielded from state interference and focuses on *ex post* reporting requirements, evaluation and audit provisions with respect to decisions made. There are five items included.

The final empirical Chapter 8 explores the implications of school autonomy for accountability patterns observed in the three states. The comparison of the patterns observed across the former Soviet countries employs the analytical framework suggested by Bovens *et al.* 2007.

Historical institutionalism among other theories was dwelt on in order to explain the patterns of school autonomy and accountability observed in the three countries. Would the evidence of educational transformation in post-Soviet countries of Central Asia support the theory of ‘isomorphism’, for instance – that is, the development of institutions along similar trajectories – has been presented in Chapter 9 ‘Explaining findings’.

Chapter 3 | Research Design and Limitations

We lack the conceptual apparatus – even of categories of educational description – to compare the South African and the Hungarian transitology in the same academic paper.
(Cowen 1999, p. 85).

3.1. Research Design

Aiming to answer the research questions - to what extent have public schools in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan achieved greater autonomy; are policies towards school autonomy converging (or diverging) in the countries concerned; what the implications of these policies are for school accountability in the region, and what institutional elements may account for the changes (or persistence) observed - the present research was informed by insights from a seminal work by Margaret Archer, *Social Origins of Educational Systems* (1979). In introducing her enquiry into how educational systems change in both centralised and decentralised countries, she states: “The nature of these problems means that our approach to them must be both historical and comparative... to account for the characteristics and contours of national educational systems and their processes of change” (p. 1). Hence, this thesis is comparative, and historical institutionalism has been used to explain its findings.

The design of this study as a comparative analysis of three neighbouring countries in Central Asia has particular merit. Whilst a basic weakness of some comparative social policy analyses of several countries is the fact that they often end up comparing countries that differ greatly (comparing “apples and oranges” (Locke & Thelen, 1995)), the three Central Asian countries investigated here all had almost identical institutional structures

(in education in particular) two decades ago. Over nearly seventy years these countries had shared the same political and administrative context under the Soviet umbrella, while the cultural context too was shared, since all three countries had once formed part of Turkestan⁸. Thus, similarities in the findings on educational autonomy in the three countries would lend support to the idea of a generalised process experienced by (separate yet similar) countries simultaneously embarking on the transition from communism to a market economy. Furthermore, because the countries have so many cultural and historical resemblances, any substantial differences detected in the patterns of autonomy would allow us to test institutional theory by identifying specific historical/contextual events, if any, on which the countries differed that would offer a reasonable explanation for the alternative patterns that were observed.

One may label the educational transformation in the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia a ‘natural experiment’ (Orenstein, 2008, p.80), where schools with similar backgrounds have been the subject of much debate, and have undergone many reforms under the impact of similar political, economic and cultural factors. Thus, it is challenging and insightful to investigate, compare and explain the patterns of public schooling in the ex-Soviet states of Central Asia after twenty years of independence.

A mixed methods approach has been used in this study for the purposes of ‘triangulation’. The rationale is, according to Webb *et al.* (1966, cited in Bryman, 2005, p. 454), that “the confidence in the findings deriving from a study using a quantitative research strategy

⁸ First used by Persians to describe the place of Turkish peoples, after Imperial Russia had wrested full control over the Central Asian region, Turkestan was adopted as a name for the entire region. Today the term is used to describe a region which is inhabited mainly by Turkic peoples in Central Asia - Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (cf. Toker).

can be enhanced by using more than one way of measuring a concept.” In fact, the findings and conclusions derived from the data collected through the conduct of a school-based survey were cross-checked against results obtained from analysis of the qualitative data collected in the course of in-depth semi-structured interviews, and, finally, correlated with analyses of legislative decrees adopted in the countries concerned.

3.2. Data Collection

The proposed research had been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards and ethical committee’s approval had been granted on March 17, 2011. Original data about Kyrgyzstan were collected over July-August 2011, about Tajikistan – September-October 2011, and data from Uzbekistan was collected over the period September 2011 – March 2012. In total data from 122 schools were collected through a survey of headteachers; 46 additional interviews were conducted with headteachers, education officials and consultants in the three countries; and, finally, some 30 legislative decrees were analysed for the purposes of the present study.

School Survey

The survey questionnaire was based on instruments used in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/questionnaire.asp>) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS) School Questionnaire (<http://nces.ed.gov/timss/questionnaire.asp>). Both instruments were analysed thoroughly and the questions relevant to the purpose of the present study were employed. These questions were adjusted to make them more relevant for developing countries. Both multi-choice (close-) and open-ended questions were included. There were spaces provided in open-ended questions that the respondents could make comments after each

question. Some information regarding the characteristics of an educational establishment was also obtained.

A pilot study of the survey was conducted in order to clarify the wording of the questions and to remove irrelevant questions. The survey was piloted on two headteachers in Kyrgyzstan, two in Tajikistan and one – in Uzbekistan. The heads were instructed to answer the questions as if they were taking the survey. They were also asked to write comments about the questions' relevance and wording. Information from the pilot study resulted in the rewording and deletion of several questions. (Questionnaire translated into English is included in Appendix 4).

In order to launch data collection, formal requests for authorisation were directed to the respective national ministries of education in March 2011, then they were duplicated for the Ministries in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in April 2011. The letters were printed on an official letterhead of the Department of Social Policy and Intervention of the University of Oxford and signed by both the researcher and her supervisor, together with a copy of the questionnaire attached (see Appendix 6 & Appendix 4). But the only response, despite several promptings, came from the Ministry of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic. The two other ministries provided no response. So, in pursuit of my research goals, I devised several 'coping strategies', which varied from country to country.

Kyrgyzstan (51 schools)

My initial intention was to approach headteachers through the Kyrgyz Institute of Education, a body that provides training courses for heads and teachers. During my field trip I learnt that, due to financial constraints, heads and teachers from remote rural schools were not in the habit of attending courses provided by the Institute, located in the capital

as it was. Thus, only six headteachers from schools in the capital were approached, and they filled in the questionnaire. In order to provide geographical representation for the sample, I travelled to other Kyrgyz provinces,⁹ and through the former and present heads of education administrations managed to contact a further 45 school heads in rural areas. The formal authorisation of data collection from the Ministry of Education and my personal job contacts proved to be of much help. Thus, my sample in Kyrgyzstan was one of ‘convenience’, but nonetheless representative of the general statistics of schools in the republic, where 86 per cent of public schools are in rural areas (National Statistical Agency, 2010). Moreover, the government of Kyrgyzstan was the first to treat improving schools in the countryside as a priority (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006, p. 673); and, hence, it was important to explore the autonomy status of rural schools in particular.

Tajikistan (49 schools)

In Tajikistan I had no formal authorisation to collect data. To get access to schools, I negotiated my participation as a volunteer in a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) exercise for the World Bank project. A former colleague of mine, currently a World Bank consultant, asked for my assistance with M&E instruments development; in return I was allowed to join the project team in their field trips to schools. This reduced transportation costs of my field work immensely. Besides, traveling with a WB team, I gained additional authority in the eyes of local educational authorities and as a result was provided with the access to schools I was interested in. I visited 25 schools in person, and 24 questionnaires were distributed on my behalf along with the WB project instruments to randomly

⁹ Travel expenses were kindly financed from the Graduate Research Support Grant of the Soros Foundation.

selected schools during the M&E activity. Schools surveyed in Tajikistan were widely distributed across the country, and provided a generally good representation of public schooling in the country, whilst being a ‘sample of convenience’ similarly to the ones in the other two states.

Uzbekistan (22 schools)

Data collection in Uzbekistan proved to be the most complicated. I anticipated that education administrators in Uzbekistan might be reluctant to cooperate, particularly since the formal authorisation had never been granted. According to Cooley, the Uzbek government had developed into “one of the most repressive of the region” (2008, p. 70). My personal experience was that the Government of Uzbekistan in 2005 suddenly terminated the Memorandum of Understanding with the contractors of USAID and stopped education reform activities without any explanation.

However, with the help of a former colleague, I approached headteachers in Tashkent. At first they agreed but then refused to participate in the study, since it was not formally authorised by the Ministry of People’s Education. The survey had to be stopped. In March 2012 the survey was re-launched in Bukhara and Tashkent. The questionnaires were distributed to the former students of the pedagogical institutes, who had become heads of schools. It was a lengthy process to collect electronically filled and faxed questionnaires from educators in Uzbekistan. The whole process took over 6 months. As a result, 22 headteachers in total responded to the survey.

Turkmenistan (a ‘dropped’ country)

My initial research plan had included Turkmenistan as the fourth country in the Central Asian region with both similar characteristics and yet also (apparently) divergent reform outcomes. Despite the fact that the US Department of State characterised Turkmenistan as “a closed society with an authoritarian political system and centralized economy” (Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Fact Sheet, November 16, 2012, www.state.gov), that particular republic’s case had the potential to contribute to the comparative analysis, as well as to extend the base of research findings. However, when about to apply for a visa, I was informed by an official in the Turkmen embassy in London that, following the second revolution in Kyrgyzstan, they were prevented from granting Kyrgyz citizens visas for Turkmenistan. Furthermore, discussions of my research plans with Turkmens living in London made me realise that my research conduct in Turkmenistan would be unethical, since any persons in Turkmenistan agreeing to cooperate in my study would thereby break the law and put themselves in peril. In Turkmenistan public schools are considered to be closed political institutes: hence, any assistance from a head/teacher to a third party in a study not authorised by the government could in principle result in imprisonment. This information from Turkmen expatriates was confirmed by secondary sources, *e.g.*:

Post-1991 Turkmenistan has become the most repressive of all post-Soviet regimes and is ranked as one of the most repressive in the world. ... [Turkmenistan] is the only post-Soviet state to have preserved a one-party system, which is occupied by the Democratic Party (the renamed Communist Party). No opposition is tolerated. Virtually all opposition activists have emigrated, have ceased activity, or are in jail. Others are dead... (Ochs and Anonymous, year unknown).

In consultation with my supervisor, it was decided to drop Turkmenistan from the study and concentrate on three Central Asian states, which were either accessible (Kyrgyzstan), semi-accessible (Tajikistan) or accessible only with difficulty (Uzbekistan).

Semi-Structured Interviews

Forty-six semi-structured interviews were conducted in the three countries (Appendix 5 includes a Topic Guide translated into English). The purpose was to use qualitative data to help explain and build upon the quantitative data, in order better to understand the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Thus, the interviews were intended to enrich the understanding of educational decentralisation and school autonomy available through quantitative and documentary analysis. Data generated as a result of this qualitative exercise provided the foundation for further comparisons involving the three countries.

Interviews in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were conducted during July-September 2011. In Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan thirteen and twelve school headteachers were interviewed respectively, 4 interviews were conducted with education administrators at different levels in Tajikistan, and 5 interviews with administrators in Kyrgyzstan. Six interviews were conducted with the local and international consultants who worked in education development in one of the countries concerned or on regional projects. In Uzbekistan, four heads and two education specialists (Uzbek consultants working for international projects) were interviewed via Skype. Each interview – conducted in English, Russian or Kyrgyz – lasted between one and one and half hours. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed; transcripts were then translated (partially) into English. The answers were coded manually and entered into the dataset.

Documentary (Legislative) Analysis

The list of legislative decrees adopted in the three countries and framing school policies and practices was identified either in the course of interviews or in reviewing the relevant literature. As with other types of educational data in the post-Soviet states, many laws and decrees important for the purposes of this research were not openly available. Content analysis of some laws, administrative codes and regulations enacted in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan over the last two decades became possible only thanks to my former colleagues, who often managed to find hard copies of the decrees to send to me.

Moreover, in order to respond to the questions raised in this study, an extensive literature review was needed: a wide range of relevant documents, articles and research briefs published across Europe and the USA, as well as in the Central Asian region, were examined.

3.3. The Construction of School Autonomy Index

For the purposes of this comparative study, I adapted techniques of index construction suggested by Verhoest *et al.* (2004) to build an index for each category of School Autonomy per country. Indices summarise the findings generated from qualitative and quantitative data, and there appears to be consistency in the findings. Moreover, they illuminate the differences among the patterns in the three countries and make comparison more precise (t-tests). However, these indices provide only an illustrative representation of the degrees of school autonomy along the six dimensions.

The estimate for each category is constructed by averaging the responses of headteachers surveyed (122) to ‘yes’/‘no’ (0-1) questions about specific areas of decision-making

authority in each dimension. This approach gives equal weight to all the areas of decision-making, which is admittedly somewhat arbitrary, but not unreasonable. This approach has also been employed by Verhoest *et al.* (2004). *Prima facie*, there does not seem to be a strong argument for giving areas of decision-making different weights. Many indices in applied social science research involve arbitrary weighting decisions by the investigator (*e.g.* Esping-Anderson's widely cited decommodification index (1999), the OECD's material deprivation index, and Verhoest *et al.* (2004), on whose index of public agency autonomy my indices are modelled). Moreover, the school autonomy indices computed in the case of Kyrgyzstan within the present study received some external validation through the scale suggested by the World Bank's SABER (WB 2012).

However, it is important to acknowledge here, that almost all indices that combine different indicators or dimensions into a summary index number are likely to have potentially serious 'cancellation effects' - that is high and low scores combine tend to produce an average result. There are statistical ways to alleviate this problem, but this has not been attempted in this study. Verhoest *et al.* simply aggregate their scores as already described and this procedure has been followed here. Future refinements to an index of school autonomy could include testing out techniques to minimise cancellation effects.

To sum up, it is important to emphasise that the employment of a mixed method approach in this thesis was chosen in order to overcome the sampling limitations. Different methods were employed to generate different types of data to enhance the validity of the findings about the six main dimensions of school autonomy, suggested by Verhoest *et al.* (2004), in the context of the former Soviet countries of Central Asia. Findings derived from the original data collected will be reported further in the empirical chapters.

3.4. Research Limitations

It is important to mention that none of the countries studied is a ‘phone book country’. There are no Internet sites for educational departments or schools, where one could obtain recent reports on schools performance or the details of a school headteacher. Ministry of Education websites are colourful facades with information either outdated (for example, the website of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Tajikistan <http://www.edumaorif.tj>), or government-filtered and pre-selected (Refer to the Ministry’s of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan <http://www.uzedu.uz>).

Furthermore, a researcher is not helped by the fact that access to educational data in these countries is not officially regulated by any one specific law, but is managed differently across *oblasts* and *raions* (these are the administrative units, which correspond to regions and districts respectively) in each state. The structural hierarchy of education, inherited from the Soviet times, is well developed, and one can have no direct access to schools in any of the three republics without a preliminary authorisation by their superior ministry. The lengthy process of official application for the approval of data collection for the present study brought no result in two of the three countries (Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). Thus, the total number of 122 schools surveyed and 46 educators interviewed in the region was possible only because of my personal contacts generated over the previous seven years of working in the region. Other researchers reported working ‘detective-like’ in the region, seeking educational (agricultural, etc.) statistical data, which was treated by local officials as potentially secret information (Heidelbach 2005, p. 46).

However, the small sample size and its unrepresentativeness are significant limitations on the present research design. Of course, a random and/or larger sample would have helped to minimise the possibility of sampling bias. Also random and large-N sample

would have increased the survey's validity and enhanced the limits of generalisation. Nonetheless, the sample obtained has some strengths.

First, the questionnaires were filled in by the headteachers whose schools' descriptive statistics correspond with the overall national statistics for heads/schools in the countries. Second, there was no need to split schools sampled in the three countries into 'rural' and 'urban', because the present study, being primarily concerned with power distribution between the central government and schools, encountered no difference related to the location of a school. Based on the documentary analysis conducted, legislative frameworks appeared to be exactly the same for schools of both rural and urban types. Third, the range of schools within each individual country from which the sample of schools has been taken is relatively homogeneous, and the overall number is not as great as the number of schools in – say – England, France or Germany (there are about 2200 schools in Kyrgyzstan, 3700 in Tajikistan and 9700 in Uzbekistan). Therefore, under the existing constraints (political regimes in the countries, financial resources available for the present project, timeframe, etc.) the sample sizes generated in Tajikistan (49), in Kyrgyzstan (51), and particularly in Uzbekistan (22), appeared to be a viable starting point.

Chapter 4 | The Dimensions of School Autonomy: Human Resource Management Autonomy and Structural Autonomy

Whatever the origins of the social tendencies and characteristics we observe,
their present existence is due in some way to the people present.
(Archer, 1979, p. 15)

In this chapter I develop the theme of educational decentralisation in the context of countries under transition. Decentralisation of public service delivery was articulated as a development strategy by the World Bank (Gore, 2000, p. 796) for the transformation of post-Soviet states from centrally planned economies to market-driven economies. Over the last two decades the strategy has attained prominence, particularly in education (Kaufman, 1997, De Young, 2006, Chapman *et al.*, 2005, Gunnarson *et al.*, 2009).

The following section consists of five chapters (Chapters 4-8), which provide empirical evidence on the dimensions of school autonomy and accountability in the three former Soviet countries in Central Asia – Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. These chapters explore the principal research question: to what extent has the locus of decision-making power shifted from the centre to schools, and what implications it might have had on the patterns of school accountability observed in the region. The framework of the six key dimensions of public agency autonomy suggested by Verhoest *et al.* (2004) has been adopted and employed for the analysis presented in these chapters.

This chapter aims to explore the current degree of decisions-making at school level along two of these dimensions: Human Resource Management Autonomy and Structural

Autonomy. The former, Human Resource Management Autonomy, is concerned with decision-making competencies delegated from the centre to schools in managing human resource and includes six items: (i) teacher appointment; (ii) teacher dismissal, (iii) setting teachers' salaries, (iv) rewarding a teacher, (v) teacher attestation, (vi) promotion of a teacher to the highest rank.¹⁰ The latter, *Structural Autonomy*, implies the extent to which the agency is shielded from influence by the government through lines of hierarchy and accountability and includes four items on its own: (i) whether a school head is appointed by the government; (ii) whether she can be dismissed by the oversight ministry, (iii) whether the school management structure is prescribed by the centre, and (iv) whether there is a parents' association or a school board at school registered as a separate legal entity¹¹.

Analysis of variables listed above is based on the headteachers' survey and interviews conducted with headteachers and central/local actors in the region, statistical data and legislation adopted in three former Soviet countries of Central Asia. As a result of the comparative analysis, some differences and similarities in the patterns of school autonomy in the three countries concerned have been identified.

¹⁰ The base salary varies by educational background and by rank. In the three Central Asian countries, there exist four ranks for teachers with a higher education degree and three ranks for teachers with a college background. The teaching force throughout the region is well educated (UNESCO, 2009, p.24). The highest rank implies the top salary scale.

¹¹ Many countries have noted that non-governmental entities may also be consulted or may be involved in decisions-making at school level (OECD 2012, p.506). The most common non-governmental participants in the countries concerned appeared to be parents' committees/associations. A parents' committee registered as a legal body acquires statutory power to hold school administration/teachers accountable and to organize different activities, including fund raising.

The present chapter consists of three parts: part explores Human Resource Management dimension through three sources of information – the survey, interviews and legislation; part two discusses Structural Autonomy following the same structure; each of these two parts is summarized in a quantitative index of school autonomy per country. Indices computed numerically reflect the findings on the level of school autonomy in each country and strengthen the comparative component of the study. The final part concludes the chapter with explanatory remarks on the findings.

4.1. Human Resource Management Autonomy

There are at least two reasons for arguing that decision-making about human resource management within public schools is critically important. First, according to the McKinsey Report (2007) on those developed countries' education systems that are improving, the quality of education cannot surpass the quality of teachers (p.19). Top-performing school systems in the world manage to keep their leading positions by attracting the ablest people into teaching. Second, teachers and school principals are certainly the most influential actors in the educational reform process. Ladislav Cerych, who described the education transformation process in the post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe, states: 'Obviously, they [teachers] can represent the main resistance to reform but, overall, it is thanks to them that numerous changes have been introduced into the system; they are at the root of the bottom-up process' (Cerych 1997, p. 79). Therefore, it is particularly important to establish who decides which teachers to recruit, whom to promote and reward with bonuses, whom to direct to teacher in-service training, and whom to dismiss (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Summary of Items Included in Human Resource Management Autonomy

HRM Autonomy
▪ teacher appointment;
▪ teacher dismissal
▪ setting teachers' salaries;
▪ rewarding a teacher
▪ teacher attestation
▪ promotion of a teacher to the highest rank

Source: Adopted from Verhoest *et al.* 2004.

4.2. Education Administration System in the Three States

Before discussing the legislative background of educational decentralisation, it is important to emphasise that the process of law-making in former Soviet countries in Central Asia differs greatly from that in the UK, for instance, where proposed legislation must go through a series of stages in Parliament at Westminster before it becomes law and before policy can be implemented (Blakemore, 2003, p. 123). The process of education law-making in Tajikistan, as Tom Cassidy described it, appeared to be common to all three Central Asian countries studied. Thus issues and proposals related to education matters, predominantly related to operational and programmatic matters, are considered and decided on in three ways: (i) in the Collegium of the Ministry of Education (MoE), (ii) in meetings before the Minister; and (iii) in meetings before the Government of Tajikistan. Of these, the Collegium is the primary and ultimate collaborative decision making body in the MoE.¹² - any proposal for substantive changes in structures, functions, processes, personnel, learning and professional standards, etc. must be reviewed and approved by the Collegium. Proposals requiring changes in legal and regulatory acts

¹² From Regulations and Terms of Reference of the Ministry of Education Central Board.

and/or with significant cost implications must also be reviewed and approved by the Ministries of Justice, Economy and Finance and by the Government of Tajikistan (the Office of the President). After the decrees have been approved by central governments, local education administrations – *raion* educational administrations - are required to supervise the implementation of those decrees at the school level, including monitoring, evaluation and reporting on policy outcomes to the Ministry of Education (Cassidy 2009, pp. 58-59). This system of education administration is common to all three states.

Each of the three countries passed an Education Law (*Zakon ob Obrazovanii*) in the early 1990s, which then went through a number of changes and amendments over the period of independence of these countries: the 1992 Education Law in the Kyrgyz Republic (amended in 1997 and 2003), the 1993 Education Law in the Republic of Tajikistan (amended in 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2003 and final variant dated 2004), and the 1997 Education Law in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Structurally the Education Law is the fundamental law in the field, in the light of which other education laws are formulated. It provides an over-arching legal framework for the regulation of internal relationships between agencies and administrations under the national Ministry of Education and external relationships with other ministries or agencies.

There are more similarities than differences in the three Education Laws. Each law was primarily designed to mark the state's departure from the communist paradigm in the direction of democratic and modernised education; thus, the interlinked status of schools and other educational institutions was recognised as one made up of legal entities with rights and duties (Section I, General Terms, the Education laws of KG, TJ, UZ). It is striking that the Education Law of Tajikistan stipulates the autonomy of schools as one of the key principles of basic public education development (Article 4). By contrast, the

Uzbek Education Law (1997) does not contain any specific reference to school autonomy. Nonetheless, the laws of the three post-Soviet countries note education as a priority for central government, and recognise public education as the foundation for national prosperity (Education Law of the Republic of Tajikistan (2004), Article 3; Education Law of the Kyrgyz Republic (2003), Article 4; the Education Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan (1997), Section 1).

The other important legislative decrees (judging by the frequency of references to them contained in other legislative documents) regulate the objectives and procedures of human resource development in the countries concerned. Analyses of the State Programme for Pedagogical Staff Training 2005-10, No. 425 (November 2004) in Tajikistan, the National Programme for Personnel Training (1997) in Uzbekistan and the Law on Teacher Status (2001) in Kyrgyzstan reveal government concerns about scarce human resources in public schooling. Migration, ageing and the general unpopularity of the pedagogical profession significantly reduced the number of teaching personnel available to fill vacancies in the growing number of schools in the central Asian region, including the three countries studied here (Silova 2009, p. 49). Thus, the teacher shortage in the schools of Tajikistan was assessed at 13,000 staff out of 110,000 total (State Programme on Pedagogical Staff Training 2005-10, No. 425 (2004)). The statistical book on Kyrgyzstan also emphasised the critical level of understaffing in 40 per cent of schools in the republic (National Statistical Committee, Kyrgyzstan. 2010). In Uzbekistan, the shortage of teachers in education was meant to be addressed through the National Programme for Personnel Training (1997), according to the legal text of this programme, but the exact figures for teacher shortages were not stipulated.

One notable point of difference in legislative frameworks adopted separates Uzbekistan from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan: there are more decrees signed by President Karimov himself rather than by his counterparts in the other two countries. This may reflect the high priority given to educational matters by the president and, hence, by the state as a whole. But it also represents the concentration of legislative decision-making power in the hands of the leader of the country, generally unrestricted and without checks and balances. Hence, political and central control of schooling in Uzbekistan might appear to be significantly greater than in the other two countries studied. This has been tested further in the thesis.

4.3. Teacher Appointment and Dismissal

Documentary Analysis

Documentary analysis was continued in order to find out the locus of decision making for teacher recruitment and dismissal. First, it emerged that the job description for a headteacher was similar in all three countries concerned. In Uzbekistan in the regulations ‘On state secondary schools’, issued by the Cabinet of the Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan (November 1995), the headteacher was empowered with the responsibility to hire a teacher and conclude a contract with her. The basis for a contract between a teacher and a school was also described in the Education Laws of the Republic of Tajikistan dated 2004. In Kyrgyzstan, the principal responsibility for hiring and firing a teacher remained with the *raion* education administration until 2009, maintaining the Soviet legacy, but in 2009 the function was delegated to schools (Regulations ‘On income-generating activities of the public educational establishments of the Kyrgyz Republic’, 2009). Hence, one may conclude that the competency to hire a teacher across three countries concerned has been

delegated to schools. However, the exercise of this competency might well in practice be restrained due to the shortage of teachers in the countries.

Survey Analysis

Continuing the investigation of the locus of decision-making power over the six main items of human resource management autonomy, stipulated in the introduction to this chapter, headteachers of the three Central Asian republics were asked about their perception of who had the principal responsibility for those six items of staff management in their educational institutions (see Tables 4.2-4.4). The output of the analysis of the first pair of items, ‘teacher hiring’ and ‘teacher dismissal’, is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Locus of Primary Responsibility for Teacher Hire/Dismissal in Three Countries (by number and percentage of schools)

		Kyrgyzstan		Tajikistan		Uzbekistan	
		School	Rai Admn	School	Rai Admn	School	Rai Admn
Teacher Recruitment	N	29	15	26	19	22	0
	%	57%	30%	53%	39%	100%	0
Teacher Dismissal	N	22	24	18	29	20	0
	%	43%	47%	37%	59%	91%	0

Question asked: ‘Who do you believe has primary responsibility for teacher hire (I) and teacher dismissal (II)?’ Options provided included *School, Regional Administration, Provincial Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other*. Categories displayed are ones with the highest proportion of preferences received, they are: ‘School’ and ‘Raion Administration’.

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

As seen in the table above, almost all school heads surveyed in Uzbekistan claimed that they had primary responsibility for both teacher hiring and teacher dismissal at their schools. The patterns emerging in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are similar to each other and

both are mixed: over half of headteachers in these two republics reported being responsible for teacher hiring (57% in Kyrgyzstan and 53 % in Tajikistan), while one third (39 percent of heads in Tajikistan and 30 percent - in Kyrgyzstan) identified the *raion* education administrations as enjoying primary responsibility for this competency. Meanwhile, governmental education administrations were reported to be more frequently responsible for teacher dismissal. In Kyrgyzstan 47 percent of heads selected the *raion* administrations vs. 43 percent of heads claiming that they were in charge of teacher dismissal. Similarly in Tajikistan – 59 percent of heads stated that the *raion* administration had primary responsibility for a teacher dismissal vs. 37 percent of votes given for school autonomy in teacher dismissal. These findings suggest some ambiguity in the legislation adopted in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. To clarify this, interviews with educators in these two republics were scrutinised on this issue.

Interview Analysis

Despite the delegation of responsibility for hiring teachers to the school level, interviews conducted with headteachers revealed that school administrations in all three countries continued to send forms specifying teacher vacancies to the *raion* administrations, which then forwarded them to the national Ministry of Education.

Nonetheless, all the heads interviewed in Kyrgyzstan emphasised that the *raion* education administrations still played a symbolic part in teacher recruitment. However, it was argued that the *raion* education administrations had no policy in place for tackling staffing problems at schools, and heads were put under pressure to find their own ways of solving such problems.

Local authorities involve us in meetings and read us reports regarding school staffing problems but...in practice it is purely the problem of the head (Kyrgyz headteacher).

The continued practice of seeking *ex ante* authorisation of activities and/or decisions made by schools in staffing appears to be ‘locked-in’, that is, reinforced by the system of teacher training inherited from the Soviet regime. Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand’ of the market was absent in the Soviet system of education. Instead, the Communist Party provided Soviet regimes “with an historically unprecedented degree of control over career opportunities” (Walder, 1994, p.299). The system of teacher training was designed so that a graduate, working in a school of the state’s choice, paid with her labour for the education she received free at a pedagogical institute. In reality, teachers assigned to remote outposts on the steppe and in the mountains tended to want to move to more desirable city schools. They often succeeded in moving to urban schools by employing personal connections; hence some schools in remote areas were left understaffed (De Young, 2006, p. 502). Soviet policy tried to mitigate the impact of this rural brain drain by controlling migration into cities, and by giving preference to provincial graduates in institutional placements (*ibid.*, p. 503).

Understaffing of rural schools, inherited from the past, persists in the post-Soviet era. In Tajikistan, only 49 per cent of graduates with higher education in pedagogical specialities started teaching at schools assigned by the state (State Programme on Pedagogical Staff Training 2005-10, No. 425 (2004)). However, the time is past when headteachers simply put together requests for staff required in their schools and then waited for the *raion* education administrations to take care of their requests. In Tajikistan and in Kyrgyzstan,

headteachers interviewed in 2011 eagerly described their proactive position over questions of teacher recruitment:

Staff appointments are the head's business. I meet a teacher, and I can see whether she will stay at my school for long, or whether she is a 'day-fly', who merely hopes that she can make money here (Tajik headteacher).

I believe it is great that I can appoint teachers because I can talk to every candidate, decide what to offer and on what conditions (Kyrgyz headteacher).

Headteachers interviewed in Tajikistan emphasised the importance of having decision-making powers in staffing issues in particular, and stressed how they approached such questions proactively.

I believe that hiring teachers is the most important function of a headteacher. When I make a contract with a teacher, I speak to each candidate, and establish that she has sufficient job experience, and is willing to learn on the job. A head has to find a common language with every single teacher at her school (Tajik headteacher).

These quotations show that a head plays a major role – often a ground-breaking one – in teacher recruitment. Similarly, one head persuaded a teacher employed in Kazakhstan to

work as ‘pochasovik’¹³ in her school. Another undertook extra efforts to convince retired teachers in the community to return to teaching at her school.

Given the shortage of specialists we solve the problem in the following way – we’ve got a teacher of English who works in Kazakhstan¹⁴ but comes twice a week to our school to conduct tests, and to deliver a kind of short but intensive English course The result is that, in general, children receive what they are supposed to receive within the national curriculum framework (Kyrgyz headteacher).

I spoke to every single retired teacher in the local area, and tried to convince them to return to teaching. And many did come back. Now fifty, no, seventy per cent of teachers in my schools are retired teachers (Tajik headteacher).

4.4. Setting Teacher’s Starting Salary and Rewarding a Teacher

When a teacher is recruited the problem of retaining her arises. Half the teachers who start teaching at a school leave within the first three years (Decree of Tajik Government No. 425 (1 November 2004)). The State Programme for Education Development in Tajikistan for 2010-15, adopted by the Government in April 2009, states: ‘Over year 2008 there were 10,803 teachers who left work at schools because of low salaries’ (Section 3).

Teachers’ salaries are an important factor. Tomlinson (2000) identifies two complementary aspects of teacher motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic rewards are those experiences a person values from doing the job itself. Extrinsic rewards, on the

¹³ ‘Pochasovik’ (Rus.) – a teacher who is employed full-time by one school yet contracted to teach several hours per week at another or others in addition.

¹⁴ Civil servants’ salaries in Kazakhstan are 10 times higher than salaried paid to teachers in Kyrgyzstan; in overall in Kazakhstan GDP per capita consists over \$11,000 (2011), while in Kyrgyzstan GDP per capita makes \$1,000 (2011) (World Data Atlas, downloaded from www.knoema.com/atlas).

other hand, are those added to the role to compensate for some unattractive aspects of the work. For instance, an English teacher might gain intrinsic satisfaction from time spent stimulating children's minds, but the burden of working in an oversubscribed class or in a cold classroom requires extrinsic compensation. Salary is the most obvious extrinsic reward that a school enjoying autonomy can regulate.

Even though the base salary of civil servants (including teachers) in the Central Asian countries is determined centrally (see documentary analysis below), the actual pay of teachers might vary widely because of the separate elements in the total teachers' earnings. Figure 4.1 illustrates the fragmentation of teacher's total pay by highlighting the various components of a teacher's income across the three former Soviet countries of Central Asia.

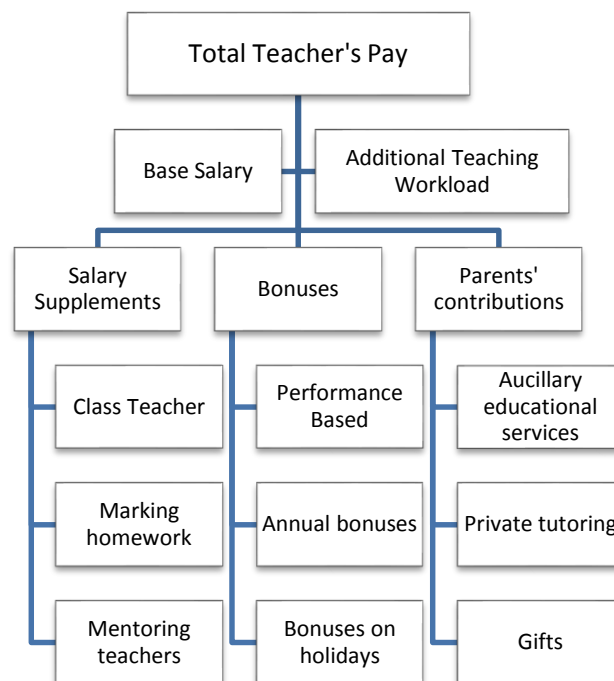


Figure 4.1 Main Components* of the Total Pay for Teachers in Three Countries

Source: Adjusted from Steiner-Khamsi & Harris-Van Keuren, 2008, p.9

*Social benefits and allowances, provided from the national central budget are not included in this figure.

There are two components of the teacher's total pay, for which a school administration could make an impact depending on the level of school human resource management autonomy. They are 'base salary' and 'bonuses'. The former is the starting salary that a teacher obtains after her appointment. This may or may not be decided about by school administration depending on the level of school Human Resource Management Autonomy. The latter, 'bonuses', are the amounts of money, which school administration might or might not be able to pay to teachers for outperformance or on special occasions depending (again) on the level of school Human Resource Management Autonomy. The next section analyses these two components of the teacher's pay, since they contribute to the patterns of school autonomy in the three countries.

Documentary Analysis

Documentary analysis showed that teachers in all three countries were hired on a centralised pay scale that specifies the amount paid depending on levels of education and experience. However, here the similarities end. Kyrgyzstan's decree 'On Unified Tariff for Teachers' Pay' (May 1993) states the school's right to decide in which category a teacher should be placed, and only the highest rank nominees (*i.e.* those teachers who managed to prove the match of their skills with the requirements of the top qualification) must then be approved by the *raion* education administration. Tajikistan's Educational Law also sets the scale according to which a teacher's initial salary is set. Nevertheless, Tajik schools are legally authorised to use 'differentiated forms of additional payments and bonuses', *i.e.* schools are allowed to use additional funds and/or savings to supplement teachers' salaries. (Education Law of the Republic of Tajikistan (2004)).

In Uzbekistan the regulations ‘On approval of normative documents in education’ (1995), stipulate that the scale is the state-guaranteed minimum payment for teachers. Meanwhile, the Decree by the Cabinet of Ministers ‘On improved system of pay to the workers of people’s education of Uzbekistan’ (2005) authorises the establishment of so-called ‘Director’s funds’ at schools, which may consist of up to 15 per cent of the state funding for teachers’ salaries. The act distinguishes different types of bonuses. Some may be paid on a monthly basis as a supplement to the standard pay rate, others as an honorarium for extraordinary teaching performance (CoM Uzbekistan (2005), Item 2).

In both cases a ‘special committee’ is required by the regulations to serve as a fund-managing body, and it must be led by the headteacher and based at the school. This body makes the final decisions what to pay teachers and when; furthermore, the regulations stipulate: ‘neither territorial administrative units nor *raion*/city or *oblast* educational administrations can interfere in the work of the special committee’ (Edict of the Cabinet of the Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 275 (25 December 2005), Item 3). It seems that a ‘Director’s Fund’ and a ‘special committee’, established at school, might contribute to a higher school autonomy in making staff related decisions. This might place Uzbekistan first among the three countries in the region of staff management autonomy. The next section analyses whether this has been implemented in practice by schools in the three states.

Survey Analysis

The output of survey data analysis on the primary responsibility for a teacher starting salary setting and teacher bonuses is presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Locus of Primarily Responsible for Teacher Starting Salary and Bonuses in Three Countries (by number and percentage of schools)

		Kyrgyzstan					Tajikistan				Uzbekistan		
			School	MoE	Regional Adm	Other	School	MoE	Regional Adm	Other	School	MoE	Regional Adm
Setting Teacher's Start Salary	a	N	9	28	6	6	22	16	7	n/a	3	11	6
		%	18	55	12	12	45	33	14	n/a	13.5	50	27
Rewarding a Teacher	a	N	21	19	5	4	23	13	4	6	22	n/a	n/a
		%	41	37	10	8	47	26.5	8	12	100	n/a	n/a

Question asked: 'Who do you believe has primary responsibility for teacher's start salary and rewarding a teacher?' Options provided included School, Regional Administration, Provincial Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other. All categories are reported.

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

In fact, 100 percent of schools in Uzbekistan claimed full autonomy in making decisions about rewarding outperforming teaching staff. This triangulates with Uzbek legislation that stipulated the foundation of a reserve 'Director's Fund' with up to 15 percent of teachers' total salary for staff rewards. However, 50 percent of schools in Uzbekistan followed ministerial guidelines about what the starting salary of a teacher should be. In Tajikistan, the pattern is different and here 47 percent of heads surveyed claimed being able to pay bonuses to teachers and 45% of them decided on the starting salary. Both of these competencies were delegated to Tajik schools within the systemic fiscal reforms in education based on the 'devolved budget' approach (see Chapter 5). Finally, the case of Kyrgyzstan depicts the most mixed pattern of power distribution on these two items, where four categories are pointed out in deciding on rewarding a teacher: schools – 41%, MoE – 37%, *raion* administration – 10% and other (*raion* financial administration) – 8%. This mixed picture may be interpreted as heads attempting to seek funds for teacher's bonuses in any possible way they can, through public and private expenditures. As it was

seen from the documentary analysis, Kyrgyzstan had neither devolved budgets to schools nor established a 'Director's Fund', as in Uzbekistan.

Interview Analysis

The heads in Kyrgyzstan interviewed claimed that the restricted autonomy in the management of their budgets impeded them exercising their staffing autonomy, building teams and carrying out effective leadership in their schools. For instance, all the heads interviewed wished to be granted the power to reward extra pay to teachers, which might strengthen team-building efforts and improve classroom performance.

It's a pity that I can't reward teachers. There are teachers who involve their hearts and souls in teaching, you know, and those who teach 'indifferently', not to say worse than that. I have no means to show that I appreciate the work of the former (Kyrgyz headteacher).

Meanwhile, the heads in Tajikistan, were granted the possibility of rewarding their teachers, and hence, influencing their behaviour.

This year we are allowed to reward distinguished teachers or deputies. I plan when they [teachers] return to school in August with no money left after the vacation, I shall meet them with envelopes: that is indeed when 'every little helps' (Tajik headteacher).

If you are appointed as a head, you must know how to motivate a teacher, how to encourage her and make her stay at the school. There are moments when you need a carrot and moments when you need a stick. ... There are

situations when I take a teacher aside and discuss problems tête-à-tête behind closed doors. That is what a headteacher is designed to do, that is why I am the leader of the school (Tajik headteacher).

The Uzbek experience might be interpreted as a sharp break from the Soviet legacy. But this view has to be qualified by reports from many interviewees about the consultation and the approval required from local education administration units for ‘going ahead’ with decisions made at schools about staffing issues, particularly in Uzbekistan:

Anyway, without RaionO, GorONO [district and municipality education administrations] we can’t take a step. No head can act absolutely independently... We always consult with our line managers (nachalnik: Rus.) and ask them to approve hiring somebody (Uzbek headteacher).

4.5. Teacher Attestation and Promotion to the Top Rank

A teacher’s base salary, discussed in the previous section, varies by her educational background and by the rank she has. The latter is determined based on promotion or “attestation” criteria. In the three Central Asian countries, three levels of education are considered: a higher education degree, a professional teacher education degree (also referred to as “college degree”), and no professional teacher education background (referred to as “incomplete higher education”). Teachers throughout the region are encouraged to continue professional development throughout their careers.

Beyond the main degree programmes, teachers participate in in-service education, after which they receive a certificate confirming that training has been completed. The participation in in-service education courses and attestation procedures are required in

order to advance or receive a promotion in the profession. After their successful completion, the qualification categories can be upgraded and pedagogical titles assigned. The subsequent paragraphs reflect on the current situation in terms of teachers' professional attestation and promotion in the countries concerned.

Documentary Analysis

The Regulations on Attestation of Teachers, adopted in the three countries, define teacher participation in comprehensive training courses, which are provided by Regional Institutes of Education, Department of the Higher Educational Establishments, National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Education. This state-run network of teacher training institutions inherited from the Soviet past continued to promote conformity among teaching staff.

Some ambiguity surrounds the funding of these institutions. Only the regulations in Uzbekistan clearly stipulate that the state institutions of teacher in-service training are financed by the state budget (UZ, 1997). Financial considerations have not been reflected in legislative decrees adopted in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, where by law, advancement of qualifications of teaching staff is obligatory and should take place at least once every five years to maintain professional qualifications (every three years in the case of Uzbekistan). Not having delegated this responsibility to the school level has caused a delay in the professional upgrading of many teachers in the region:

My teachers could not take any training course this year. It is too expensive nowadays. Teachers are asked to cover transport and accommodation themselves.... They often refer to 'the good old days' when every trip to a city teacher training institute was like a 'freebie' (Kyrgyz headteacher).

In the Central Asian countries, the normative documents of the Ministries of Education define attestation of teachers as the system of measures aimed at comprehensive and complex evaluation of their pedagogical activity according to which they define compliance of the teacher to the position, level of her qualification, qualification category and pedagogical title assigned (Decree on Pedagogical Staff Attestation, Kyrgyzstan, 1993, Education Law of Tajikistan, 2004; Decree of the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Material Stimulation of Pedagogical Staff, 2005).

Attestation committees are found in educational institutions (schools), but also in the *raion* education administrations. The main decision made by a school attestation committee is to assign one of the teacher qualification categories as well as pedagogical titles. The highest category appears most likely to be assigned by a *raion* attestation (appraisal) committee. Which tier of the educational administration or the school is primarily responsible for teacher's appraisal and attestation has been examined through the survey.

Survey Analysis

The pattern of teacher attestation appeared to vary across the three countries concerned. *Raion* education administrations in 71% of cases in Tajikistan were reported to be primarily responsible for teacher appraisal. Kyrgyzstan stated that schools were fully in charge of their teaching staff appraisal. Schools in Uzbekistan reported two levels of education administration were in charge of teacher attestation: 50% named the *raion* education administrations and 31% of heads named schools.

A different pattern of teacher promotion to the highest rank emerged across the three countries. Uzbekistan appeared to be different from the other two countries. Here the

teacher promotion was argued to be the competency shared among all three tiers of education administration: MOE – 14%, *raion* administration – 54.5% and *oblast* administration – 23%. Schools were not mentioned at all. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan reported schools to be in charge of teacher promotion in a similar way (47% and 55% respectively). Also 26% of respondents in Tajikistan selected the MoE, while in Kyrgyzstan the *raion* education administration received 39% of responses and the national MoE – none.

Table 4.4 Locus of Primary Responsibility for Teacher Attestation and Promotion in Three Countries (by number and percentage of schools)

		Kyrgyzstan				Tajikistan				Uzbekistan			
		School	MoE	<i>Raion</i> Adm	Other	School	MoE	<i>Raion</i> Adm	<i>Oblast</i> Adm	School	MoE	<i>Raion</i> Adm	Oblas Adm
Attestation	N	42	n/a	6	2	4	n/a	35	4	7	n/a	11	n/a
	%	82	n/a	12	4	8	n/a	71	8	32	n/a	50	n/a
Promotion to the highest rank	N	28	n/a	20	3	23	13	4	9	0	3	12	5
	%	55	n/a	39	6	47	27	8	18	0	14	55	23

Question asked: ‘Who do you believe has primary responsibility for teacher attestation and teacher promotion to the highest rank?’ Options provided included *School, Regional Administration, Provincial Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other*. All categories ticked by respondents are reported per country.

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

Interview Analysis

In the course of interviews conducted with headteachers in three countries, a list of the main mechanisms and instruments applied in teacher appraisal and attestation at the school level was developed. Thus, the mechanisms adopted for teacher appraisal and attestation appeared to be common across the three countries concerned and included:

As a head of attestation committee I attend teacher's lessons and assess them (Kyrgyz headteacher).

We exchange good practices at school... (Kyrgyz headteacher).

I introduced teacher development supervision... It works well (Tajik headteacher).

We still demand accurate teacher's record keeping. It is one of the criteria (Tajik headteacher).

Good old lesson plans should be in place. I believe in good planning (Tajik headteacher).

If teacher's pupils were the winners in competitions or Olympiads', it counts of course! (Uzbek headteacher).

There are two teachers in my school who are the authors of a text book., They have the "The Best in Education" (Otlichnik Obrazovaniya) medals (Uzbek headteacher).¹⁵

To summarise, diverse patterns of school decision-making competencies along human resource management dimension in the three countries have been investigated and described in the first part of this chapter. In order to systematise and compare the patterns observed, I employed the human resource management autonomy index computing suggested by Verhoest and his colleagues (2004).

¹⁵ *Otlichnik Obrazovaniya*: Rus. ('The Best in Education') is a title that is given to a particularly outperforming teacher by the Ministry of Education.

4.6. Index of Human Resource Management Autonomy

Having adapted the Verhoest *et al.* (2004) framework for studying public agency autonomy to the schools, I measured the *human resource management autonomy* dimension of former Soviet states in Central Asia using six items: (i) teacher appointment; (ii) teacher dismissal, (iii) setting teachers' salaries, (iv) rewarding a teacher, (v) teacher attestation, (vi) promotion of a teacher to the highest rank. Following the Verhoest *et al.*'s approach, the items listed were scored '1' (maximal autonomy), in cases where the headteacher reported her school to be primarily in charge of the activity, and '0' (minimal/no autonomy), in cases where the headteacher reported that the Ministry of Education or another agency subordinate to it was primarily in charge. The mean score for the HRM Autonomy for each country is presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Index of Human Resource Management Autonomy

Country name	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Kyrgyzstan	.52	49	.24	.04
Tajikistan	.38***	45	.22	.03
Uzbekistan	.55	21	.12	.04

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

On average, the highest level of Human Resource Management Autonomy was experienced by schools in Uzbekistan ($M=0.55$), with second place taken by schools in Kyrgyzstan ($M=0.52$), and the least Human Resource Management Autonomy registered at schools in Tajikistan ($M=0.38$). The difference in the scores of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan is very small, and statistically insignificant ($p>.05$); but differences compared between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan as well as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan appeared to be statistically significant ($\text{sig.}=.004$ and $\text{sig.}=.002$ respectively) (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 T-test for Equality of Means of Human Resource Management Autonomy Index

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
KG vs. TJ	Equal variances assumed	2.94	92.00	.004	0.14	.05
	Equal variances not assumed	2.95	91.99	.004	0.14	.05
UZ vs.TJ	Equal variances assumed	3.23	64.00	.002	0.17	.05
	Equal variances not assumed	3.58	50.65	.001	0.17	.05

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

Although Uzbekistan demonstrated inconsistency in discretion granted to schools across the items explored, in overall its Human Resource Management Autonomy index appeared to be as high as one in Kyrgyzstan.

Summary

On average, across the three post-Soviet countries, the human resource management index is well above '0' (no/minimal autonomy), clearly showing that public schools are now exercising a degree of decision-making control over human resource management.

However, across the three countries these indices are well below '1', which indicates a relative failure to achieve a high degree of decentralisation. Changes that would alter the deep structure of the system (Gersick, 1991, p. 15) have not occurred, and schools continue to be significantly dependent in human resource management issues on the oversight ministry and ministerial agencies across the region. In other words, the institutions in these countries have implemented only incremental changes, and continue to operate predominantly along old lines. New norms and rules imposed through new legislation seem to be interleaved with norms inherited from Soviet times. For instance, the *raion* education administrations used to be in charge of hiring and firing teachers, and

some of them continue to implement that despite regulations that nominally put school heads in charge of personnel contractual matters (MoE, 2006, Interview with a former *raion* education specialist, Kyrgyzstan). The role of history and institutional rigidity appears to have created resistance to more fundamental change (see Thelen, 1999).

Another feature of the decentralisation processes in the post-Soviet states is the divergence of patterns in Human Resource Management Autonomy across the three Central Asian countries. Differences have emerged between two pairings of the countries: Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan appears to have the highest degree of school autonomy in human resource management (HRM) dimension. The analysis of data on HRM summarised in Table 4.2 raises another question: namely, what explains the difference in institutional change related to HRM in public schooling in post-Soviet countries of Central Asia with similar institutional and socio-economic characteristics? Unfortunately, the index of the HRM autonomy can only ‘map and mark’ institutional change, it does not explain the mechanisms underpinning such change. Nonetheless, triangulation of the index values with accounts based on the survey and interviews reveals consistency in the patterns observed across the countries. Explanations for these patterns will be further explored in Chapter 9.

4.7. Structural Autonomy

Structural Autonomy means the extent to which the agency is shielded from influence by the government through lines of hierarchy and accountability (Christensen, 1999 cited in Verhoest *et al.*, 2004, p. 106). This analytical factor in educational context may apply in the extent to which the school head is appointed and accountable to central government or to a school governing board, and the extent to which members of the school governing board, if any, represent central government.

Survey analysis showed that Boards of Governors have not yet become part of the educational environment in any of the countries concerned. Documentary analysis demonstrated that although ‘state-public’ management of schools was proclaimed in legislative rhetoric, the headteacher continued to be formally responsible for school failure or success on the daily basis in all three countries. Headteachers appeared to be middle managers in the education systems of the newly emerged states of Central Asia. To assess this four items have been included in the Structural Autonomy of schools: (i) whether a school head is appointed by the government; (ii) whether she can be dismissed by the oversight ministry, (iii) whether the school management structure is prescribed by the centre, and (iv) whether there is a parents’ association or a school board at school registered as a self-contained legal entity (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7 Summary of Items Included in Structural Autonomy

Structural Autonomy
▪ whether a school head is appointed by the government; ▪ whether she can be dismissed by the oversight ministry; ▪ whether the school management structure is prescribed by the centre; ▪ whether there is a parents’ association or a school board at school registered

Source: Adopted from Verhoest *et al.* 2004.

4.8. Appointment and Dismissal of a Headteacher

Survey Analysis

In the Soviet era the membership of the Communist Party was an essential criterion for a headteacher’s appointment. If the head failed in her duties, she could be demoted by the local organ of the party (Zajda, 1980). Party membership is no longer vital, but school heads continue to be appointed rather than elected in all three countries concerned. This

legacy appeared to be continuing in the educational institutions of the countries concerned.
(Table 4.8).

Table 4.8 Locus of Primary Responsibility for Headteacher Appointment/Dismissal in Three Countries (by number and percentage of schools)

		Kyrgyzstan		Tajikistan		Uzbekistan		
		School	Rai Admn	School	Rai Admn	School	Rai Admn	MoE
Headteacher Appointment	N	1	48	1	44	0	11	9
	%	2%	94%	2%	90%	0%	50%	41%
Headteacher Dismissal	N	0	50	1	45	0	13	5
	%	0%	98%	2%	92%	0%	60%	23%

Question asked: ‘Who do you believe has primary responsibility for headteacher appointment and headteacher dismissal?’ Options provided included *School, Regional Administration, Provincial Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other*. All categories ticked by respondents are reported per country. Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

Survey data showed that schools played virtually no part in choosing their headteachers across the three Central Asian countries. Almost no schools reported being involved in appointing their own heads. A headteacher’s post continues to be an administrative position, to which *Raion* Education Administration in 94% of cases in Kyrgyzstan and 90% of cases in Tajikistan appoint people from inside the education system. Schools in Uzbekistan reported two levels of education administration to be in charge of headteacher appointment: 50 percent named the *raion* education administrations and 41 percent of schools named the Ministry of Public Education. A similar pattern of headteacher dismissal emerges across the three countries that is not different from the pattern of headteacher appointment. Consequently the patterns of headteacher appointment/dismissal are the same in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan; Uzbekistan appeared to be different. Here the headteacher appointment/dismissal is under the control of both an oversight Ministry and its regional unit.

Interview Analysis

In order to give further background to the survey results, I explored the career paths of school teachers aiming at school headship. It was also relevant to investigate the requirements for a successful candidate under the conditions of transformation in the countries concerned. In the course of interviews conducted with headteachers, diverse paths to headship emerged. The diversity was observed within the countries rather than between them:

They called it staff rotation.... I was rotated to this school 20 years ago. I remember it like yesterday, 1992, the most difficult year... Then NN [names the person] was the head of our Gorod [education] administration. He invited me to his office and said that they trusted me with this school. I did not want it, I cried in his office, so I remember. He would say: 'Don't cry, 'dochenka' ['daughter', an informal address of an older person to a younger woman in Central Asia], you can do it.' (Tajik headteacher).

I became a head by chance. Now I am grateful to the previous head who had noticed me, who was leaving and before she left, she asked me: 'Would you please try?' So I tried, and now I cannot imagine myself without this job. I worry, when I retire, what shall I do? (Tajik headteacher)

'To be or not to be' is not the question that bothers a head. I am a soldier – I was put in here and I can be dismissed...or I can stay in my current job: it does not depend on me really (Kyrgyz headteacher).

And, finally, in Uzbekistan:

I was chosen and nominated as a head by raion administration.... Now my RaionO [raion education administration] is 'guarding' me (Uzbek headteacher).

I was picked and taught that by the previous head (Uzbek headteacher).

4.9. School Management Structure and Parents' Association

Survey Analysis

A mixed picture emerges over the locus of decision-making power in relation to schools' structural autonomy. Christensen (1999 cited in Laking 2004, p. 18) suggested that either an advisory or a management board, inserted between an agency and the central ministry, might help shield an agency from frequent central government interference and increase its commitment to local needs. In education this board may well be the board of governors (or trustees). If this body of school management can be made redundant by the ministry, or rather consists of the representatives or members of education administrations, then the school may not be perceived to be shielded from frequent interventions of the ministry, and, hence, school autonomy in structural dimension is low. Where these advisory or management boards become involved in the school organisational structure, they may enhance the extent of school autonomy. In the same vein, the legitimisation of parents' participation through including parents in the school management structure rather as an independent legal entity might have a positive effect on the extent of school autonomy.

Across the three countries the distribution of power is perceived to rest between a school and government administrations. Advisory/management boards have not been recorded as a general practice yet. Thus, primary responsibility for the setting (and altering if required) of school management structure in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan seems to rest with schools rather than with the governmental administrations - 55% of heads, who selected schools vs. 37% who chose state structures in Tajikistan and 53% - schools and 43% - governmental structures in Kyrgyzstan. In Uzbekistan, however, the majority of heads

surveyed (64%) believed that the Ministry of Education and its administrative units had the main part in deciding what a school management structure should be.

Table 4.9 Locus of Primary Responsibility for Setting School Structures (by number and percentage of schools)

		Kyrgyzstan		Tajikistan		Uzbekistan	
		School	Government (all units)	School	Government (all units)	School	Government (all units)
School Structure	N	27	22	27	44	5	14
	%	53%	43%	55%	37%	23%	64%

Question asked: ‘*who do you believe has primary responsibility for setting a school structure?*’ Options provided included *School, Regional Administration, Provincial Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other*. Categories reported are ‘Schools’ and ‘Government’ where ‘MoE’, ‘Raion Administration’, ‘Oblast Administration’ were summed.

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

Parental participation in school management plays an important part. There are cases when parental participation gets legitimacy and becomes a part of the school structure (Gunnarsson et al, 2009, p.27). However, this appeared not to be the case in the three countries concerned. The survey analysis indicated that in Tajikistan 57 per cent of schools surveyed had such parents’ bodies established as legally self-contained entities, while in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan only about a quarter of schools could claim the same (29% and 23% respectively). The low level of representation by parents’ agencies in the educational field of these two countries was likely to contribute to a generally low level of school autonomy in these states. Meanwhile, much higher level of parental involvement in schools (*e.g.* based on the number of parents’ legal entities registered) might well contribute to a higher level of autonomy in Tajik schools, in particular in the Financial Resource Management Autonomy and Fundraising Autonomy (see Chapter 5.)

Table 4.10 Proportion of Schools with/without Parents' Legal Entity (by number and percentage of schools), 2011

		Kyrgyzstan		Tajikistan		Uzbekistan	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Registered Parents Body at School	N	15	29	28	17	5	13
	%	29%	57%	57%	35%	23%	64%

Question asked: 'Is there a parents' body at your school registered as a legal entity?' Options provided 'Yes' and 'No'.

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

4.10. The Role of a Headteacher

According to the McKinsey Report (2007) on the best education systems in the world, change administered by the school leadership team and aimed at using the entire teaching staff is more beneficial than efforts aimed at building up a single leader. A head is expected to change her role from a solo administrator and transmitter of state policies, common under a command economy, to a leader and a team-player appraised under quasi-market conditions.

According to legislation adopted in the three countries a headteacher continues, as in Soviet times, to be primarily responsible for failures and successes of school management and administration. The school head is the first person to be praised or punished according to the results of monitoring and attainment tests. The issues whether there are external bodies authorised to assess and monitor schools and whether the heads can be sanctioned by the oversight ministry are the subjects of Autonomy from Intervention (see Chapter 7). Here, I investigate whether the style of school heads' management has been 'locked-in' or undergone changes. I argue that systems where headteachers are inclined to rely on other agencies *e.g.* staff and parents (distributive leadership) are more likely to exercise

increased school autonomy, than those where heads continue to act as the sole ‘principals in charge’ in their educational establishments. A ‘self-relying’ management would reflect the legacy of the Soviet education management when heads’ responsibilities, though significant, differed little from those of an administrator (Tomiak, 1980).

Survey Analysis

In order to understand the dimension of Structural Autonomy one needs to find out who a headteacher in Central Asia now relies on in her daily professional activities. This may well indicate whether there are any actors (if not an advisory/management body included in the school organisational structure) who the headteacher may be willing to rely on, and, hence share responsibility for the decisions made. The results are presented in Figure 4.2. The right hand column indicates that in day-to-day activities headteachers in Uzbekistan prefer to rely on themselves, personal experience and judgment, without involving others. The practice seen here seems to be entrenched, as observers in the Soviet period claimed that school heads practised an individualistic approach to school administration (Klein 1980). Remarkably, in Tajikistan, where the mean of Structural Autonomy is the highest across the three countries, the largest proportion of heads reported that they relied on parents.

Figure 4.2 shows that the majority of headteachers surveyed in Kyrgyzstan and 83 per cent of heads in Tajikistan report relying in their daily activities on a wide range of actors, including pedagogical staff of their school, education administrations and parents. This might well indicate that decentralization policies toward distributive leadership in the institutional field of schools have gradually shifted the heads’ behaviour toward greater openness and cooperation in school management.

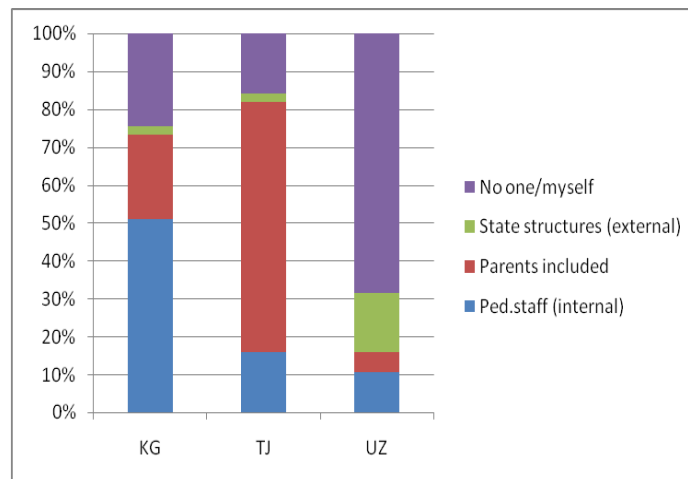


Figure 4.2 Categories of agency headteachers rely on in their professional activity (as percentage of headteachers)

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

A headteacher in Tajikistan summarises well the argument about the importance of headship transformation through the other agencies in the educational field:

Today everything is complicated and being a head in particular. There are teachers in my schools who are more experienced, better teachers. ... I consult with my experienced teachers, and with parents too. I can ask them directly whether or not I have done the right thing. There are people to help me. Many thanks to teachers and parents of my school (Tajik headteacher).

4.11. Index of Structural Autonomy

Following the common pattern used in this study, I computed the index for Structural Autonomy for each country concerned based on the quantitative survey data. Although the index proposed here is an approximation, it contributes to the comparative analysis of patterns of school autonomy among the Central Asian countries concerned and suggests

whether there is ‘space’ available for further reforms in educational institutions towards greater autonomy.

Table 4.11 Index of Structural Autonomy

Country name	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Kyrgyzstan	.20	51	.18	.025
Tajikistan	.22	48	.19	.027
Uzbekistan	.09	22	.15	.032

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

On average Tajikistan appears to be the most shielded from state intervention in the three countries studied, and, hence, apparently enjoyed the most Structural Autonomy ($M=0.22$; $SE=.027$), followed by Kyrgyzstan ($M=0.2$; $SE=.025$) and Uzbekistan ($M=0.09$; $SE=.032$). Uzbek schools appear to be least shielded from central governmental interference in the exercise of competencies delegated to them. Tajikistan has the highest mean score on the Structural Autonomy index. However, the rather low mean values in the Structural Autonomy index suggest that the adjustments in the structural design do not yet justify speaking of a system shift in the post-Soviet countries of Central Asia. Nevertheless, keeping Tajikistan as a reference country, the difference in Structural Autonomy values in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan appears to be insignificant ($p>.05$), whereas the difference in means between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan appears to be statistically significant ($sig.=.005$) (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.12 T-test for Equality of Means of Structural Autonomy Index

		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
TJ vs.UZ	Equal variances	2.89	68.00	.005	0.13	0.04
	Equal variances not	3.12	49.40	.003	0.13	0.04
TJ vs.KG	Equal variances	0.71	97.00	.48	0.03	0.04
	Equal variances not	0.71	95.98	.48	0.03	0.04
UZ vs.KG	Equal variances	-2.41	71.00	.02	-0.1	0.04
	Equal variances not	-2.57	46.54	.01	-0.1	0.04

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

4.12. Conclusions

As a result of adjustments made over the last two decades to both human resource and financial resource management, the specific field of school structural autonomy must have changed as well. Margaret Archer described the interdependence of component parts within a complex system as follows:

In complex societies [systems] the number of cross-cutting interdependencies between parts is so high, any change introduced in one element will have repercussions for others. These will be greater the lower the autonomy between parts. This is when equilibrating processes in one area create disequilibria in others and thus precipitating a new potential for change (1979, p 29).

Similarities in societal and institutional environments in the countries concerned (see Chapter 1) led to similar reforms being introduced (Cibulka 1996) in the dimension of human resource management across the three Central Asian cases. In fact the analysis of the legislative base and the survey showed that many operational managerial responsibilities related to human resources at school level, *e.g.* hiring teachers, to evaluating teacher's performance and promoting a teacher - have been delegated to schools across the three countries. Meanwhile, strategic managerial tasks, such as setting

teacher's salaries, identifying the method of teachers' appointment and evaluation, continue to be under the control of an oversight ministry and its regional administrations. This was the common trend observed in all three countries concerned.

Nevertheless, there were differences in patterns observed as well. Thus, in Kyrgyzstan the heads surveyed/interviewed complained about being "not able" and "having the lack of opportunity" to reward outperforming teachers. In contrast, heads in Tajikistan emphasised their right to pay bonuses as an important aspect of their leadership. This is likely to be related to the right of schools in Tajikistan in the allocation of school budgets (see Chapter 5). Similarly headteachers in Uzbekistan enjoyed the possibility of having a reserve of funds in a so-called 'Director's Fund' that was designed and introduced through legislation to reward teachers.

Furthermore, the perceptions of headteachers surveyed and interviewed over the decision-making authority in their schools in human resource management, place Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (with their indices of Human Resource Management Autonomy ~ 0.5) in the middle and Tajikistan ($M \sim 0.3$) below the middle of the scale in this study. It is important to mention here that the numerical expression of Human Resource Management Autonomy is an indicative figure, which serves as an approximation for ranking the level of school autonomy in the countries concerned. along the human resource management dimension¹⁶. Graphically countries' ranking is depicted in Figure 4.3.

¹⁶ The same approach should be applied for the interpretation of the indices of school autonomy along the other dimensions.

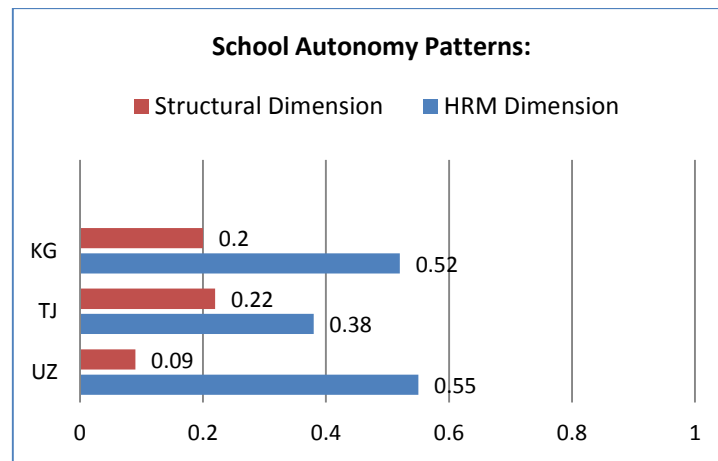


Figure 4.3 Human Resource Management Autonomy and Structural Autonomy

Source: the Headteachers' Surey 2011.

However, the study of Structural Autonomy, the dimension through which governments may control a school's exercise of power in other dimensions and human resource management in particular, shows that schools across the three countries are hardly shielded from government intervention. This finding correlates with the general characteristics of NPM. Osborne & Gaebler provided a concise summary of NPM in their 1992 work 'Reinventing Government' that the role of government was "to steer, not to row"; to ensure a course was maintained rather than worry about powering the boat (Osborne & Gaebler 1992, p. 32). Thus, the common pattern observed in legislative decrees and school practices was that school headship continues to be a post filled by administrative nomination. Neither school teachers nor parents appear to have any say in headteacher selection. This may well be interpreted that in order to succeed in career advancement a teacher needs to conform with state requirements prior to meeting parents' expectations and/or students' educational needs.

Moreover, the survey showed that out of the 122 schools sampled in three countries, 49 schools (51 per cent of the responded to this question) do not have any parents' body

registered as a legal entity at the school. This may well impose structural constraints on the parents' ability to form "advocate coalitions" for/against any school reforms introduced.

Finally, school organisational structures are predetermined by the oversight ministries across three countries concerned. There is a legislative framework in each country that prescribes the number of staff allowed (according to the number of class sets in a school) as well as what hierarchical structure is to be implemented. Therefore, the index school autonomy in the structural dimension of three countries studied ranges from 0.1 to 0.2 and, hence, places all three countries close to '0' (minimal/no autonomy) (Fig. 4.3).

Chapter 5 | The Dimensions of School Autonomy: Financial Resource Management Autonomy and Fundraising Autonomy

It [education] is a common good that is regulated to a bigger or lesser extent
in all countries across the world, recognizing that education systems have
nowhere literally been privatized.

(Dale, 1997, p. 273)

Six organisational autonomy dimensions enable the main research question to be explored: to what extent have three former Soviet countries in Central Asia – Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – decentralised decision-making powers from central government to schools? Furthermore, these six dimensions – suggested by Verhoest *et al.* (2004) – facilitate thematic comparisons since it can be seen how much change along one dimension is mirrored (or not) along another.

Evidence provided in the previous chapter showed that school autonomy domains are likely to have developed at different paces. Across the three countries a relatively low degree of *structural autonomy* appeared to have emerged compared to a higher degree of *human resource management autonomy*. Hence, the latter may have been changing at a more rapid pace, while the former was more incremental. Furthermore, the *structural dimension* appeared to be relatively unchanging, since its practices proved persistent, and resembled ones adopted in Soviet times, while *human resource management autonomy* appeared to have been more amenable to change. But on average both dimensions shifted only to a rather low extent.

Evidence presented in Chapter 4 supports the premises of institutional theory that postulates the persistence of institutional settings (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991), particularly in education (Cibulka, 1996). Moreover, elements of institutional arrangements established under the Soviet regime (*e.g.* state-run teacher in-service training) remain entrenched and continue to impact on institutional developments in the Central Asian states. Thus, many ‘new’ practices adopted in educational settings appear to be reinforced by more structural elements of the institutional field, and, hence, demonstrate a form of path-dependency. More detailed explanations of the findings are provided in the final chapter, Chapter 9.

The objectives of this empirical chapter are to explore the current degrees of decision-making autonomy enjoyed by Central Asian schools in two further dimensions, Financial Resource Management Autonomy and Fundraising Autonomy. A detailed account of dimensions of school autonomy adapted from the framework by Verhoest *et al.* (2004) is provided in Chapter 2. Financial Resource Management Autonomy covers decision-making competences delegated from the centre to schools in managing financial inputs, and includes four items: (i) budget formulation; (ii) budget allocation, including carrying out virements (transfer of funds) across budget lines and arranging for savings to be carried over across academic years; (iii) setting tariffs for ancillary services provided, and (iv) allocation of private funds raised by the school.

Meanwhile, Fundraising Autonomy concerns whether or not any proportion of the school budget is accounted for by private funds. It is based on the sole criterion of whether the agency depends on governmental funding only, or also can count in part on its own revenues (Verhoest *et al.* 2004, p. 106) (see Chapter 2 for a more detailed account of the analytical framework and the methods applied).

This chapter has three parts: the first two sections explore school autonomy along two dimensions identified above, and the final section concludes by summarising the findings and their explanations. As indicated in the previous chapter, analysis draws on a survey of 122 schools in the region, 46 additional interviews with headteachers and central and local actors in the field of education, statistical data and policy documents adopted in the three former Soviet countries. Accounts about levels of school decision-making power in particular dimensions in each country are summarised by constructing an index of school autonomy for each dimension. Numerical indices reflect the overall findings on the level of school autonomy in each country, and thereby strengthen the study's comparative component.

5.1. The Context for Education Budgeting Reforms from 1991 Onwards

Over seventy years of Soviet rule, primary and secondary education was provided free to all citizens of the Central Asian republics in line with Article 45 of the Constitution of the USSR (Moscow, 1983, p. 16). Similarly, constitutions and national education laws contain references to free education as a citizen's right. For example, Article 45 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic states, firstly, that "everybody has a right to education"; and, secondly, that everybody has a right to receive primary and secondary comprehensive education free in state-owned educational establishments. Very similar statements are made in the Constitutions of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Thus, the legacy of the Soviet state has been preserved in the legislative institutions of the newly emerged states of Central Asia.

However, with the transition from Soviet rule to independence, the meaning of 'free' education has changed. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, on average, education

budgets throughout the former Soviet states shrank dramatically from 1991 to the end of the century. The states of Central Asia in particular suffered a dramatic drop in GDP that was “greater than the cumulative decline of production in the United States during the great Depression” (Mertaugh, 2004, p. 4). Thus, in Tajikistan, the worst affected country, real GDP fell by over half, in Kyrgyzstan by over the third, and in Uzbekistan, the least affected by falling output, real GDP fell by over 18 per cent in the five years following independence (*ibid.*). With wages being the highest cost outlay, this meant that buildings, textbooks, learning materials and utilities typically were not provided by the national governments of the three states until quite recently (De Young, 2006, p. 502).

But the fall of educational expenditure was not the only drastic problem with which the newly emerged independent states had to cope. When education reforms came to be launched, the governments of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan faced the collapse of the communist ideology that had previously been rigorously circulated to the national ministries from Moscow (Walder, 1994). This meant that a new context needed to emerge for the exercise of state institutional power (*ibid.*, p. 299). The development of new institutions coupled with moves toward some form of political pluralism intensified national struggles in the region (Brubaker, 1994, p. 47), and resulted in a civil war in Tajikistan (1992-97). However, “the country managed to recover and build a viable state in a relatively short time” (Matveeva, 2009, p.3). Kyrgyzstan experienced two revolutions over the course of the last two decades, and a succession of four presidents.

The impact of these problems on education in the three Central Asian countries meant that many public schools were unable to make ends meet with the funds received from government, and as a result all actors in the educational field were badly demoralised, while retaining a deep-rooted belief that education was the sole responsibility of the state

(Bray and Borevskaya, 2001, p. 354). This is likely to explain one of the most notable features of political and budgetary decentralisation in education in the three countries, emphasised in the writings of international consultants, namely the quicker pace of *budgetary reforms* (Bird *et al.*, 1994, Klugman, 1999).

The following section of this chapter explores what financial reforms were undertaken in education, and whether these reforms contributed to empowering schools' decision-making and autonomy.

Principles and Objectives of Financial Reforms

Documentary analysis shows that similar ideas guided education budgeting reforms throughout the states studied. Thus, all three prioritised concentrating resources on basic education (Bird *et al.*, 1994, Klugman, 1999). To that end, governments had two principles: (i) attracting additional resources; and (ii) reallocating existing resources (see Figure 5.1).

The former, attraction of additional resources, was implemented through pursuit of extra-budgetary funds from domestic and foreign sources. Domestic resources included a new educational tax (introduced in the case of Uzbekistan), local budget funds used for educational purposes (*e.g.* in Kyrgyzstan responsibility for school building maintenance and utilities costs was delegated to municipalities and village self-management administrations, *ayil-okmotuu*), households' funds and contributions of the wider community (*e.g.* sponsorship and donations from businesses and individuals). The last two sources of income were particularly relied on across all three countries.

External resources came in the form of aid money from international agencies, which also meant an inflow of foreign currency. Thus, during the period 1998-2009 the Asian Development Bank invested \$47 million (US) in education sector development in Kyrgyzstan, \$183.5 million in Uzbekistan, and \$29 million in Tajikistan; the World Bank provided loans for education reforms of \$10 million in Kyrgyzstan, \$40 million in Uzbekistan, and \$29 million in Tajikistan (Silova, Steiner-Khamsi, 2008, pp. 22-23).

Meanwhile, the reallocation of existing resources – the second major method of focusing funding on basic education in all three states – implied a number of institutional changes, such as changes to budget formulation (the introduction of per capita formulas), competences delegated to schools in relation to virements (transfers of funds) across budget lines and savings carried over, as well as staffing responsibilities delegated (see Chapter 4). These reforms, introduced in educational institutions throughout the three states, altered the framework of the countries' educational culture; and so they were perceived as ones with a profound impact on school practices.

Later in this chapter I shall study the degree of change (if any) introduced in each country through the reforms depicted above.

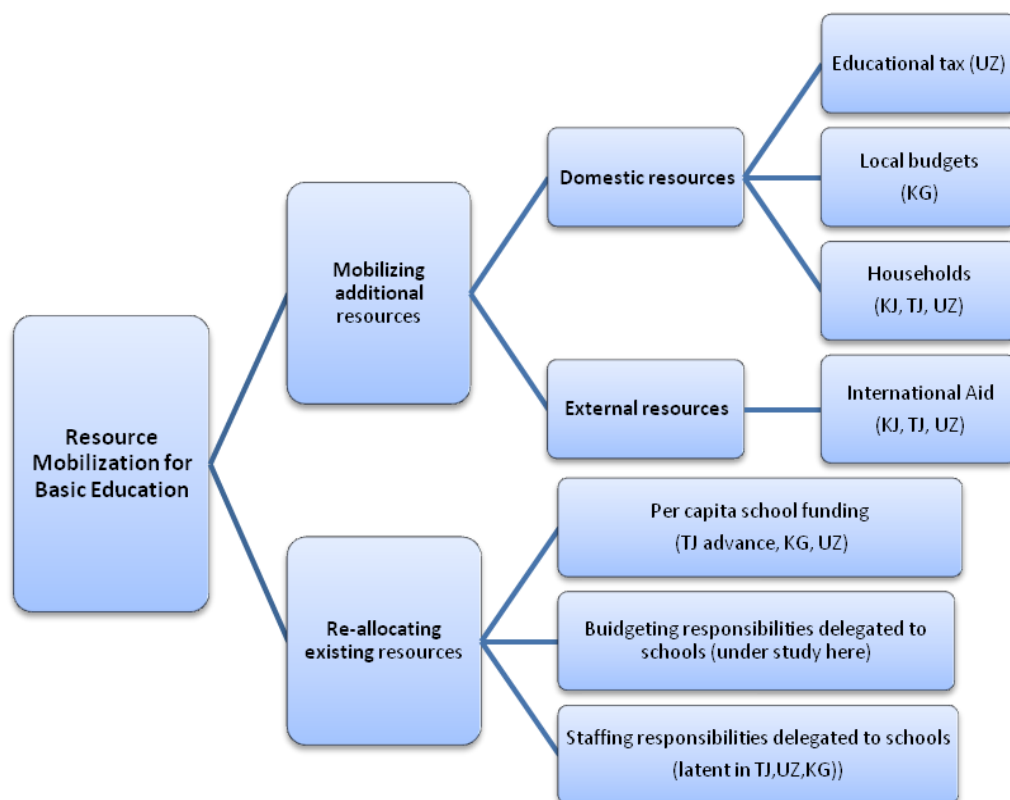


Figure 5.1 Reform Processes in the Education Systems of the Three Countries

Source: documentary analysis, the Headteachers's Survey, interviews, 2011

5.2. Financial Resource Management Autonomy

The items included in Financial Resource Management (see Table 5.1) cover the main competencies a public agency might take decisions about along this specific dimension (*cf.* Verhoest *et al.* 2004, OECD 2012, Eurydice 2007).

Table 5.1 Items Included in Financial Resource Management Autonomy

Financial Resource Management Autonomy
▪ budget formulation; ▪ budget allocation ▪ setting tariffs for ancillary services provided; ▪ allocation of private funds raised by school

Source: Adopted from Verhoest *et al.* 2004.

5.3. Budget Formulation and Budget Allocation

Tajikistan

In response to falling central revenues following the civil war, and in order to reduce its budgetary burdens, the Tajik government under the leadership of the current President Imanaly Rakhmonov introduced legislation at the end of the 1990s to delegate financial responsibilities away from central government to schools and local authorities.

In 2010 Tajikistan announced that the ‘delegated budgets’ approach had been applied to all schools in the republic (‘Report On Transition of Compulsory Educational Establishments to the New Methods of Funding’ (Dushanbe, 2010)). This approach suggests that schools’ budgets were released as lump sums for school-based management, which must cover all operational expenses apart from capital construction and teachers’ in-service training. Tajik schools were authorised to divide these lump sums along budget lines according to minimum per capita norms and coefficients approved by the Ministry of Finance (*ibid.*). In other words, Tajik schools were put in charge of managing their operational budgets within guidelines set by local educational and financial administrations.

Survey Analysis

The government’s declared intent was tested across 49 Tajik public schools surveyed in 2011. Survey results showed that 33 per cent of heads (31 schools) in the sample perceived that in 2000 they had had ‘no autonomy’ regarding allocating and managing their own budgets, with only 6 per cent (3 schools) claiming that they had had ‘full autonomy’. When the same sample of headteachers was requested to report what the

status of the school's decision-making autonomy in relation to its budget was in 2011, 'no autonomy' was reported by 12 per cent (6 schools), and 'full autonomy' by 63 per cent of respondents (31 schools) (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Headteachers' Perception of School Autonomy in Budget Allocation and Management in 2000 and 2011 (by number and percentage of schools)

		Kyrgyzstan		Tajikistan		Uzbekistan	
		2000	2011	2000	2011	2000	2011
No Autonomy	N	29	14	31	6	14	3
	%	57%	27.5%	63%	12%	64%	14%
Limited Autonomy	N	17	33	15	12	4	18
	%	33%	65%	31%	24.5%	18%	82%
Full Autonomy	N	4	4	3	31	4	0
	%	8%	8%	6%	63%	18%	0%

Question asked: 'How far was/is your school autonomous in making decision about school budgets?'

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

Furthermore, when asked whether 'your school is in charge of formulating its budget', 63 per cent of responses were positive (31 schools). Moreover, 92 per cent of headteachers (45 schools) reported that they were fully in charge of school budget allocation (including virements and savings carried over) (see Table 5.3). This was the highest indicator of school autonomy registered within this survey across the three countries and the six dimensions studied.

Table 5.3 Schools with Primary Responsibility for Budgeting in Three Countries (by number and percentage of schools)

		Kyrgyzstan		Tajikistan			Uzbekistan		
		Schools	Other	Schools	MOE	Other	Schools	Local Gov.	Other
Budget Formulation	N	28	10	31	6	6	8	0	5
	%	55	20	63	12	12	36	0	23
Budget Allocation	N	33	10	45	2		14	4	
	%	65	20	92	4		64	18	

Question asked: ‘Who do you believe has primary responsibility for budget formulation and budget allocation?’ Options provided included School, Raion Education Administration, Oblast Education Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other. ‘Tick one’ was requested.

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

Interview Analysis

Survey findings on the level of school autonomy in Financial Resource Management were triangulated with semi-structured interviews conducted with educators in the region. Headteachers interviewed in Tajikistan sounded particularly empowered by the legal authority to manage their operational budgets.

I remember we were taught at one seminar that any reform comes with pluses and minuses. School autonomy in financial management has no minuses, I think, 85-95% of the time there are only pluses. The minuses lie only in finding a good accountant and turning a head into a manager (Tajik headteacher).

Moreover, the heads stated that, having been granted decision-making autonomy related to school budget allocation, schools “finally started to live better”; one head explained:

In the past we could not buy furniture we wanted to buy, or equipment we needed. Now we can set an amount for furniture purchase, for instance, and the furniture we like; we decide how much to spend on equipment or any other stuff we need at our school. We have become much more independent, and that is a big plus in our work (Tajik headteacher).

In regard to budget formulation too, the role of schools was reported as increased:

At the end of one academic year we formulate a budget for the next. RaiFin [raion division of the Ministry of Finance] usually supports some items and cuts off others. I have been boiling in this pot for a while, and I know where to plan more spending and where to be modest. Of course, we would like RaiFin¹⁷ to approve more sums requested (Tajik headteacher).

This quotation indicates that although the school's role in budget formulation has increased, still the principal decision to approve or not the estimated amounts remains with the regional administrations of the Ministry of Finance. It is important to notice here that neither the Ministry of Education nor its regional units was mentioned by headteachers in discussing school budget formulation and execution. It is the Ministry of Finance that matters.

External validation of the findings presented above was found in the report on the implementation of the regional education development project, the Participation Education and Knowledge Strengthening (PEAKS), implemented in 2002-07 in four

¹⁷ This is the abbreviation for *raion* division of the Ministry of Finance in Tajikistan (same in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan); see Figure 5.2.

post-Soviet countries of Central Asia, including the three studied here. One headteacher from Tajikistan stated that, after the introduction of devolved budgets, “My school has got the opportunity and ability to make repairs and purchase much needed supplies.” Another head noted, “The transition to per capita financing improved the financial situation of the school, and similarly [improved] the teaching and educational process” (Yarkova and Giles, 2010, p. 147).

Evidence from Kyrgyzstan

In 1999, Kyrgyzstan became one of the first former Soviet states to try to introduce a serious reform of education finance: per capita financing of education was organised through *oblast* educational administrations but the experiment was never scaled up across the country (Howse, Wicks & Stackpole, 1999). New attempts were launched within the PEAKS project, funded by USAID and implemented by a consortium of international NGOs (Yarkova & Giles, 2010). Later, this new method of school funding was supported by the World Bank’s \$15 million Rural Education Project (2005-11). Within that project, the new method of per capita education funding was introduced to schools in two *oblasts* in Kyrgyzstan: Issyk-Kul and Talas (Hou, 2011). Some of these schools were included in the sample for the present research. However, the reform of school budget formation and management started thirteen years ago, but has eventually amounted to almost nothing. Monitoring of schools transferred to the new methods of financing under the PEAKS project revealed that per capita funding and school-based budgets as piloted were not sustainable, and so schools went back to centralised budgeting through their municipality as soon as the project funds were exhausted (Interview with a consultant on the PEAKS project, Kyrgyzstan).

Survey Analysis

Analysis of a survey returned by 51 Kyrgyz schools showed that in 2011 it was still common for a headteacher to be unable to manage his/her own budget. In 2000 57 per cent of heads (29 schools) in the sample perceived that they had had ‘no autonomy’ in relation to budget allocation and management, with only 8 per cent (4 schools) claiming that they had had ‘full autonomy’. When the same group reported what they perceived the status of their schools’ budgetary decision-making was in 2011, ‘no autonomy’ was reported by 27.5 per cent (14 schools), and ‘full autonomy’ by just 8 per cent of respondents (4 schools) (see Table 5.2).

Nonetheless, the answers provided to the question, whether ‘your school is in charge of formulating its budget’ were positive in 55 per cent of responses (28 schools). Furthermore, 65 per cent of headteachers (33 schools) reported that they were in charge of school budget allocation (including virements and savings carried over) (see Table 5.3).

Interview Analysis

Semi-structured interviews conducted with educators during a field trip to Kyrgyzstan in 2011 helped to establish that decisions about purchasing goods and services for schools are at present made by municipalities or village administrations. Furthermore, teachers’ salaries were paid centrally through these administrative units, and building maintenance is provided and paid for by the municipality. One headteacher interviewed in Kyrgyzstan complained:

As far back as I remember, schools have lacked access to real money. Since Soviet times, it is believed that either the school or its headmaster will steal money, or at least spend improperly. Why has the same question never been asked about the Ministry? Is there no one there who may steal (Kyrgyz headteacher)?

However, interviews with those school directors who were involved in pilot projects on per capita funding and budget devolution to the school level sounded pessimistic and blamed the government - although the initiative was launched, it seemed that neither policy adjustments were made nor lessons were learnt:

I, for one, cannot see where per capita funding will take us. A good start was made. We began to provide additional educational services, and to raise money, and then what? Next year I find that MinFin [Ministry of Finance] has cut my budget because we raise enough money of our own! How is that? We implemented the terms of our contract, the government did not, as usual (Kyrgyz headteacher).

The issue of autonomy and capacity (see Chapter 2) was frequently raised by respondents. It seemed evident that schools' capacities including teaching staff capacity and financial resources available were quite limited. Hence, the delegation of competencies related to school finance seemed to be as a 'wrong' extent of autonomy (see Fukuyama 2013) imposed over schools. Thus, one of the respondents in Kyrgyzstan argued:

I do not like per capita funding. The financial part scares me. Go there, do this, do that, and with what money, how to spend it. To have that system, there should be well trained staff in place, I should be trained accordingly,

and parents prepared, I think. Also, there should be more money: Why have autonomy if a school has no money to spend? (Kyrgyz headteacher).

Several interviewees in Kyrgyzstan referred to specific preconditions for effective delegation of budgetary competences to schools. Adequate funding by far outweighed all other factors mentioned (*e.g.* supportive parents, trained staff). This was a common argument made by the respondents across the three countries.

Evidence from Uzbekistan

As in Kyrgyzstan, the scheme of per capita funding has been piloted at a number of schools in Uzbekistan. There were no reports published on how far (if at all) the new method of school budget calculation had been scaled up over other schools in the country. The report of the PEAKS projects does not provide much information on the case of Uzbekistan either. That is, in 2005, right in the middle of the PEAKS project implementation period, the Uzbek government terminated the Memorandum of Understanding with the USAID contractors and thus ended the educational initiative. Many international NGOs were closed (*e.g.* the Soros Foundation) and their bank accounts frozen. The Country Director of the Soros Foundation in Uzbekistan sought asylum in the UK (information from discussions with Soros Foundation employees in their London office).

A former educational official, who agreed to give me an interview that his voice could not be recorded, commented on educational fiscal reforms in Uzbekistan as follows:

In fact, school directors are now wholly responsible for financial management of their schools – but only on paper: the responsibility delegated was not married to empowering the head teacher... In order to buy a pack of paper a head should provide the raion Treasury Unit with a form filled in and quotes given by three or four different companies. In Tashkent it is probably easy, but in rural areas where there is only one supplier it must be a nightmare. The idea of per capita finance was linked to decentralisation, yet in the case of Uzbekistan, to my mind, centralisation was reinforced (An interview with an Uzbek official).

His remarks may be taken to mean that, as in Kyrgyzstan, the delegation of authority to schools in allocating operational budgets has neither been scaled up nationally, nor authorised centrally.

Survey Analysis

It was possible to triangulate the latter with the statements of 22 headteachers from schools located in urban and suburban areas in Uzbekistan. Thus, 14 school heads in the sample perceived that in 2000 they had had ‘no autonomy’ in relation to the allocation of the school budget, with 4 claiming that they had had ‘full autonomy’. When the same headteachers reported on the status of schools’ decision-making autonomy in relation to school budgets in 2011, ‘no autonomy’ was reported by 3 schools and ‘full autonomy’ by none. Remarkably 82 per cent of respondents (18 school heads) claimed ‘limited autonomy’ along the budgetary dimension. This is the principal difference in the pattern observed in Uzbekistan from the ones recorded in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (see Table 5.2).

Interview Analysis

It was interesting to investigate what Uzbek headteachers implied by ‘limited autonomy’. Through interviews it was found that there was a big gap between formal autonomy and actual autonomy that schools could exercise:

Here [in school budget responsibilities] everything is very complicated. May seem that schools are given autonomy. We have our accounts, but can we really manage our money? We cannot. Everything should go through the treasury [regional department of the Ministry of Finance]. Transferring funds from one budget item to another is not possible. I had some savings on teachers’ salaries, but overused electricity – the winter was very cold; so, I was not allowed to use that saving to pay the electricity bill (Uzbek headteacher).

Furthermore:

Despite a decree adopted about school autonomy, school status as a legal entity, and a bank account for each school – everything is very regulated. For instance, I have got a director’s fund with some money in it, but cannot spend it on anything apart from teacher bonuses. (Uzbek headteacher).

Thus a quite unique autonomy type in financial resources management has been identified in Uzbek public schooling. This could be labelled ‘*autonomy of dependence*’, this is when decision-making competences are delegated to schools but their exercise is possible only within such a narrow corridor specified by government regulations that the autonomy turns into another form of dependency and centralisation.

However, the answers given to the question, whether ‘your school is in charge of formulating its budget’ were positive in 36 per cent of responses (8 schools), and 64 per cent of headteachers (14 schools out of 22) reported that they were in charge of school budget allocation (see Table 5.3).

Summary

Thus, Tajikistan is clearly ahead of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, with the highest level of school autonomy in both budget allocation and formulation (Table 5.2. highlighted areas). Per capita funding and budget management competences delegated to schools broke up the persistence of education budgeting institutions and appeared in principle to be a profound shift in this dimension toward more decentralisation. Here I continue discussing public funds management in educational institutions of the three countries by exploring the funding flows in their education systems.

Headteachers across three countries frequently ticked ‘Other’ option responding to the question about where the primary responsibility for budgeting processes lay. Thus, ‘Other’ appeared to be the second largest category with significant decision-making power in budget formulation and allocation, according to the headteachers’ (see Table 5.3). The section aims to explore what other actors were involved in school budget formulation and allocation apart from the Ministry of Education, local educational administrations and schools.

5.4. Funds Flow in Basic Education

The course taken by education budgeting processes in the pre-1991 period shows that under the centralised regime the locus of decision-making power over school budgets lay

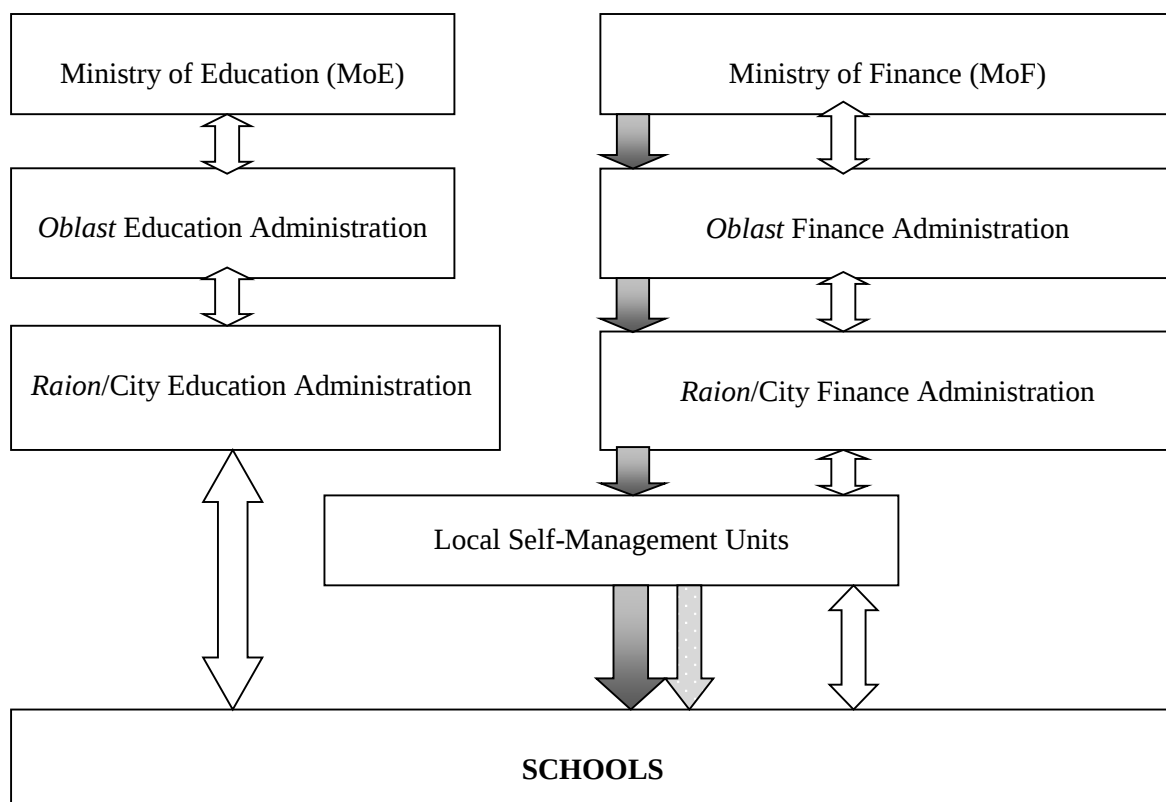
with the Ministry of Education (MoE), while served as the liaison between the centre in Moscow and schools in the national republics. Based on the premises of the neo-institutional theory, it might be expected that school budgeting procedures in the former Soviet countries would have been altered to a degree that the nation Ministry of Education (instead of an All Union Ministry of Education in Moscow) would be a focal point for making decisions about school budget formulation and execution. Yet such an expectation appeared inconsistent with evidence from Kyrgyzstan. This is how the Deputy Minister commented on the statement in the Kyrgyz Strategy for Education Development 2010-15 that argued that Kyrgyz education nowadays had ‘*maximum regulation and minimum accountability*’ and that the Ministry aimed to introduce ‘*minimum regulation and maximum accountability*’ (MOE KG 2010, p.2):

We still adore slogans: this one sounds good but has nothing to do with reality. There is no ‘maximum regulation’ today. To purchase coal or lunches for schools, for instance, tenders are organised by aiyl okmoty [village self-management units]. They, of course, distribute contracts among their relatives. Headteachers come to the Ministry, complaining that they receive stones and dust instead of coal. We simply gesture, we have no means to help (Interview with a Deputy Minister in Kyrgyzstan).

In order to investigate why and how the ministries, *i.e.* the central governments appeared to be deprived of regulation means, the study of funding flows within the education systems of the countries concerned was conducted. The main features of funding flows in education appeared to be common for all three countries concerned.

Feature one was that the national Ministry of Education played no part in formulating school budgets at either national, *oblast* or *raion* level. Feature two, devolved administrations of the Ministry of Education did not monitor school spending. Fiscal data collection was performed by the appropriate administrations of the *raion* and *oblast* levels, where each level would merely summarise the reports it received before forwarding them to the higher authority. Feature three, the aggregated data were accumulated at the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Education might have only a vague idea about an overall money flow in education system. The Ministry of Education annually produced statistical reports with limited content on statistics and no content on finance. Feature four, individual school data remained at the *raion* level, *i.e.* physically remote from the Ministry, and were available in hard copy only. Thus, the Ministry of Education¹⁸ in each country appeared to have little control – if any – over financial flows, and limited access to relevant data (Figure 5.2).

¹⁸ The budgetary responsibilities of the national Ministries of Education were limited to the schools it directly managed, usually meaning boarding schools and schools for children with special needs.



How to read this chart:

The arrows with no colour filling (white) indicate data/information exchange between schools and the units of administration. As seen in the chart data flows are parallel for finance and education administrations, meaning there is hardly any data exchange among them. The arrows filled with colour indicate money flows, these are transfers from central budget (grants distribution) and funding from local budgets of self-management units, about which the Ministry of Education might have no or limited information based on the existing data flow within the system.

Figure 5.2 The Scheme for Funding and Data Flows in Education Systems in the Three Countries

Source: based on Educational Laws of the countries; adopted from the ‘Concept of Education Financing in the Republic of Tajikistan in 2004-15’ (2003).

This scheme of school funding is common to the three countries. It is rooted in the ill delineated responsibilities of different state administrations for education inherited from Soviet times (Bird *et al.*, 1994.). As Figure 5.1 shows, all financial flows are channelled through the devolved units of the Ministry of Finance and thence directly to schools, bypassing the Ministry of Education. The latter and its administrative subunits have a

limited role merely in distributing information through the system, and, hence, they are without any means to regulate financial flows reaching schools.

It is a commonplace in reports on the topic that the distribution of education funds from the central budget, through *oblast* and *raion* budgets to Local Self-Management Units and down to schools is ‘non-transparent’ and ‘leaves much room for politically motivated pressures and favouritism’ (*ibid.*). Moreover, the split in responsibility for education funding (the Ministry of Finance) and education policy-making (the Ministry of Education) in the three states contributes to the lack of transparency and lack of decision-making power delegated to schools.

To sum up, we have explored two out of four items included in Financial Resource Management Autonomy suggested by Verhoest *et al.* (2004): (i) budget formulation; (ii) budget allocation (carrying on virements across budget lines and arranging for savings to be carried over across years). This leaves the third and the fourth items included in the dimension of Financial Resource Management Autonomy to be discussed, namely ‘setting tariffs for ancillary services provided’ and ‘private funds allocation’.

Since the early 1990s, public funding of education in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan has undergone structural change, meaning a move away from a centralised system with a single revenue base (Basov, 1971) to a decentralised one with diversified revenue bases (Klugman, 1999)¹⁹. Currently, according to documentary analysis of legislation adopted in the three countries,²⁰ public schools are funded from three sources:

¹⁹ Those are indicated by arrows with grey filling in Figure 5.1.

²⁰ Budgetary Laws of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan downloaded from www.zakonuz.uzshar.com; www.nimk.tj; and www.spinform.ru.

(1) a block grant to the municipality from the national Ministry of Finance; (2) a share of municipal tax revenues;²¹ and finally (3) extra-budgetary funds raised by the schools themselves.

Item 3 in the list above indicates the presence of private expenditures on educational institutions in the post-Soviet countries concerned. This is a profound change from the practices and ideology of education provision since the Soviet times, when basic education was provided at no cost to the population (Moscow, 1983, p. 16).

Therefore, it is important to explore school autonomy related to the management of private funds raised by schools through extra-curricular activities or offering other additional services. Three major aspects of private funds in education need exploration: (i) whether schools have a right to provide services at a charge; (ii) whether schools can set tariffs for the services they provide; and (iii) whether schools are free to allocate extra-budgetary funds generated without *ex ante* or *ex post facto* approval by the oversight ministry. These items, suggested by Koen Verhoest and his colleagues, are discussed in the following section of the present chapter, are explored in the present section.

5.5. Setting Tariffs and Private Funds Allocation

Documentary Analysis

In the course of documentary analysis of legislation adopted in three countries and related to setting tariffs on services provided by schools, a mixed pattern has emerged. Thus, in

²¹ Block grants and a share of local tax revenue, are presented in Figure 5.2 as ‘dark arrows’ and indicate public money flows into educational institutions in the three countries.

Uzbekistan tariffs are set according to state regulations: if such tariffs are absent then the fee is agreed and stipulated in an agreement between the school and a ‘customer’, *e.g.* a school-parent agreement (Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, No. 440 (1995), Section VI, Item 10). In Kyrgyzstan tariffs are set exclusively by the state’s Anti-Monopoly Committee. Schools are allowed to allocate extra-budgetary funds raised in consultation with their parents’ association or board of trustees, if one exists. Tajik legislation leaves the most room for schools, devolving the responsibility for tariff-setting to them – to be stipulated in school-parent or school-customer agreements – and for extra-budgetary funds raised to be allocated according to their own decisions.

Survey Analysis

Meanwhile, analysis of questionnaires in the three countries revealed that in Kyrgyzstan two state structures were named as being in charge of setting tariffs for ancillary services provided by schools: 22 per cent of schools surveyed reported an Anti-Monopoly Committee, and 4 per cent a Local Self-Management Administration. An Anti-Monopoly Committee was mentioned by 18 per cent of schools in Tajikistan, and 10 per cent assumed that parent-teacher associations were in charge. In Uzbekistan there was consistency among respondents, who placed the locus of tariff-setting at school level, either on the school accountant’s judgment or by means of a parent-teacher agreement.

It is important to note here that over half of schools in each country did not answer this question. This may well suggest that about half of schools surveyed in the three countries were not quite sure where they were formally allowed to provide any ancillary services, *i.e.* services provided by school teachers as extra-curriculum activities at a separate charge. Furthermore, about half of those who did provide an answer to the question about extra

services stated that they currently were not providing any (25% of the sample in Kyrgyzstan, 28% - in Tajikistan and 12% in Uzbekistan). The reasons why the right to provide extra services and raise funds formally granted to schools, appeared to be rather not exercised on the ground has been discussed under Fundraising Autonomy in this chapter. Nonetheless, those heads who stated they were providing the services, the biggest proportion of responses referred to schools as the principal locus of decision-making about the price-setting for these services.

Table 5.4 Proportion of Schools Reported They Provided the Extra Services

			Country name		
			KG	TJ	UZ
Provide services	yes	N	25	28	12
		%	49.0%	57.1%	54.5%
	no	N	26	21	10
		%	51.0%	42.9%	45.5%
Total	N		51	49	22
	%		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: the Headteachers' Survey 2011.

Interview Analysis

In interviews conducted in the three countries about who sets the tariffs on the services schools provide, the answers received were diverse. Thus in Kyrgyzstan some headteachers discussed the level of poverty of the community where the school was located, others claimed that their schools provided extra lessons in subjects at a price a fraction of the one charged by private tutors. Uzbek headteachers cited teacher-parent agreements as the basis for the cost of extra lessons. Finally, headteachers in Tajikistan likewise identified teacher-parent contracts as the basis for setting the tariffs. They, in particular, tended to slip into discussion of other 'school-parent'-related topics, when asked about price-setting for additional educational services provided:

Our parents do not provide appropriate upbringing to their children at home. Particularly if they have paid some money [for an extra service], they consider that the school is obliged to bring up, educate, etc., etc. This is wrong (Tajik headteacher)!

To summarise, the evidence from the three post-Soviet states suggests that decisions about the use and allocation of financial resources are made less frequently at the central level. In order to compare the patterns observed, I constructed an index of Financial Resource Management Autonomy based on the quantitative data of my survey and modelled on the one computed by Koen Verhoest and his colleagues (2004).

5.6. Index of Financial Resource Management Autonomy

After revisions, the Financial Resource Management Autonomy index was adopted for the purposes of measuring school autonomy related to decision-making about financial inputs. The index was based on four items explored in the first part of the chapter: (i) budget formation; (ii) legal authority to reinvest savings; (iii) setting tariffs for additional educational services provided by school; and (iv) managing the school's operational budget, including making shifts between budget lines (virements). As with the construction of the Human Resource Management Autonomy index (see Chapter 4), here responses were scored '0' in cases where heads reported having no primary responsibility for items listed above, and '1' in cases where schools reported having primary responsibility in making decisions concerned. Thus the range of the Financial Resource Management Autonomy index goes from 0 (minimal autonomy) to 1 (maximal autonomy).

Table 5.5 Index of Financial Resource Management Autonomy

Country name	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Kyrgyzstan	0.55	47	0.24	0.03
Tajikistan	0.7	47	0.21	0.03
Uzbekistan	0.54	20	0.25	0.06

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011..

As is seen in Table 5.5, Financial Resource Management Autonomy (FRM Autonomy) is experienced to the greatest extent by schools in Tajikistan ($M=0.7$, $SE=.031$), with second place being taken by schools in Kyrgyzstan ($M=0.55$, $SE=.035$), and least FRM Autonomy index registered at schools in Uzbekistan ($M=0.54$, $SE=.062$). The difference in the FRM Autonomy indices computed for Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan is very small, and counts as insignificant ($p>.05$), but differences between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan appeared to be robust ($sig.=.003$ and $sig.=.02$ respectively) (see Table 5.6.). Means of FRM Autonomy computed on quantitative data for the three countries have been tested by the qualitative account reported above.

Table 5.6 T-test for Equality of Means of Financial Resource Management Autonomy Index

		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
KG vs. TJ	Equal variances assumed	-3.07	92.00	.003	-0.14	0.05
	Equal variances not assumed	-3.07	90.98	.003	-0.14	0.05
UZ vs. TJ	Equal variances assumed	-2.39	62.00	.020	-0.15	0.06
	Equal variances not assumed	-2.21	24.77	.036	-0.15	0.07

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

Table 5.5 and Table 5.6 show that the FRM Autonomy index mean score in Tajikistan has a comparatively high value (0.70), indeed the highest among the indices of the three countries. At this stage it remains premature to claim that the trend in educational

institutions toward more decentralisation is as yet profound enough to break the equilibrium of education budgeting processes of the Soviet time. Yet the value of the mean of FRM Autonomy index (0.7 in the range 0-1) indicates that change introduced from above has been accepted and institutionalised at school level at least in Tajikistan, while the FRM Autonomy indices of the other two countries suggest that incremental changes are underway in educational institutions there. Further explanations for these changes are in Chapter 9.

5.7. Fundraising autonomy

Sources of School Funding

Having explored whether schools in the three former Soviet countries were delegated with competences related to the management of financial inputs, it is important to investigate whether or not schools are free from institutional constraints that might limit the exercise of their autonomy. According to the framework adjusted for this thesis, Fundraising Autonomy refers to the extent to which the public agency depends on governmental funding or has its own revenues to cover part of its financial needs (Verhoest *et al.* 2004, p. 12).

One may assume that a school is more likely to exercise autonomy if it enjoys some funding arising from non-public sources. In this vein, Margaret Archer stated:

The more dependent A is on the supplies B provides, the bigger the loss of A's autonomy to determine the nature of its own activities, which A provides to B to secure resources inflow (1979, p. 63).

Previous practice in educational management under the Soviet regime excluded any possibility of income generation at school level (Zajda, 1980)²². Hence, in order to secure resources inflow, schools under Soviet regime were very unlikely to exercise any degree of autonomy. Therefore, current freedom to raise money granted to schools can be viewed as a significant move toward a form of education decentralisation and school autonomy in the post-Soviet states of Central Asia. The research question this section of the chapter aims to answer concerns the extent to which this freedom was implemented in the three countries concerned.

Legislative Framework for Private Expenditure: Documentary Analysis

During the economic transition, the proliferation of extra-budgetary sources of financing served to cushion the impact of reduced state financial support (Klugman, 1999, p. 432). As a result of decentralisation policies introduced in the newly emerged countries of Central Asia, resources for educational funding have been diversified. According to the UNICEF Report (2005), extra-budgetary resources employed to generate additional funds for public schools in these countries included:

1. Households, through payment for extra-curricular activities organised by/through schools, and/or by voluntary contributions to cover, for example, the costs of classroom decoration, school events, etc.;

²² By contrast, according to Noah (1966: cited in Klugman, 1999, p. 429), about 90% of education financing during the Soviet period came from local sources, while the Union and republican budgets together accounted for more than 10% of the total costs of schooling. However, this seems unlikely, since the Central Asian republics were always subsidised in the USSR. As Prof. Miloserdov argued, “Centralized plan economy that existed in the USSR allowed for the concentration of financial and material resources in one ‘fist’. Thus, the wellbeing of the national republics and their social services depended on the transfers from the central resources.” (Extract from an interview placed at www.newsland.ru/news/detail/id/448779. Downloaded on 23 January, 2012).

2. Businesses and other sponsors, in the form of assisting in the purchase of specific ICT equipment or pieces of furniture; and
3. Donor funds from NGOs, acting as bilateral or multilateral partners, invested in schools within the framework of specific pilot projects and/or as co-funding of community-school projects.

The governments of the three newly emerged states in Central Asia institutionalised private sources of funding through Educational laws adjusted accordingly (Tajik Educational Law (17 May 2004), Section 1; Kyrgyz Educational Law on Education (1992), amended in 2003; Uzbek Educational Law (29 August 1997), Article 31). The emergence and legitimisation of private sources to finance mainstream schooling is one of the most important institutional changes to the region's education systems over the last two decades (UNICEF, 2005).

Furthermore, general analysis of legislative decrees in these three countries reveals both similarities and differences in the area of Fundraising Autonomy. The types of income-generating activities allowed for schools appear to have much in common but to vary in scope. The most detailed list of income-generating activities allowed was found in Uzbek legislation. Notably, one decree dated 1995 listed the following income-generating activities:

1. Organising subject-based tutorials, where students are exposed to subject knowledge exceeding the minimal state educational standard;
2. After-school, extra-curricular clubs;
3. Additional classes of physical exercise, art, etc.;

4. Lectures by guest speakers; and/or consultancy provided by specialists from prestigious institutions;
5. Training courses for adults;
6. Selling services and/or products produced by students and teachers as a result of internal activities or of fulfilling orders from enterprises;
7. Renting out school premises, sport/dining halls, equipment, etc.; and
8. Performances of drama etc. by students and teachers in front of the local community.

(Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, No. 440 (21 November 1995), Section VI, Item 10).

Further analysis of legislation adopted in Uzbekistan suggests that the state maintains rather a 'neutral' position in its attitude toward income-generating activities within schools. Thus, Edict No. 440 (November 1995) prohibits any ministries and/or state administrations from imposing plans on schools related to how much money to raise or how many activities to undertake (Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, No. 440 (21 November 1995), Section VI, Item 12). Here, on the one hand, the state gives schools autonomy to decide whether to raise extra-budgetary funds and how much. At the same time, however, income-generating activities of schools are not monitored, and hence cannot be counted as a 'plus' in school appraisal by the oversight ministry. This lack of incentives is likely to 'cool' schools' keenness to seek private funds.

In contrast, according to the 1999 regulations adopted in Kyrgyzstan, schools are required to seek private funds. Schools are obliged to estimate income to be generated per term from extra activities in the next academic year. Moreover, the estimation must be approved at the *raion* level of the Ministry of Finance and submitted to the ministry in the capital too (Regulations on income-generating activities of the public educational

establishments of the Kyrgyz Republic (1 December 1999), Section III). The level of detail regarding mechanisms for schools' reporting their income-generating activities specified in Kyrgyz legislative decrees suggests that there existed both a strong political will and a strong economic necessity to delegate to schools responsibility for generating funds from private sources, at the end of the 1990s at least.

The Tajik Educational Law (2004) includes a list of activities for income generation similar to the one in the Uzbek legislation. The core notion governing income-generating activities allowed is that extra activities should be organised to 'strengthen' and 'deepen' knowledge in order to meet state educational standards. In Article 50 of the Educational Law (2004), schools are recommended to establish a 'Learning Fund', but with the key proviso that it should not exceed one per cent of total school funds, even though it may accept funds coming from any of the sources mentioned above, including private donations or fees for services.

While the sequences of education laws and reforms in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were similar, it is important to note that the substance of the laws and how they have developed differs.

Analysis of legislation in Uzbekistan points to a trend of persistent centralisation rather than decentralisation in public schooling. First, what is striking is that many decrees are approved by President Karimov himself. This observation supports Weidman and B. Yoder's conclusion that "Uzbekistan's education laws are primarily decrees from the president" (2010, p. 60). Second, liberal readings of the law are not reflected at all in state practices and/or schools' own behaviour and experiences. For instance in regulations No. 440 (1995), "school heads are authorised to cooperate with foreign educational

establishments on teacher and student exchange programmes, the conduct of joint activities (conferences, summer camps, etc.) in accordance with the legislation in force of the Republic of Uzbekistan” (Section III, School Management: Headteachers’ Rights). Meanwhile, since 2006 international foundations and organisations – including Save the Children UK, Save the Children US and the Soros Foundation – have been closed or had their activities suspended in the country (PEAKS Report, 2006).

Third, the state employed a centralised approach in fighting financial shortages in education through the foundation of an Education Development Fund designed for school infrastructure and enhancing the technical-material base of teaching. A centralised bureaucracy was established at the Ministry of Finance to regulate the inflow of funds from various sources, including compulsory contributions by domestic persons (legal and physical), and voluntary contributions from foreign agencies (Educational Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan (1997), Article 32).

Policies of continuing centralisation observed in Uzbekistan bring to mind images from the socialist era when educational policies were strongly motivated by the political objective of maintaining one-party control over both schooling and wider society. According to Iwasaki and Suzuki (2007, p. 402), in the 1990s, some ex-Soviet states pursued a ‘recentralisation’ strategy as a political choice: Uzbekistan seems to fit this category. In addition, obstacles encountered in collecting data (see Chapter 3) confirm that the relationship between government and schools is tense, and does not reflect democratic principles seemingly grounded in some education legislation (*e.g.* Educational Law, 1997, Uzbekistan).

This conclusion accords with other researchers' observations. For instance, in 1975 Margaret Archer commented that factors known to affect educational change include the mode and level of economic production, nature of social stratification, and a country's type of political organisation (1979, p. 56). Cooley (2008) claimed that the Uzbek government had become one of the most repressive in the region (2008, p. 70). Similarly, a little earlier, Gita Steiner-Khamsi had concluded that Uzbekistan was developing into one of the most authoritarian Asian states (2004). Thus, government-led educational reforms based on a strategy of ongoing centralisation are not particularly surprising in the Uzbek context.

5.8. Proportion of Public and Private Expenditure: Survey Analysis

Documentary analysis presented in the previous section pointed out that schools in the three states were granted the legal right to raise private funds through providing ancillary services. Empirical data collected for this study indicates that accumulating private funds has become an important activity in the majority of schools surveyed across all three countries. But the data also show that private funds represented a very small part of total school budgets despite apparent legitimisation throughout the countries (Table 5.7).

Table 5.7 Relative proportions of public and private expenditure on schools, 2011 (in per cent)

Country name		Central Budget	Local Budget	Public Total	Households' expenditure	Other private entities	Private Total
KG	Mean	83.7	15.4	99	0.9	2.5	3.4
(N=51)	Std. Deviation	17.1	16.0		3.4	5.7	
TJ	Mean	62.8	31.2	94	4.9	2.7	7.6
(N=49)	Std. Deviation	47.3	41.4		12.7	5.7	
UZ	Mean	57.7	18.8	76.5	3.8	18.5 ²³	22.3
(N=22)	Std. Deviation	39.3	35.2		11.0	25.8	
Aggregate	Mean	70.6	22.4	93	3.0	5.4	8.4
(N=122)	Std. Deviation	37.5	32.5		9.7	13.4	

Source: the Teachers' Survey, 2011.

Table 5.7 based on survey returns from 122 schools, indicates that public funding still dominates basic education in the three countries. On average, it reaches 93 per cent across three countries of Central Asia. For comparison, the OECD average is 91.5 per cent and the EU19 average 93.8 per cent (OECD, 2008).

Particular attention is merited by household expenditure on education since it constitutes 5 per cent of a school budget in Tajikistan, 4 per cent in Uzbekistan and 1 per cent in Kyrgyzstan. Whether this proportion of household expenditure in the school budgets of countries concerned is considered low or not, it massively exceeds that found in OECD countries such as Sweden and Portugal (0.1% each). It also resembles the levels registered in other rich countries such as Italy (3.7%), the Netherlands (2.7%), including three post-

²³ Schools surveyed in Uzbekistan were ones located in urban and semi-urban areas with industrial and business sector.

communist states, the Czech Republic (7.8%), Poland (1.8%), Hungary (2.5%) (OECD, 2008).

Table 5.8 Locus of Decisions-Making re Private Funds Allocation (by number and percentage of schools per country), 2011

		Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Schools	N	40	33	18
	%	79%	68%	82%
Raion Admin	N	1	1	2
	%	2%	2%	9%
Oblast Admin	N	n/a	1	0
	%		2%	0%
Other	N	6	9	2
	%	12%	18%	9%

The question was: ‘*Who has in your opinion primary responsibility for the allocation of private funds raised by your school?*’ Options provided included School, *Raion* Education Administration, *Oblast* Education Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other. ‘Tick one’ was requested.

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

Table 5.8 indicates that according to the majority of the responses received the locus of decision-making regarding private funds allocation rests with schools across all three countries concerned.

5.9. The Role of Private Funds in Schools: Interviews Analysis

Nonetheless, on average, the percentages of private funds raised by public schools in the countries studied are relatively small compared to the proportion of funds coming from state and local budgets (see Table 5.8). Yet they were seen by headteachers interviewed as manifesting their autonomy from the centre. School heads in Tajikistan sounded particularly empowered by the shift to multi-source funding for their schools:

Of course, a man [headteacher] feels self-confident when he knows that there is some money in the school budget, he feels independent a bit. It helps, has an effect (Interview with a headteacher in Tajikistan).

Apart from budget money, we raise private money. Its proportion is minuscule but it plays an important role. When they [parents] pay, they devote more time and attention to their children, i.e. it is positive for both education and upbringing. I do not say that public schools should be paid for. But nowadays free and paid [education] should be combined. (Interview with a headteacher in Tajikistan).

Extracts from interviews with Tajik headteachers illustrate that no matter how small the amount of private funds raised at a school level, it played an important part in a head's perceiving him/herself to be in charge. It may also serve as some form of validation of his/her managerial and leadership skills. Private funds within the Tajik education system were created mainly in the search for additional resources in times of hardship following the break-up of the Soviet Union. But, later on, this measure came to be articulated not only as an expression of the general liberalisation of education, but also in the expectation that it would promote parental participation by providing a feeling of ownership.

Among the three countries, Kyrgyzstan had the smallest percentage of private revenues in overall public education funding. Here, financial constraints, similar to those in Tajikistan, resulted in the delegation of financial responsibility for school maintenance and utility costs to the local city/village authorities according to the law 'On Local Self-Government and Local State Administration' (1992). Shortly after Kyrgyz schools were also authorised to supplement tight school budgets through the collection of consumer

fees up to an amount stipulated in law as equalling the cost of 30 loaves of bread in cities, and 20 in rural areas; this had to be collected from parents once a year to maintain school premises. However, parents' fees were banned in 2006 by President Bakiev, currently in exile, who transferred responsibility for school running costs and repairs to local city/village budgets. This has resulted in a deteriorating physical environment in schools and also reduced community participation in schools as the President's decision was falsely interpreted as meaning a return to wholly "free schooling". Yet headteachers retain the right to conduct contracted educational activities stipulated in legislative decrees (discussed above).

I wish I were leading my school but...no funding, no leading, as you know, and no quality of education (Kyrgyz headteacher).

We do not receive any money... [we] have no money to buy chalk or paper. We returned to centralised bookkeeping, and now the village administration buys all stationery, as well as light bulbs, nails etc. It then distributes to schools, but no computer cartridge! Some time ago, we were able to maintain our computers from parents' money given to the school. Now not even powder is included in our budgetary plans (Kyrgyz headteacher).

Summary of Empirical Evidence from the Three Countries

To sum up, state funding – from both central and local budgets – continues to be the main source of school income: hence, it cannot be argued that the state has attempted to withdraw substantially from funding public education in any of the countries concerned. But, judging from the proportion of school expenses covered from local budgets, the

conclusion that emerges is that the delegation of partial responsibility for school funding to village and municipal self-management units, alongside permission to generate private funds at the school, was a way of ‘spreading’ the burden of funding under financial constraints and shifting some blame for under-financing from the central apparatus.

The legislative decrees adopted in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan reveal that in policy papers issued over the last decade, the governments of the three countries not only delegated to schools responsibility for “generating additional funds from alternative sources”, but also strongly encouraged school administrations to seek private funds. However, it is different in Uzbekistan, where Decree No. 440 (11 November 1995) indicates that the oversight ministry and/or education administration cannot impose a compulsory plan on a school setting out the amount of additional services to be provided. Moreover, additional services at a charge must not constitute services funded from the state budget, and must not undermine the quality of services provided free (*ibid.*).

Nonetheless, the revised constitutions in the three states appear to follow closely the lead set by the USSR in Article 45 of its Constitution: notably, the right of all citizens of the newly emerged states to a free education is confirmed. There is an ongoing debate in the mass media in the Central Asian countries about the power delegated to schools to charge fees for providing additional educational services as a violation of the Constitution and of citizens’ rights.²⁴ Furthermore, while shifting some educational costs to households may be an efficient solution, concern arises about the growth of informal payments for

²⁴ Similar practices of generating extra-budgetary resources at school level can be found across all post-communist countries.

publicly provided services and the burden created for the poor, impeding their access to education (Asad and Sundberg, 2002, p. 11).

5.10. Fundraising Autonomy Index

In order to measure the degree of *fundraising autonomy*, a quantitative benchmark has been computed for each country. This helps to rank the three post-Soviet states according to the extent of school fundraising autonomy. For this purpose a binary score has been applied to the responses received from schools. According to Verhoest *et al.* (2004), this measurement is based on the only credible criteria, namely the sources of school budgets. A score of ‘1’ has been given any school that reported any portion of its funds as coming from outside the central budget, and that charges for additional services it provides and/or is in receipt of sponsorship; and a school that reported 100 per cent of its typical annual budget as coming from central and/or regional budgets has been scored ‘0’ (minimal autonomy) (Table 5.9).

Table 5.9 Fundraising Autonomy Index

Country name	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std.Error
Kyrgyzstan	0.37	51	.49	.07
Tajikistan	0.59	49	.50	.07
Uzbekistan	0.53	22	.50	.10

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

On average, schools in Tajikistan appear to enjoy most fundraising autonomy (M=0.59; S.E.=.072); *i.e.* funds raised from non-public sources. Tajikistan is closely followed by schools in Uzbekistan (M=0.53; S.E.=.068), with Kyrgyzstan last (M=0.37; S.E.=.107). However, none of the differences among means were statistically significant ($p > .05$).

Table 5.10 T-test for Equality of Means of Fundraising autonomy Index

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
KG vs. TJ	Equal variances	-3.07	92.00	.00	-0.14	0.05
	Equal variances not	-3.07	90.98	.00	-0.14	0.05
UZ vs. TJ	Equal variances	-2.39	62.00	.02	-0.15	0.06
	Equal variances not	-2.21	24.77	.04	-0.15	0.07

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

Inter-republic differences in the means for the financial dimension of school autonomy appear insignificant; and, hence, despite changes in norms and regulations in the three countries, the development of educational change seems to follow similar trajectories so that later the countries' policies may well converge. But there is no 'one-size-fits-all' pattern of autonomy that will fit all three countries. What seems to suit one country can be much less appropriate for another because of countries' levels of socio-economic development and/or cultural differences.

5.11. Conclusions

In the countries of former Soviet Union, including the Central Asian cases studied, fiscal reforms in education marked a major departure from the past (Bird *et al.*, 1994, p. 10). The 'past' from which the former Soviet states departed was described by Noah as "a thoroughgoing external control exerted via minute concern for the pettiest detail and for every last kopek of expenditure" (1966, p. 200).

Nonetheless, as Janos Kornai observed, "the change of system is a historical process that seems likely to require a long period of time" (cited in Bird *et al.*, 1994, p. 1). As a broad generalisation, the changes introduced through legislation failed to be fully

operationalised at school level in two out of three countries studied. Tajikistan appeared to be the only country that after two decades of independence could claim to have significantly delegated financial resource management competences to schools. The Tajik index for the FRM Autonomy equals 0.7, the highest in the sample, and tending to ‘1’ (maximal autonomy), may serve as the evidence for that.

It is remarkable that the means for measurements outlined in Figure 5.4 show that the level of school FRM Autonomy in Uzbekistan, the most authoritarian of the three countries (Cooley, 2008), is not significantly different from that in Kyrgyzstan, possibly the most democratic country in the region on some measures²⁵. These measurements, based on quantitative data of a survey, support the argument in the literature that schools’ daily practices and a country’s education reform strategy make a “loose coupling” that contributes to continuity of educational institutions. (Cibulka, 1996). Despite evidence from documentary analysis, where Uzbek education legislation framework appeared to be more centralisation-driven, data from schools, translated into the FRM and Fundraising Autonomy scores, showed that schools had managed to some extent to adjust institutional constraints to their advantage.

²⁵ In 2012 Kyrgyzstan was ranked 154, Tajikistan – 157, and Uzbekistan – 170 on the scale of the Corruption Perceptions Index developed by Transparency International (downloaded from www.transparency.org/cpi2012).

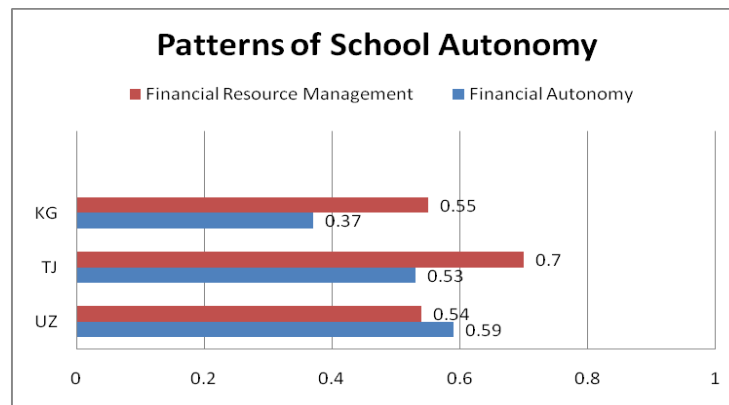


Figure 5.3 Patterns of school autonomy; *Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011*

The evidence presented here supports the theoretical propositions contemplated by Verhoest and his colleagues, who argued that the constraining factors taken together may at one extreme even favour modern reforms in some states (Verhoest *et al.* 2010, p.9). Thus, countries suffering economic crisis and bearing strong normative pressure from international organisations (*e.g.* Tajikistan), and those having 'elective dictatorships' (*e.g.* Uzbekistan) might adopt NPM reforms most easily; those with less external environmental pressure or structural and cultural characteristics of public sector organisations (*e.g.* Kyrgyzstan to a greater extent so than Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) may lag behind (*ibid.*, p.9).

Under such circumstances, certain ideas happen to be 'taken on board' by policy-makers probably without questioning, because they were promoted by the international organisations and consulting firms. Thus, the concept of decentralization appears to be 'taken-for-granted' by the countries concerned, having been promoted by the dominant donor agencies in the post-1991 period (Silova, & Steiner-Khamsi 2008). However, analysis of the existing structure of school finance reveals constraints, which might have restricted the options available for the countries.

The main institutional argument provides at least two basic reasons, why the ability of an organisation to adopt new practices cannot be understood in terms of the preferences and capabilities of actors only. First, the very nature of actors' preferences and capabilities cannot be understood except as part of some larger institutional framework; second, the possible options available to actors at some point in time are constrained by available institutional capabilities, and the latter is a product of choices made during some earlier period (Krasner 1988, p. 72). Analysis of educational fiscal institutions reveals a persistent schema common to all three post-Soviet countries. This is, while managerial responsibility for education rests with the national Ministry of Education, the responsibility for budgets lies with the Ministry of Finance. This structure continues to reinforce itself through data exchange patterns and finance flows and may well impede half-developed processes tending toward greater decentralisation of education.

Furthermore, since the national Ministry of Education has no power in regulating budget planning processes at the *raion* (regional) and *oblast* (provincial) levels, any delegation of decision-making competence related to education budgeting appears to be an act of simple "blame avoidance" (Hood, 2002, p. 20). Budgetary and fundraising autonomy, in this light, could simply be a convenient way for the governments of the countries concerned to extricate themselves from the burdensome process of seeking public funds with limited control over input, and shifting blame school administrations and lower tier authorities.

These institutional characteristics seem to restrict the underlying potential for systemic change. No matter how good or bad the legislative decrees issued by the governments in each country are, they can hardly disturb the equilibrium. Only in the course of numerous initiatives developed gradually through implementation of pilot activities at different

school sites across the region may there result a cumulative effect amounting to profound change.

Thus, because of the existing constraints built into the institutional structures of the education systems in the three countries (*e.g.* centralised approach to school budgeting), it may be argued that the core of education system – its values, structures, content, etc. – has remained rather the same. In other words, In fact, if patterns of behaviour, roles and forms of organisation had changed frequently and rapidly, then there would have been little use in involving an institutional argument; one could rather focus on individuals without regard to some larger context (*cf.* Krasner 1988; Hall and Taylor 1996). However, all leading approaches to institutional analysis – sociological institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism and historical institutionalism (Hall and Taylor, 1996) face problems in explaining institutional changes, for instance, those recorded in Financial Resource Management and Fundraising dimensions of school autonomy in countries concerned.

Chapter 6 | The Dimensions of School Autonomy: Policy Autonomy

What on one side turns out to be a change in steering systems directed towards a distribution of policy-making from the centre to the periphery, will on the other side be a strengthening of a central steering system.

(Lundgren 1990, p. 35)

In this empirical chapter I continue to develop the theme of educational decentralisation in the three former-Soviet republics – Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Previous chapters investigated the extent of school autonomy in these countries along the four dimensions suggested by Verhoest *et al.* (2004); they were human resource management, structure, financial resource management and fundraising. Analysis showed that the patterns of school autonomy along those four dimensions varied. First, the regional trend appeared to be quite established in the terminology of System Approach for Better Education Results introduced by the World Bank (SABER WB 2012); the level of decision-making power delegated to schools in the realms of human and financial resources management (autonomy indices across the three countries are ≥ 0.5). Second, the same quite established level of autonomy (> 0.5) in the fundraising dimension was observed in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, but not so much in Kyrgyzstan ($= 0.37$); the fundraising dimension signifies the extent to which a school depends on governmental funding or on its own revenues. Finally, in the structural dimension of school autonomy, that is the extent to which the school is shielded from influence by the government through lines of hierarchy and accountability, my findings showed a quite low (or ‘latent’ in terminology of WB SABER (2012)) level of autonomy (0.1-0.2), *i.e.* schools in the

three countries appeared to remain under strong bureaucratic control of the central government despite having been delegated decision-making competencies over the management of financial and human resources. According to the qualitative analysis conducted, the governments of the three states continue to hold schools under central control through, for instance, appointing heads rather than allowing them to be selected on a competitive basis (see Chapter 4), as well as delegating quite limited authority to schools in forming and implementing educational policy (below).

6.1. Curriculum Reforms in the Three Post-Soviet Countries

According to Anne Looney (2001), in an educational context one should accept that ‘curriculum is policy and policy in its most public form’ (Looney 2001, p.153). Looney also suggests that it is crucial to accept that the roots of a curriculum are usually culturally selected and represented (*ibid.*, p.154). Therefore, the decentralisation of educational content in the form of curriculum reforms can be, as Rogers (1997) states, ‘the hardest nut to crack’, because changing the curriculum ‘goes against the grain of collective cultural experiences and expectations’ (p. 684). This section reviews controls over the content of school curricula and methods of curricula development within the classroom, considered to be the key focus of decentralisation reforms in many nations (Astiz, Wiseman, Baker 2002, p.71).

Before the post-1991 curriculum reforms, all three countries had very strong traditions of centralised development and delivery of educational content. Compulsory schooling introduced in the three republics in the 1930s chose a centralised curriculum right from the start (Noah 1966). There are several reasons why a centralised curriculum appeared best to serve the newly emerging power of the Soviets. First, according to Zverev (1983), a centralised curriculum was seen as a way to develop the intellectual and moral

requirements of the new '*homo sovieticus*'²⁶ irrespective of which socialist republic a citizen of the USSR lived in. Second, the rationale for a centralised curriculum was based on the need for standardisation. In fact, mobility and standardisation of labour were vital for implementing the planned economy of the Soviet period.

When the Soviet countries of Central Asia gained independence in 1991, there was a need to 'de-ideologise' the curriculum that had been strictly prescribed over Soviet times (Eklof; Holmes; Kaplan, 2005). In that period, many of the subjects that constitute important elements of a modern education – such as politics, sociology, anthropology and religious studies – barely existed. This condition prevailed in part due to the ideological orthodoxy of Marxism-Leninism, which guided all spheres of public life (*ibid.*, p 164). It was following the achievement of independence that the Central Asian states started to introduce these subjects at the school level.

The emerging countries also used curricula reforms to create a greater sense of social cohesion and to strengthen emerging national identities (see also Silova, Johnson & Heyneman 2007). In aiming at new national identity formation, teaching of history became a particular challenge. According to Meier (2005), history teaching in the post-Soviet republics was controversial and far from 'seeking the truth'. Subject content now reflected the policy lines taken by the governments of the newly independent states. All three states' search for identity was essentially related to the question of how Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, defined themselves vis-à-vis Russia and the world (Silova, Johnson & Heyneman, 2007, p.165). National languages and religious studies were

²⁶ Western scholars tend to see the construction of a 'Soviet Man' as the ultimate goal of the Soviet education system (see Silova, Johnson & Heyneman 2007, Meier 2005).

subjects that contributed to the quest for a new identity. The introduction of civic education courses at school level was energetically promoted by international organisations to help soften conflicts in teaching history, religion and languages.

In 2011, when the data for this research were collected, it was evident that the post-Soviet period had already left its imprint on the educational systems of the three countries. Over 20 years these post-Soviet states had all witnessed a large number of experiments and projects aimed at helping developing countries to modernise (*cf.* Peterson 2012). Directly or indirectly, foreign aid from developed countries influenced countries' curricula development. All three newly independent states faced similar phenomena in the form of foreign donors' prescribed reform agenda. For instance, as mentioned above, the World Bank's views on education across all sectors and for all developing countries, including the so-called transitional economies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union were reflected in a paper that reinforced the particular strategies that the World Bank judged to be effective (World Bank, 1995).²⁷ This is not to argue that the Bank's policy advice was necessarily translated into practice on all occasions; thus, China, the World Bank's major client, clearly did not adopt the Bank's recommendations (Cheng Kai-Ming, 1995 cited in King 1997, p. 116). Nevertheless, countries such as Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, which were desperately in need of external support for their education sector, were hardly in the position to argue for an alternative educational strategy to that of the

²⁷ This forceful positioning of the Bank's recommendations was supported by the fact that the World Bank was responsible for 25 per cent of all external educational loans in the world (King 1997, p.116). World Bank (1995) *Priorities and Strategies for Education: A World Bank Paper*. Washington: World Bank.

Bank²⁸. Thus, curriculum-reforming policies in particular appeared to be introduced to the emerging states from the outside.

Nonetheless, the curriculum reform initiated from outside by the International Banks and aimed at decentralising educational content in post-soviet countries, reflected the internal desire of the governments and policy-makers to express local and country-specific cultures and traditions across the three newly emerging states. This is found in the literature noting that, first, the decentralisation of content could ‘provide greater sensitivity to local variations’ (Bray, 1984, p.9). Second, seeking a substitute for loss of legitimacy, curriculum reform in the three states was seen as remedying the dismantled Soviet legacy (see Eklof 2005). Third, economic hardship during the years of independence and a concomitant lack of state funding created massive difficulties in funding the educational minimum contained in the national curricula.

6.2. Outline of Policy Autonomy

This chapter explores the dimensions of Policy Autonomy of state schools in the three states, the fifth dimension in the framework suggested by Verhoest *et al* (2004) for a public agency autonomy assessment employed in this study. In order to investigate the extent of school policy autonomy, identified here as both a process and a product, I focus on ‘pedagogical content knowledge’ introduced by Shulman into educational discourse in 1986. Pedagogical content knowledge deals with the teaching process, including “the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others”

²⁸ Thus, in Kyrgyzstan the curriculum for primary schools was developed with Asian Development Bank funding and launched only as late as 2011. In 2013, I found that the government was still in the process of developing curriculum and educational standards for secondary schools.

(Shulman 1986, p. 9). He observed that the emphasis on teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogy were being treated as mutually exclusive domains, and yet sought to show the inescapable relationship between the two (*ibid.*, p.6).

The measure of Policy Autonomy suggested by Verhoest and his colleagues had to be adjusted to a greater extent than the other dimensions in order to be applicable to the assessment of school autonomy. Thus, Verhoest *et al.* referred to policy autonomy as *ex ante* control to exercise rules, standards and norms concerning processes, policy instruments and the quantity and quality of outputs, and objectives and outcomes. For the purpose of this study, the Policy Autonomy dimension has been adjusted to focus on decision-making competences delegated from the centre to schools in relation to processes and procedures a school must conduct and/or follow to perform educational services. This dimension includes four items: (i) whether a school has the right to decide what subjects to teach; (ii) whether a school has the right to decide how many hours to teach per subject; (iii) what textbooks to use; and (iv) internally to coordinate classroom teaching methods (Table 6.1).

This particular dimension may contribute to the so-called paradox of autonomisation, in which autonomisation of a public agency may imply stricter central control (Smullen *et al.*, 2001; Kickert, 1998 cited in Verhoest *et al.* 2004). Stated in autonomy terms, this is the case when an agency gets more managerial autonomy but less policy autonomy, thus so-called 'centralized-decentralisation' occurs (Burger, 1992; Hoggett, 1996, p. 18; Burger & Treur, 1996).

This hypothesis was tested in the countries concerned. Thus, the findings of Chapters 4 and 5 suggest that the three states had been granted some established level of autonomy

in decision-making within managerial dimensions (see Chapters 4 and 5). The investigation of the second part of the hypothesis – a public agency is granted less policy autonomy - is presented below.

Analyses of the variables listed above are based on the headteachers' survey and interviews conducted with headteachers and central/local actors in the region, as well as statistical data and legislation adopted in the three Central Asian countries. The chapter is structured so that the extent of schools' autonomy in the three states on each of Policy Autonomy items is presented through, first, documentary analysis, second, survey results and, third, the evidence derived from the interviews. Finally the findings of the chapter are summarised in a quantitative index of school Policy Autonomy, which numerically reflects the level of Policy Autonomy in each country at school level and strengthens the comparative component of the study. Finally, the implications of these findings are discussed in the conclusion to this chapter.

Table 6.1 Summary of Items Included in Structural Autonomy

Policy Autonomy	
Curriculum Items	▪ whether a school has the right to decide what subjects to teach ▪ whether a school has the right to decide how many hours to teach per subject
Textbook Usage Item	▪ whether a school has the right to decide what textbooks to use;
Teaching Methods Item	▪ whether a school has the right to coordinate internally classroom teaching methods

Source: adopted from Verhoest *et al.* 2004.

The next section of this chapter examines the extent to which the power to adjust national curricula in accordance with local needs and financial circumstances has been delegated to schools in the three countries.

6.3. Policy Autonomy: Curriculum

The term ‘curriculum’, in common use in the West, has become a ‘loan-word’ borrowed at the end of the 2000s by the policy-makers in Central Asia. Curriculum Items (i) and (ii) within Policy Dimension proposed in the survey questionnaire referred to ‘learning plan’ and ‘timetable of lesson hours’ (*setka chasov*: Rus.), commonly used in educational practice in the countries researched. The following discussion draws on documents that address ‘curriculum’ in the countries concerned, *i.e.* documents that appeared to guide education planning in the three countries. These were teachers’ aids to plan education and instruction (but not learning *per se*). In all three countries, curricula appeared to be presented in the form of learning plans (*uchebnyi plan*: Rus.). Just as does the suffix ‘-plan’ does in the German ‘*Lehrplan*’, the word ‘plan’ in each title indicates explicitly that the curriculum definition aims primarily at having an instrumental effect (Scholl 2012, p.329). Concerning the other function of curricula, to provide a ‘verbalisation of long-term objectives and concepts for planning’ (Bechmann, 1981, p. 37 cited in *ibid.* p.329) and ‘legitimacy of such activities towards the persons concerned’ (p. 37; *cf.*), another document had been adopted in the three countries, one that is expressed an educational standard (*obrazovatel’nyi standart*: Rus.).

In each of the three countries the ‘curriculum’ appeared to be a ‘soft’ policy²⁹ (Chan 2012), which possessed guiding power to instruct the (head)teachers ‘what’, ‘when’, and ‘how many hours’ they had to teach. Nonetheless, curriculum in the form of ‘the outlines of the

²⁹ ‘Soft’ policy is one of the distinctive features of policy implementation where there are multiple layers of collective decision-making, and is considered to be an efficient means to coordinate policies across these multiple layers (Chan 2012).

skills, performances, attitudes and values pupils were expected to learn from schooling’ was not found explicitly articulated in any of countries’ policy documents.

Curriculum: Documentary analysis

Tajikistan

A new desire to decentralise and bring schooling closer to Tajik values was emphasised in the Law on Education (TJ MoES, 2004), which was an important and influential document. Nonetheless, Article 29, Section 3 of the Law states that “the state republican education administration is in charge of state educational standards development; based on the state educational standards the state republican education administration (*i.e.* Ministry of Education) develops and approves educational plans and programmes to be recommended to educational establishments of Tajikistan and monitors and evaluates plans/programmes implementation at any educational establishment irrespective of its legal or ownership status” (2004). This passage may be interpreted as meaning that none of Tajik schools has any right to choose the subjects taught. The only exception is made for Years 10 and 11 (16- and 17-year-old students), when schools can adjust the national curriculum to ensure in-depth study of at least two subjects. The same legal text specifies parameters to be included in the state educational standards, which are a compulsory minimum content per subject, workload per student, requirements regarding levels of students’ attainment (Art. 8, Sect. 1, MoE TJ). The responsibility charged on principals and teachers is to ensure that programmes are implemented and that students meet those requirements (Art. 41, Sect. 4, MoE TJ).

Remarkably, five years later, in 2009, the Tajik government issued a decree, which stipulated that the state educational standard does not restrict schools’ activities and

teachers' initiatives; its fundamental purpose is to ensure that all students receive the same level of education to which they are entitled by law, regardless of where they live or who they are; to specify what is to be taught and to what extent. Education standards were also introduced as a basis for the assessment of student learning. Moreover, individual and collective authors were encouraged to develop alternative learning programmes based on "observing the unity and conformity of educational norms" (Government Decree TJ, 2009, *Ob utverjdenii gosudarstvennogo standarta obshego srednego obrazovaniya*). This decree introduced a 'school component' into the national curriculum, *i.e.* the school pedagogical committee was authorised to allocate a specific number of hours (usually 2-3 hours per week) to be taught in accordance with the students' interests (*ibid*). Nevertheless, the content taught over these hours was prescribed within the *republican (i.e. national) component* of the curriculum and could not be significantly altered by any school administration (*ibid.*).

Uzbekistan

A decree issued by the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan as early as 1995 stipulated the structure and organisation of school education (Sect. 2, *Postanovlenie* #440, *Ob utverjdenii normativnyh dokumentov ob obrazovatelnyh uchrejdeniyah*):

Item 11. Openness and variety of secondary education, oriented toward the national and regional traditions and peculiarities, is ensured through the structure of educational content as follows: (i) State Base Component [of the national curriculum] (defined by the Ministry of Education); (ii) School Component [of the national curriculum] (Defined by a school's pedagogical committee in consultation with local education administration bodies) (MoPE Uzbekistan, 1995).

Item 12. Educational and upbringing work³⁰ at school is arranged in accordance with the educational plans and programmes approved by the Ministry of Peoples' Education of Uzbekistan (MoPE Uzbekistan, 1995).

Reading the principal document regulating education policy in Uzbekistan suggests that the list of subjects allowed for study at school is defined by the state educational standard elaborated and approved by the Ministry. Moreover, the number of hours allowed per student per week is based on curricula and programmes approved by the Ministry of Peoples' Education. Schools in Uzbekistan seemed to be authorised to identify the content of 'the school component' only, which consists of two hours per week (two lessons). Nevertheless, these lessons were monitored and assessed by state educational units, and, hence, were treated in the same way as any other lesson conducted at a school.

Kyrgyzstan

In 2009 the Ministry of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic issued an Edict N1114/1 titled "Launching a National Framework Standard (Curriculum) for General Secondary Education". The Education Development Strategy for 2012-2020 (EDS) referred to the National Framework Standard as 'transformational', since this was the first legislative act of a new type that proclaimed a skills- and outcomes-based approach in education provision and evaluation (EDS, Sec.II, 2012). The same year a subject-specific curriculum for Years 1-4 was developed, as well as the draft of subject-specific curriculum for Years 5-9. The Curriculum for Years 10-11 was still pending at that time.

³⁰ A twofold objective found its way from Soviet schooling policies to the modern strategic documents and laws of education development in the Central Asian states: schools are obliged to provide both education and upbringing (*vospitanie*: Rus.) for pupils. The latter means the social-emotional development of pupils as individuals and members of society.

In parallel, the project of an experimental learning plan for schools with per capita funding had been developed and approved by the Ministry. Total instruction time has been reduced by 10 per cent through merging subjects into integrated courses. Six thousand headteachers and teachers from across the Kyrgyz Republic were trained in the basics of a new curriculum under the Asian Development Bank's project in 2009-2010.

Nevertheless, according to the 'Knowledge Brief' issued in 2011 by the World Bank, the central curriculum applied in the Kyrgyz Republic was inherited from the Soviet era. There was an overload of subjects and hours; consequently the time available for practical, creative and integrated learning was very limited. The curriculum in use did not allow students to adequately master essential and functional literacy and numeracy. In other words, the new National Framework Curriculum developed in 2009 had not been launched yet in 2011.

Analysis of the educational documentation in Kyrgyzstan showed that the process of educational content decentralisation – and recentralisation – started in the mid-1990s, when there were several variants of educational plans designed for different types of schools. In the Soviet era, the choice of schools was limited. Apart from regular secondary schools, children could choose so-called maths schools with advanced programmes in maths and science, and specialised language schools offering advanced programmes in one or two languages. However, two decades ago a new classification of schools into four major types emerged: (a) comprehensive schools; (b) specialised schools with advanced programmes in specific subjects, such as languages, or in narrow fields like physics, chemistry, etc.; (c) lyceums, specialised schools with advanced programmes in maths and natural science; (d) gymnasiums, specialised schools offering advanced programmes in languages, humanities and social sciences. According to school types, as listed above, a

school could choose a variant of the educational plan with a higher number of hours for foreign languages or for maths. This was a so-called multi-variant curriculum that provided schools with some degree of independence in regard to time resource. However, only schools with some special status (*e.g.* lyceums, specialised schools and gymnasiums) could enjoy this and other ‘freedoms’ (*e.g.* to select students). However, in 2006 the multi-variant central curriculum was abolished by the decision of the Ministry of Education of Kyrgyzstan (Decree MoE No. 285, 27 November 2006).

As in Uzbekistan, the Kyrgyz educational plan prescribed by the National Ministry of Education included a so-called ‘school component’, *i.e.* a limited number of hours for any subject chosen by school but funded by the state. Thus, schools were given two hours per week within which they could choose subjects/topics to respond to the particularities of the region or students’ interests in specific areas of knowledge.

Since then, the funding of the ‘school component’ has been delegated to the budgets of local governments. Disparities in funding possibilities among different *aiyl-okmuttuu* (Kyrg.: administrative divisions of local governments) hindered schools’ flexibility and responsiveness to local needs, in respect of choosing the content to be taught within those hours.

Curriculum: Survey Analysis

Several characteristics of the Kyrgyz curriculum appeared to be common to curricula in the other two republics, which also seemed to be overloaded with the number of subjects and lesson-hours. Curricula in use in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as those used in Kyrgyzstan, did not allow students to master adequately essential and functional literacy and numeracy (*cf.* WB 2011). The World Bank experts provided negative feedback on

the quality of the central documents, which stipulated the educational content across the three states. Taking their views into account, it appeared to be very important to investigate the schools' responsibility (if any) in relation to curriculum, and also any adjustment of standards to local and/or students' needs across these states. The locus of decision-making power over Policy Autonomy had been analysed via the headteachers' survey. For this purpose, headteachers in the three Central Asian republics were asked about their perception of who had the principal responsibility for making decisions about educational content (*i.e.* what subjects to teach) and time of instruction (*i.e.* what amount of lesson hours to devote to a specific subject).

Table 6.2 Locus of Primary Responsibility for Subject Selection in the Three Countries (number and percentage of schools)

		Country name		
		Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Head or School Committee	N	7	2	0
	%	13,7%	4,1%	0,0%
Regional Educational Administration	N	1	6	0
	%	2,0%	12,2%	0,0%
Ministry of Education	N	43	41	22
	%	84,3%	83,7%	100,0%
Total	N	51	49	22
	%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question asked: 'Who do you believe has primary responsibility for making decisions about subject selection?' Options provided included School, Regional Educational Administration, Provincial Educational Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other.

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011..

As is seen in Table 6.2, across the three countries the vast majority of schools refer to the national Ministries of Education as the principal decision-making body in the area of educational content in the national curricula. These findings offer firm testimony to the high degree of centralised control over course content exercised by the governments of the three republics. Table 6.3 supports the same argument with 100, 90 and 76 per cent of heads in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, respectively, stating that the central

governments of the republics made decisions about the amount of time subjects should be taught (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3 Locus of Primary Responsibility for Deciding How Many Hours to Teach a Course in the Three Countries (number and percentage of schools)

		Country name		
		Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Head or School Committee	N	3	4	0
	%	5,9%	8,2%	0,0%
Regional Educational Administration	N	2	8	0
	%	3,9%	16,3%	0,0%
Ministry of Education	N	46	37	22
	%	90,2%	75,5%	100,0%
Total	N	51	49	22
	%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question asked: ‘Who do you believe has primary responsibility for making decisions about the number of hours per course?’ Options provided included School, Regional Educational Administration, Provincial Educational Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other.

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

Curriculum: Interview Analysis

Tajikistan

Apparently the introduction of per capita funding and the delegation of managerial decision-making power in relation to fundraising to schools provided headteachers in Tajikistan with the impetus to continue following the Ministry of Education’s framework for educational standards without really questioning it:

There is the Ministry of Education, of course, that sets the educational framework, it is their function. Sometimes the framework may be debated in the mass media, but for us schools, it is a must to implement the state educational plan and state standard for education (Tajik headteacher).

Feeling empowered by changes toward greater autonomy introduced in managerial dimensions, headteachers interviewed believed that the trend toward decentralisation was relatively stable in Tajikistan, and school powers would be enhanced further with time:

We have just started to work more independently, to be more autonomous. We've even learned how to set our own objectives at school. They are difficult to achieve, though. There is freedom, but not in a full sense yet (Tajik headteacher).

Kyrgyzstan

In contrast to heads in Tajikistan, heads interviewed in Kyrgyzstan were more explicitly critical. They referred to the rather restrictive impact of the centralised curriculum on school performance. They suggested that flexible and adjustable educational plans and programmes could fit better with the changed pedagogical framework. They felt that the elimination of ideological constraints and the change in political climate had turned out to have a rather limited impact on the state curriculum:

It seems pointless to teach drawing and craft separately, they could be easily merged, but other subjects like ethics, much needed nowadays, were not given enough hours. I also wish we could stream pupils in a class according to their interests and aptitudes – some of them are just much more inclined to learn humanities than they are to learn exact sciences. It would help to stream pupils within classes or even across them (Kyrgyz headteacher).

I do find the framework set by the national learning plans quite restrictive. Because there are so many hours in the state plan, for instance, 36 in all

for Year 9, there is no way I can introduce any extra-curricular activities (Kyrgyz headteacher).

The centralised curriculum overladen with lesson hours appeared to be an especial burden for schools in Kyrgyzstan given the teacher shortages in the country. No matter how scarce human resources were, schools were obliged to fulfil the state educational standard. Naturally, there were schools in Kyrgyzstan that failed to fill teacher vacancies and provide tutoring on a number of subjects. Meanwhile, other heads appeared ready to defy the MoE's instructions and curtail the education plan in order to provide for all subjects in the curriculum to be taught but over shorter hours:

Coping with the shortage of teachers I did the following – I invited a physics teacher, who works in Kazakhstan, asked him to develop concentrated programmes of physics for different year groups, so that our children could learn about all topics but over a shorter period of time. Life made me seek solutions (Kyrgyz headteacher).

There are indeed schools in our area whose leavers have blank spaces instead of grades in their attestates (Rus.: certificates on the completion of secondary education) for a number of subjects, meaning there must be no teachers to teach those subjects (Kyrgyz headteacher).

Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan those few heads who were asked about decision-making competences delegated to schools in relation to the national centralised curriculum emphasised state control and that it was impossible to adjust it to school community needs:

Both educational plans and programmes are developed and approved by the Ministry of the Peoples Education and then get channelled to schools. We are not allowed to change them (Uzbek headteacher).

Furthermore, headteachers explicitly stated that every aspect of the educational process was strictly prescribed by the state through norms, edicts and regulations adopted in the system:

In reality there is not much I can decide: the state educational standard for secondary education regulates the length of a lesson; the period of a term; timetables; the number of students per class; the number of hours taught per annum. Every decision in this regard is centralised (Uzbek headteacher).

It is unmistakable that national ministries of education have maintained a firm control over curricula and educational standards across the three states. This might seem to be a continuation of the centralism of the past. Nonetheless, it is also clear that there was some level of flexibility in the policy (i.e. curriculum) dimension since the legislation in the three countries stipulated two-tiered national curricula comprised of a ‘national component’ and a ‘school’ one.

6.4. Policy Autonomy: Textbook Usage

Although designation of a curriculum provides only a general framework, it is the whole paradigm of educational policy that is normative and binding (Scholl 2012, p.331). Only in conjunction with other policies, such as teaching methods and textbook provision, can curricula statements be assessed as restricting or enhancing school autonomy. This raises

the question of the extent to which schools in the three countries were granted the opportunity to choose which textbooks to use.

In Soviet times, the republics were expected to fill in request forms for quantities of textbooks and send them to Moscow, where, according to Walker (1978), all textbooks in the Russian language were developed, approved and printed at one of the state-owned publishing houses (p.109).³¹ In 2005 John Maier characterised the textbook landscape in Russia as ‘versatile’, and still marked by many characteristics associated with the Soviet tradition (p.150).³²

In Soviet times textbooks and teachers’ manuals in the national languages were merely produced by publishing houses located in the republics, while the manuscripts of these textbooks were developed and approved in Moscow (*ibid.*, p.109). Thus, for the emerging independent states of Central Asia textbook publishing (*i.e.* the whole production) was a totally new experience. In the early days of their independence, the main function of educational academies or institutes (administrative units within national ministries) in the three states was to translate Russian textbooks into the main national languages: Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek.

Furthermore, in a socialist society, the value of books, including textbooks, was guided not solely by demand and profitability. The very low retail prices set by the Soviet state for textbooks and other educational materials was a characteristic of the system. Walker

³¹ For more details about textbook production over the Soviet era, see Appendix 3.

³² Maier (2005) refers to the principles of history textbook construction, that is labelling the theoretical models used in the textbook as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, instead of pointing to the models’ strengths and weaknesses to be discussed in the classroom.

(1978) notes that a complete set of textbooks for primary and secondary school, 84 titles in total, had an average retail price of only 33 *kopeek* per book (equal to about £0.20 at that time) (p.111). After 1991 the former Soviet republics had to accept that production costs were the principal factor in price-setting for ‘home-made’ textbooks. Thus, the frequently reiterated principle, that a textbook’s price should not hamper a textbook’s circulation among pupils for whom it was intended, appeared to be trampled on across the three states. The lack of funding made those states seek donors’ help,³³ where the shortage of textbooks in schools became one of the major barriers facing educational development in the three states (see Table 6.4).

Whether schools were authorised to choose textbooks available in the region was studied with the help of an analysis of the three states’ legislative frameworks.

Textbook Usage: Documentary Analysis

Uzbekistan

The legal framework in Uzbekistan appeared to be particularly centralised, and, hence, differed the least from the framework adopted over the Soviet period. Textbook production and supply procedures in Uzbekistan were stipulated in the Decree of the President No 362, adopted in May 2006: ‘On additional measures for enhancing textbooks supply to public schools. The National Ministry of Public Education is in charge of informing parents about the list of textbooks approved by the state for the next academic year. The Ministry is also in charge of forming the printing order for each title

³³ For instance, in 2004 in Kyrgyzstan 100% of funding for textbook publishing was sourced by the Asian Development Bank (ADB, Education Development Project II Report, 2006).

based on a parents' survey' (Presidential Decree No 362, 2006, Sect. 3). The parents' survey investigates how they plan to obtain textbooks for their children. The decree suggests that parents can choose one of two options available. One is through school libraries, free or at a small rental charge, and the other through textbook fairs organised by the state agency 'Uzkitobsavdo', with branches spread across the republic. Therefore, textbook prices at the fairs, as well as rental fees at school libraries, are centrally set and standardised across the country. In short, in Uzbekistan the state controls textbook supply from the stage of manuscript development, through production at the state-owned printers, to the textbook being shelved in a school library or a student's home. Thus, the schools had almost no decision-making authority to choose textbooks in Uzbekistan.

Tajikistan

The national Ministry of Education (MoE) of Tajikistan is fully in charge of textbook development and publishing for all school subjects in accordance with the national curriculum and educational standards. 'Publishing' includes manuscript development and signing off a textbook for printing, ordering a specific number of copies per title and paying a publishing house for the copies ordered. Also the ministry ensures that the textbooks are delivered and distributed to schools (Art. 29, Sect. 3, Tajik Educational Law, 2004). The same Tajik Educational Law (2004) includes a list of activities allowed at schools for income generation but with the core objective of 'strengthening' and 'deepening' students' knowledge stipulated in the state educational standard. There is no reference to alternative textbooks allowed for purchase and usage by schools. Similar to Kyrgyz and Uzbek procedures, the Tajik list of textbooks recommended for schools is issued annually by the Ministry of Education. However, textbooks have been officially

traded to people in stores and markets since 2011 (Report of the Prime Minister's Office, Government of Tajikistan, 2011).

Kyrgyzstan

The supply of official textbooks in Kyrgyzstan is organised in a similar way to that in Uzbekistan. Nonetheless, a number of differences in textbook production and supply arrangements were found. First, although the legal framework of textbook provision is very similar to that in Uzbekistan (*i.e.* the state controls textbook production from manuscript development to textbook distribution to schools), a flourishing 'black market' of textbooks exists in Kyrgyzstan. It is usually formed from extra copies printed illegally by publishing houses, which handle state orders for textbook production; these extra copies are sold through spontaneous book markets or bookshops. This is more prominent in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan than in Uzbekistan, where textbook publishing and distribution are regulated by law and administered through national agencies. In practice schools in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – in contrast to Uzbek ones – have the option of turning to the 'black market' to purchase textbooks if and when they have funds generated from private sources (*e.g.* sponsors, parents, non-governmental organisations, etc.).

Second, the list of textbooks recommended by the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education to schools includes titles developed and published abroad, in Russia and in Uzbekistan³⁴ in particular. These were popular among schools with mixed languages of instruction.

³⁴ Textbook trading between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan gradually slowed after Uzbekistan adopted Latin script: "Uzbekistan has decided to adopt a Latin script similar to that used in Turkey to replace Cyrillic" a Government spokesman said (New York Times, 5 September 1993). Kyrgyz schools using Uzbek as the language of instruction and continue to use the Cyrillic script.

Hence, textbooks produced in Russia might be purchased in the market place by schools, or ordered directly from Russia with private funds raised from parents. Textbook prices, having been fully deregulated, could vary from £2 to £20 per book in Kyrgyz currency.

Third, as in Uzbekistan, textbooks supplied to schools via the official pipeline could be lent to pupils at small fees regulated by the state. By the end of the academic year the books had to be returned to the school library. Fees would be accumulated in a special school account at the regional unit of the Ministry of Finance, and could be spent only on paying for the next lot of textbooks supplied by the Ministry of Education. The study showed that such ‘textbook rental schemes’ were common practice in schools across the three states. It was only in Uzbekistan that textbooks for primary school pupils were distributed free:

We distribute textbooks to pupils as loans, and to primary school pupils as presents (Uzbek headteacher).

In Kyrgyzstan, this scheme was launched and scaled up over the republic under the ADB Educational Sector Development Project (ESDP Report, ADB, 1999), but was terminated in 2006 by edict of the second president, K. Bakiev. Much as that edict bolstered his popularity, it severely impaired textbook supply in the Kyrgyz Republic:

Bakiev was convinced that people would build him a monument for this edict making textbooks free. He just forgot to think where money would come from. It’s a great pity that the textbook rental scheme was ruined; it did work and proved to be efficient. Now we want it to be reintroduced, today the fee would be 25 som per book [about £0.30], and 15 per cent of pupils from low-income families would be exempted. I also believe it is time to start to sell textbooks openly (Kyrgyz Deputy Minister of Education, 2011).

Finally, the fourth difference from textbook production and supply in Uzbekistan is that Kyrgyz textbook publishing contracts are usually put out to tender, where publishing houses of any ownership type can participate. This was one of the conditions that accompanied foreign aid, which constituted the biggest part of funds spent on textbook production in the state since 1998 (MoE Bulletin N 455). Officially, textbook publishing in Kyrgyzstan is liberalised and based on free market principles. However, headteachers and officials in interviews mentioned that textbook authors and ministerial expert committee members were often people with conflicting interests, and “insider dealing” occurred throughout the system:

Since 2008 textbooks have not been published in Kyrgyzstan. A big fraud was revealed within Continent Print Ltd., a printing house owned by one of the sons of the former President [of Kyrgyzstan]. Then Continent won a 100 million *som* state contract for textbook printing, but [Continent] did not have equipment required to produce books in hard cover. They broke all possible deadlines. Finally, the contract was not fulfilled, textbooks were not published; there was a big scandal and as a result Mrs Boljurova [the previous Minister of Education] was fired (Ministerial official in Kyrgyzstan). Quasi-market mechanisms were incorporated into textbook production regulations adopted in Kyrgyzstan (also in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) in response to the international donor organisations’ requirements (*e.g.* Asian Development Bank’s conditions in particular). Thus, school heads should annually fill in an order form on textbooks required at their schools. Nevertheless, the final lists of textbooks for publishing are authorised by the textbook publishing committee at the Ministry of Education. During the course of data collection for this study, respondents reported fraud cases, when textbooks written by family members of ministerial officials would be included in the official list of textbooks recommended by the ministry without any demand for them from schools.

There were no orders for the latest edition of a maths textbook for primary schools, and suddenly on tender day the deputy [of the Minister of Education shouts:] “How come the X primary maths textbook has not been included! Put it in immediately! What shall we to say to schools?” It appeared his wife was the author of that textbook (WB Project specialist in Kyrgyzstan).

Textbook production stood out as a resource-consuming activity in the educational sectors across the states concerned. Perhaps the liberalisation of the textbook markets (*i.e.* allowing private publishing houses to produce textbooks) might serve as a means to release the states from the financial burden of centralised textbook production.

Textbook Usage: Survey Analysis

Survey findings confirmed that the lack of decision-making power over textbook selection at a school level was less of a worry than the overall shortage of textbooks and other learning materials across the three republics (in Uzbekistan to a lesser extent). Despite foreign-aid and state investment in textbook production, in 2011 a significant proportion of schools in the countries surveyed claimed that shortages of textbooks hampered teaching (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4 Textbook Shortage as a Hindrance to Headteachers' Work (number and percentage of schools), 2011

		Country name		
		Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Not at all	N	0	0	1
	%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%
Very little	N	3	2	2
	%	5.9%	4.1%	9.1%
To some extent	N	13	30	11
	%	25.5%	61.2%	50.0%
A lot	N	35	17	8
	%	68.6%	34.7%	36.4%
Total	N	51	49	22
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Question asked: 'Does the shortage of textbooks have a negative impact on your school work?'

Source: The Headteacher's Survey, 2011.

As is shown in Table 6.4, both in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan more than 95 per cent of schools surveyed stated that the shortage of textbooks hampered work in their establishments to some extent or a lot; in Uzbekistan 86 per cent of the schools expressed the same opinion.

Table 6.5 Locus of Primary Responsibility for Textbooks Selection in the Three Countries (number and percentage of schools), 2011

		Country name		
		Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Head or School Committee	N	13	22	0
	%	25.5%	44.9%	0.0%
Regional Educational Administration	N	2	5	2
	%	3.9%	10.2%	9.1%
Ministry of Education	N	35	21	20
	%	68.6%	42.9%	90.9%
Missing	N	1	0	0
	%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	N	0	1	0
	%	0.0%	2.0%	0.0%
Total	N	51	49	22
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Question asked: 'Who do you believe has primary responsibility for making decisions about the selection of textbooks?' Options provided included School, Regional Educational Administration, Provincial Educational Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other.

Source: The Headteacher's Survey, 2011.

The locus of primary responsibility showed greater diversity among the three states over the selection of textbooks (Table 6.5). Although 91 per cent of heads in Uzbekistan identified the central government as having primary responsibility for deciding which textbooks schools should use, 69 per cent of headteachers expressed the same opinion in Kyrgyzstan and 43 per cent in Tajikistan. Heads in Tajikistan appeared to be the most empowered to decide about textbooks: 45 per cent of respondents there replied accordingly, against 25.5 per cent from Kyrgyzstan, and none from Uzbekistan.

Textbooks Usage: Interview Analysis

Tajikistan

In interviews heads were worried primarily by the shortage of textbooks, since a lack of state funding in the 1990s and 2000s had created a major shortage. Although the national statistics on the availability of textbooks at Tajik schools varied, serious shortages were evident on the ground with a number of schools reporting they had to establish practices relying on teachers' notes rather than on standard textbooks:

Textbook supply is a big problem. It is all the more so because my school is trilingual. There are enough textbooks in Tajik language, but textbooks in Russian and Uzbek are almost non-existent. But my teachers are good. Via the Internet they access the information required, and summarise it in notes – and then they are able to teach well. (Tajik headteacher).

Thanks to the Internet teachers have access to information. They develop outlines of topics. Pupils study by those outlines. There are some Soviet

textbooks left from Soviet times, and so they remain in use (Tajik headteacher).

One of the questions asked during interviews was on why lists with state-recommended textbooks were still circulating, since the state had failed to provide these books; and, anyhow, there was access to relevant information via the Internet, which was not subject to censorship or control. Some heads experienced problems responding to this question, but insisted that all textbooks imported from Russia, or materials accessed via the Internet would have to correspond to the national educational standards:

There is a state approved standard, and we cannot compromise it. If we bring in textbooks published in Russia, they are those that correspond well to the Tajik state standard (Tajik headteacher).

Uzbekistan

The limitations of sample size in Uzbekistan – it is small and mainly urban – restrict the generalisability of the interview findings. However, interviews with heads there led to the conclusion that schools in Uzbekistan were much better equipped with both ICT and textbooks than the schools in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Headteachers even mentioned e-textbooks used in their schools:

One hundred per cent of pupils at my schools have the textbooks required. Textbooks are distributed at a small rental fee that is less than 25 per cent of a textbook price. The fee is revised annually by the government. The rental scheme [adopted] helped us to provide each student with a textbook. (Uzbek headteacher).

There is a list of textbooks recommended by the ministry to schools. Through RaiOO we receive those textbooks and also receive electronic textbooks, the ministry recommended so (Uzbek headteacher).

This greater availability of textbooks in Uzbekistan may be explained by the fact that among the three countries it had the highest GDP per capita \$3287 (PPP), compared with \$2324 in Tajikistan and \$2402 in Kyrgyzstan (UIS Statistics in Brief, UNESCO 2011).³⁵ The absence of textbook choice appeared to be not prominent in heads' minds, and was not emphasised in interviews.

Kyrgyzstan

As in Tajikistan, Kyrgyz heads reported a major shortage in the supply of textbooks. The practice of relying on notes and outlines produced by teachers rather than on standard textbooks appeared to be common as well. Financial austerity was blamed.

We experience a tremendous shortage of textbooks, particularly Physics and Chemistry for Years 10 and 11. We also have to continue using textbooks that were outdated long ago (Kyrgyz headteacher).

Textbook provision currently in the Republic is 39.4 per cent. This is if a pupil needs a set of twelve textbooks, she has only four, and the other eight subjects are taught on an improvised basis (Interview with a Deputy Minister of Education, Kyrgyzstan, 2011).

³⁵ The percentage of government spending going to education in Uzbekistan was not available; in Tajikistan it amounted to 13.8% (2011) and in Kyrgyzstan 21.2% (2011) (UIS Statistics in Brief, UNESCO 2011).

According to the WB ‘Knowledge Brief’ (April 2011), roughly half of all Kyrgyz students do not have access to modern textbooks; moreover, teachers’ and students’ access to other learning materials is also limited (p. 1).³⁶

The lack of transparency in textbook production – sometimes including fraud, as mentioned above – left headteachers dissatisfied:

We, of course, submit our applications to RaiOO [Local Education Authority] with textbooks we prefer to have and quantity required, but these applications are never fulfilled 100 per cent and we always receive less than what we asked for (Kyrgyz headteacher).

It is very annoying that we cannot choose textbooks and have to accept what the raion education administration gives us (Kyrgyz headteacher).

As noted in these quotations, in Kyrgyzstan the delivery of textbooks to schools continued to be channelled through the *raion* education administrations: *i.e.* the scheme of distribution used during the Soviet era had been left unchanged. No difference was observed in the way textbooks were ordered: schools continued to submit applications to the *raion* education administrations specifying the titles of textbooks and the quantity desired. The titles of textbooks requested had to be among those included in the list of textbooks recommended by the Ministry of Education:

³⁶ The World Bank Knowledge Brief (April 2011) was based on the report: “Lessons from PISA - Kyrgyz Republic”, OECD and World Bank, 2010.

I wish we might request alternative textbooks, written by authors we like, but it is not possible. We have to include titles recommended by the ministry (Kyrgyz headteacher).

6.5. Policy Analysis: Teaching Methods

As far as student-centred pedagogical approaches are concerned, changes in the post-Soviet systems of the three countries appeared to be more episodic than systematic. They seemed closely associated with individuals: for instance, a number of teachers in schools surveyed across the three countries had been exposed to alternative teaching methods as part of experiments and pilot projects funded by the international organisations. The present thesis did not seek to evaluate the shift of teaching methods (if any) from teacher-centred to student-centred at schools in the countries concerned. However, the focus was on how free the heads felt in relation to choosing classroom practices and whether they would be controlled in *ex post* audits by educational authorities³⁷. In fact, as Muckle (2005) stated in relation to the Russian school, “The manner in which lessons are conducted owes a lot to the way students are tested and assessed” (p.322); and, hence, also to the way teachers are trained and upgraded.

Teaching Methods: Documentary Analysis

Legislative frameworks adopted in the three countries contained general references to the creation of a child-centred atmosphere at school, but did not include any detailed guidelines on how to achieve it. Headteachers’ feelings expressed in interviews about the

³⁷ Headteachers in the three countries were in the best position to answer questions about the extent of school autonomy in selecting classroom teaching methods because they taught subjects as well as managing schools. This was common practice throughout the region to boost heads’ salaries (see Ch. 7).

shift from a teacher-centred to a student-centred paradigm is discussed in the following two sections.

Teaching Methods: Survey Analysis

As seen in Table 6.6, the picture did not change in Uzbekistan in relation to specifying what teaching methods were to be employed: 100 per cent of schools reported the Ministry of People's Education to be in charge. Over ten per cent of respondents surveyed in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan claimed that they had some responsibility for deciding about teaching at their schools. The patterns that emerged in teaching methods had been reinforced by pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes available in the countries concerned and managed by the national educational ministries (*Interview with a Teacher In-Service Training expert, Tajikistan*).

Table 6.6 Locus of Primary Responsibility for Deciding How to Teach a Course in the Three Countries (number and percentage of schools), 2011

		Country name		
		Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Head or School Committee	N	13	14	0
	%	25.5%	28.6%	0.0%
Regional Educational Administration	N	2	8	0
	%	3.9%	16.3%	0.0%
Ministry of Education	N	36	27	22
	%	70.6%	55.1%	100.0%
Total	N	51	49	22
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Question asked: 'Who do you believe has primary responsibility for making decisions about how to teach a course at your school?' Options provided included School, Regional Educational Administration, Provincial Educational Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other.

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011

Heads appeared to be well-informed about internationally regarded innovations in teaching methods. However, the actual introduction of such ideas into schools seemed to

be problematic due to centralised curricula, state-run teacher in-service institutions and the lack of financial resources (based on interviews with educators in the three countries). Although headteachers might continue to employ authoritarian teaching methods in the classroom, the arrival of the new discourse, especially regarding the need for a more democratic and team-leader style, as well as greater exposure to new teaching approaches (mostly through non-governmental organisations), had informed their responses to the question about their own management style in the questionnaire (Table 6.7).

Table 6.7 ‘Team-player’ Style of School Management (number and percentage of schools), 2011

		Country name		
		Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Yes	N	31	29	9
	%	60.8%	59.2%	40.9%
No	N	19	19	8
	%	37.3%	38.8%	36.4%
Missing	N	1	1	5
	%	2.0%	2.0%	22.7%
Total	N	51	49	22
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Question asked: ‘Is your school management style of a ‘team-player’ type?’

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

Thus, in Kyrgyzstan 61 per cent of headteachers in schools surveyed claimed that their management style was of a ‘team-player’ type, in Tajikistan 59 per cent, and in Uzbekistan 41 per cent. Interestingly, nearly one fifth of respondents in Uzbekistan left this question unanswered in contrast to just one school each in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (Table 6.7).

Teaching Practices: Interview Analysis

National curricula and textbooks prescribed by the educational ministries appeared to have a restrictive impact on headteachers' capacity to promote the shift from teacher-centred to student-centred schooling. Some of the heads who introduced this shift experienced opposition and resistance from educational authorities (see Chapter 7):

Our teachers like to try different things in their lessons but these are all extra: there is a state educational programme that no one has cancelled, they have to follow it (Tajik headteacher).

There is a state-approved educational programme and a plan, approved by the Ministry. There are subject-based programmes. My school is not a gymnasium, we have no right to develop our own programmes. A programme is given to be followed (Kyrgyz headteacher).

In fact, my previous professional involvement in schooling in the region proved that such phrases as 'school self-management', 'teacher-centred pedagogy' and 'education democratisation' had been turned into buzzwords eagerly used in education rhetoric but hardly implemented in classroom practices. According to Steiner-Khamsi (2004), this is not uncommon in transitional settings. Having borrowed discourse, especially regarding being more democratic and having a team-leader approach, school managers and officials pursue the purposes of leverage, legitimation and recognition. The way in which these heads identified the management style they followed and classroom practices they supported suggested that they were aware of internationally preferred practices.

I am very democratic, a real team-player. When a teacher is innovative and creative in her teaching, if she is trying hard, then it is my part to notice and reward her achievements (Tajik headteacher).

It is not as simple as a teacher coming, conducting a lesson and leaving. I expect her to be an innovator, to introduce new ideas at school. She should demonstrate a creative approach to her lessons (Tajik headteacher).

While heads in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan tended to demonstrate their loyalty to the democratic principle of child-centred schooling, Uzbek heads were likely to demonstrate their loyalty to the schools where they worked and to the country (Uzbek headteacher).

Teachers are praised for devotion to their profession, loyalty to their school and responsibility for their work. They are the ones who create a 'healthy' atmosphere at school (Uzbek headteacher).

Apart from patriotic discourse, only a few heads interviewed managed to provide specific examples of their support for innovative methods. One of them was a head in Tajikistan:

It was important to retain my German teachers, but there was no one to lead and inspire them. Teacher in-service training was no great help. So, we approached the German embassy requesting the opening of a centre for the German language at our school. Now students and teachers have the opportunity to travel to Germany with study tours, and we receive books and other materials needed from our German partners (Tajik headteacher).

This head's statement suggests how the lack of resources may both restrict the promotion of innovations in teaching at schools and at the same time encourage it – necessity as the mother of invention. Since textbooks were not readily available in 87 per cent of the

schools surveyed in the region (see Table 6.4),³⁸ memorisation and rote learning might seem to be a generally acceptable mode of teaching. Thus, one of the heads in Kyrgyzstan argued:

A teacher must be provided with methodological guidelines and up-to-date textbooks: then and only then I can demand high-class performance from him or her. (Kyrgyz headteacher).

New approaches to teaching created problems for the in-service development of teachers. Across the three countries teacher training and retraining continued to be provided by the state-run network of institutions subordinate to national Ministries of Education, which ensured a certain unity among teachers who had to work under similar constraints. Retraining teachers is an expensive and lengthy process that involves releasing time in-service, as well as supporting those being retrained – all of this is difficult to arrange under conditions of financial scarcity. Moreover, it was far from clear whether all teachers and heads opposed the traditional methods:

Teachers receive upgrading training at the state institute of Teacher In-Service Training. It is not necessarily innovative methods of teaching that they are taught at those courses, but teachers are satisfied (Kyrgyz headteacher).

³⁸ This is the proportion of heads surveyed who claimed that textbook shortages at their schools were a hindrance to teaching either to some extent or a lot.

Teacher in-service training courses [state-run] help my teachers implement the state educational standard with great precision (Uzbek headteacher).

As Schweisfurth (2013) observes, unease emerges about total rejection of the past, and some headteachers defended their previous practices under the Soviet system. Some of the attitudes expressed by teachers in the three countries were similar to those found by Schweisfurth in Russia:

Many Russians prefer the collective ethic to modern individualism and selfishness. Some appeared to comply with new requirements strategically; some denied the impact or even the reality of the intended reforms; some ignored reform and merely re-named time-honoured practice (p.103).

To summarize, empirical evidence from the countries in my study showed that although the majority of headteachers interviewed were well-informed and quite supportive of innovative teaching methods which were promoted in the world of modern education, they shared similar views regarding the barriers to changing pedagogy in their schools. Thus, they believed it would be limited by both state regulations in the form of centralised curricula and austerity in financial and human resources across the three countries.

6.6. Index of Policy Autonomy

Having adapted the Verhoest *et al.* framework for studying public agency autonomy, I measured Policy Autonomy here through four items: whether a school has the right to decide what subjects to teach, how many hours to teach per subject, what textbooks to use and has the capacity internally to coordinate classroom teaching methods.

Following the Verhoest *et al.* (2004) approach, the items listed were scored ‘1’ (maximal autonomy), in cases where the headteacher reported her school to be primarily in charge of the activity, and ‘0’ (minimal/no autonomy), in cases where the headteacher reported that the Ministry of Education or another agency subordinate to it was primarily in charge. The mean score for the Policy Autonomy for each country is presented in Table 6.8.

Table 6.8 Index of *Policy Autonomy* per Country, 2011

Country name	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Kyrgyzstan	0.12	51	0.21	.03
Tajikistan	0.3	49	0.2	.03
Uzbekistan	0.07	22	0.09	.02

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

As with the Financial Management indices, schools in Tajikistan on average experience the highest degree of Policy autonomy (M=0.3, SE=.03), with Kyrgyzstan (M=0.2, SE=.03) in second place, and the least policy autonomy registered at schools in Uzbekistan (M=0.07, SE=.02). This finding is supported by qualitative evidence generated from interviews, and by analysis of policy documents in the three countries. As with the HRM and Fundraising autonomy dimensions, the difference in the means of Policy autonomy between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan as well as between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan appear to be statistically significant (sig=.014 and sig=.000 respectively); and statistically insignificant between the means in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (see Table 6.9).

Table 6.9 T-test for Equality of Means of Policy Autonomy Index

		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
KG+UZ	Equal variances	-2.59	71.0	.012	-.12	.05
	Equal variances not	-3.42	71.0	.001	-.12	.04
KG+TJ	Equal variances	-2.51	98.0	.014	-.11	.05
	Equal variances not	-2.51	98.0	.014	-.11	.05
UZ+TJ	Equal variances	-4.95	69.0	.000**	-.23	.05
	Equal variances not	-6.42	69.0	.000**	-.23	.03

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

Schools in Uzbekistan self-reported the least extent of decision-making competences in relation to education policy delegated to a school level. However, the means of the policy autonomy dimension of all three post-Soviet countries appear to be smaller than the means of the other two managerial dimensions of human resource and financial resource management (see Chapters 4 & 5).

6.7. Conclusions

Policy Autonomy appeared to be the least decentralised among the six dimensions in the framework suggested by Verhoest *et al.* and employed in this study. All three countries appeared to have a relatively traditional curriculum overloaded with academic hours, and leaving no flexibility to schools for adjustments to suit local community needs or student preferences. Conversely, reforms piloted by international partners in the three countries, Kyrgyzstan in particular, failed to be sustainable. As Astiz *et al.* (2002) noticed: “Often decentralisation of curricula control and implementation was assumed to achieve a host of effects in ways that are not clearly specified” (p.71).

The findings of survey and interview analysis presented above provide evidence from post-Soviet countries for a so-called ‘centralized-decentralisation’ phenomenon (see Burger & Treur, 1996). Thus, it appears that schools in the region had been granted more

managerial autonomy, as Chapter 4 and 5 describe, yet rather less policy autonomy. The central curriculum adopted in the three states circumscribed teachers' decision-making power, but also allowed for some academic freedom exercised within the framework of an obligatory area of activities (see Appendix 2;³⁹ also see Scholl 2012). Teachers appeared to be in charge of a large part of the activities concerning the planning and implementation of lessons but only within the central curriculum approved by the ministry. Subject teachers at schools across the region had to develop lesson plans, which would outline and sum up the topics prescribed in the central curriculum. Therefore, more similarities than differences were found in the approach to national curricula development in the three countries, something that, looked at in the round, has to signify isomorphism (see Chapter 9 for details).

³⁹ The table in Appendix 2 shows that over the course of the 'perestroika' period 1989-91 schools in the republics were in charge of making decisions about the educational content of 10% of the maximum permitted workload per week, and for up to 30% of the total workload in the senior parts of secondary schools within so-called 'school component'. Thus, the study of the outline curriculum adopted in the pre-collapse period of the Soviet state shows that schools in the countries concerned were not inexperienced in taking responsibility for organising some hours within the central curriculum.

Chapter 7 | The Dimensions of School Autonomy: Autonomy from Intervention

In modern organisations we trust highly educated professionals with a much higher degree of discretion because we assume or hope that they will be guided by internal norms in cases where their behaviour cannot be monitored from the outside.

(Fukuyama, 2013, p. 354)

The evidence provided in the previous chapters appeared to be supportive of the New Public Management (NPM) doctrine, adopted in the West. According to Verhoest and Lægreid (2010) the ideal type of an NPM agency scores highly on managerial autonomy and *ex post* control of the outcomes and low on policy autonomy and *ex ante* control (p.276). Evidence derived from the three post-Soviet countries in Central Asia supports this dictum - schools in these states have been granted more managerial autonomy and yet less policy autonomy (see Chapters 4-6). The part of the dictum that relates to 'high *ex post* control - low *ex ante* control' has been tested in this chapter.

Clearly the concept of autonomy is linked with another important concept that is the governmental control over the public agency's behaviour. Control is defined here as the mechanisms and instruments used by the government to influence the decisions and behaviour of the agency in order to achieve government objectives (Verhoest *et al.* 2004, p.106). This chapter focuses on Autonomy from Intervention, the final dimension of school autonomy adapted from Verhoest *et al.*, which refers to the extent to which an agency (a state school here) is free from *ex post* reporting requirements, evaluation and audit provisions by the government. I investigated the extent to which schools in the three

republics in this study are subject to audits with respect to fulfilling preset norms, and the extent to which headteachers are free from possible sanctions in cases where they deviate from preset normative expectations. A central feature of ‘autonomy-control’ relationships is that there is an unstable balance between greater autonomy at the local level and more steering by the central agencies; therefore we are seeing parallel processes of decentralisation and centralisation and of regulation and de-regulation (Christensen and Lægreid 2006), in the educational sector as well.

However, finding the balance between ‘steering’ by the central government and ‘rowing’ at the school level is not the only challenge. School Autonomy from Intervention is also opposed to the principles of participatory democracy (Lauglo 1995, p.25). The latter implies that evaluation should involve all ‘inside’ participants and be a collective process. This lays schools open to evaluation by not only the upper education authorities but also students, parents, school staff. This is basically the idea contained in the concept of “embedded autonomy” (Evans 1995 cited in Fukuyama 2013), that, if interpreted for schools, might sound as ‘schools might need to be shielded from certain influences of the central government, but also might need to be subordinated to the society regarding larger goals.

Ideally this process has to be linked to collective decisions about what to teach and how teaching should be conducted, and what adjustments should be made to school management and budget allocation (*ibid.*). Thus, Autonomy from Intervention is positively related to the exercise of autonomy by a public agency in other dimensions (Verhoest *et al.* 2004). The extent to which local school administrations are sheltered against governmental sanctions brought about by outcomes of school decisions made along the dimensions discussed in the previous chapters, appears to have an important

influence on the extent autonomy is exercised by schools. As Verhoest and associates argue, when an agency knows that it will not be heavily controlled on explicit norms under the threat of substantial sanctions, it will use the delegated decision-making competencies to a greater extent. This will promote innovation, experimentation and risk taking in a bureaucracy and, hence, enhance the degree of autonomy and arguably the quality of outcomes (Fukuyama 2013, p.359).

On the other hand, when *ex post* reporting, evaluation, auditing and sanctions are weak or absent, the agency can use its decision-making competencies to pursue its own objectives. (Verhoest *et al.*, p.106). This may well be associated with the ‘quality of government’ (Fukuyama 2013) (*i.e.* quality of school administration in education). If school administration and teaching staff are incompetent and unprofessional, one would want to limit their discretion and subject them to more rather than fewer rules to refrain misconduct and corrupt behaviour.

7.1. Outline of the Autonomy from Intervention

In this chapter I am interested in ‘output’ controls (*e.g.* performance measurement), which might be exercised by governments over schools using different forms and mechanisms of intervention. This final indicator in the framework of a public agency autonomy suggested by Verhoest and associates aims to explore what could lie behind intervention processes as opposed to ‘constraints’, which might provide the agency with some extent of autonomy from those. In other words, Autonomy from Intervention reflects the extent to which a school is free from *ex post* reporting requirements, evaluation and audit provisions with respect to decisions made (Verhoest *et al.* 2004, p. 106).

This dimension includes five items which have not been altered much from those proposed by Verhoest and his colleagues: (i) whether a school is in charge of setting educational goals/norms; (ii) whether a school is subject to audit *ex post* by the Ministry of Education (MoE); (iii) whether a headteacher is subject to sanctions/rewards; (iv) whether there are standardised tests to evaluate outcomes; and (v) whether school performance is measured by the MoE to be presented in league tables available to the public. These items may also be viewed as mechanisms employed by the state for holding schools accountable for outcomes. Therefore, these items will be further explored in Chapter 8, which focuses on accountability patterns adopted in the three states under conditions of partial autonomy.

Analyses of the variables listed in Table 7.1 are based on the headteachers' survey, interviews conducted with headteachers and central/local actors. As in the analyses of previous chapters, statistical data and legislation adopted in the three countries were explored. The findings were summarised in a quantitative index of school Autonomy from Intervention. Finally, the discussion of implications of these findings concludes the chapter.

Table 7.1 Summary of Items Included in Autonomy from Intervention

Autonomy from Intervention:
▪ whether a school is in charge of setting educational goals/norms; ▪ whether a school is subject to evaluation <i>ex post</i> by the MoE; ▪ whether a headteacher is subject to sanctions/rewards; ▪ whether there are standardised tests to evaluate outcomes; ▪ whether school performance is exhibited to the public in league tables.

Source: Adopted from Verhoest *et al.* 2004

Items included in school Autonomy from Intervention in part reflect the evaluation and ranking of schools against specific external standards. The literature on globalisation and educational development indicates that those standards tend to follow wider international trends in education (see Steiner-Khamsi 2004). Thus global standards need to be translated into national education policies.

7.2. Autonomy from Intervention: Goal-Setting

On the one hand, it is essential that ‘the State must be a custodian of the principles of education as a public good...in a context of increased privatization of education’ (UNESCO 2013)⁴⁰. On the other hand, scholars warn that in transitional countries – especially those where authoritarianism had reigned as long as 70 years – it might be problematic to ensure that schools exist primarily for students and not as a forum in which government objectives are carried out (Meier 2004, p.143). In this regard, the question of where the locus of educational goal-setting rests in the countries concerned is of great importance.

Goal-Setting Item: Documentary Analysis

Uzbekistan

Two principal legislative documents – the Educational Law of Uzbekistan N464, dated August 1997, and Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan N5 “On the development and introduction of the Educational standard to the general compulsory education”, dated January 1998 – stipulated that educational goals were “serving the

⁴⁰ See UNESCO Principles for Education and Development Beyond 2015, Paris, March 2013.

interests of an individual child, civil society and the state”, and had to be identified and revised by the state.

Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan

In a similar vein, educational laws in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan proclaim education as a priority for the state, and declare education to be central in raising the efficiency of the national economy and the development of civil society. The notion of public governance to be introduced in education, in addition to state management, was mentioned in the legal frameworks adopted in the three countries. However, neither incentives for nor mechanisms of community involvement in educational management have been developed. Across the three states, the headteacher appeared as a focal person in charge of educational processes conducted in school.

Goal-Setting Item: Survey Analysis

Table 7.2 summarises headteachers’ perception of schools’ roles in making decisions regarding crucial areas of education management: personnel, finance, educational content and goal setting. In the latter, schools across the three countries perceived the national ministries of education to play a primary role; thus in Kyrgyzstan 82 per cent of schools reported the Ministry of Education to be the principal agent in educational goal setting, in Uzbekistan 68 per cent of schools surveyed and in Tajikistan 59 per cent. Quite remarkably, in Kyrgyzstan one third of schools responding to the questionnaire held headteachers accountable for goal-setting against zero per cent of schools reported in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, according to the data in Table 7.2, personnel management stood out as the area where school headteachers across the region were granted the highest

degree of autonomy in making decisions. This is supported by the documentary, survey and interview analysis in Chapter 4.

Table 7.2. Locus of Goal Setting vs. Personnel Management, Finance, Educational Content (number and per cent of schools)

		Ministry of Education			Headteacher		
		KG	TJ	UZ	KG	TJ	UZ
Personnel Management	N	16	13	1	46	33	19
	%	31	27	5	90	67	86
Finance	N	24	13	3	17	17	1
	%	47	27	14	33	35	5
Goal Setting	N	42	29	15	18	6	0
	%	82	59	68	35	12	0
Educational Content	N	36	17	11	18	2	0
	%	71	35	50	35	4	0

Question asked: ‘*who, do you believe, provides a direct impact on the areas of school management?*’ Options included the Ministry of Education, Regional Administration, Provincial Administration, Headteacher, Parents’ Committee at School, Pedagogical Committee, Other. This was a multiple answer question.

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

Goal-Setting Item: Interview Analysis

Uzbekistan

Chapter 6 identified the very low degree of autonomy of Uzbek schools along the Policy dimension, compared to the other two states. In fact, 100 per cent of schools in the Uzbek sample stated that the Cabinet of Ministers developed and approved state educational standards and educational programmes in 1998. These have been compulsory for implementation by all schools in the republic since then. It is not surprising that the responses of heads interviewed about goal-setting in education were alike, and referred to central government only:

The educational and upbringing process (uchebno-vospitatel'nyi: Rus.) at school is organised in accordance with the state goals specified in educational law, learning plans and programmes approved by the president and the Ministry of People's Education (Uzbek headteacher).

Nonetheless, apart from strategic long-term goal-setting for education at a national level, a school, like any other organisation, needs operational goals, which, in concert with long-, medium- and short-term ones, help the school function on a daily basis. Analysis showed that the principal responsibility for the development of operational goals was given to pedagogical committees at schools in Uzbekistan.⁴¹

The strategy for school development is discussed and put forward by the pedagogical committee; it includes tasks and objectives our school plans to achieve. Of course, we develop it in accordance with the state educational standards (Uzbek headteacher).

Kyrgyzstan

Across the three countries, the ultimate responsibility for both strategic planning and implementation rested on headteachers' shoulders. Despite being 'the only one in charge', heads interviewed in Kyrgyzstan reported the practices of 'spreading' the function of goal-setting among other school staff (i.e. collective leadership):

⁴¹ A pedagogical committee is a structural unit in a school management system found across the three states. Usually, it consists of the most experienced school staff - teachers, deputy headteachers - and is chaired by the headteacher.

Teachers meet within methodological units to discuss and set goals for each subject. There are three units at our school – humanitarian, natural science and primary skills. The best subject teachers are the leaders of the units. My first deputy head is in charge of consolidating those plans and presenting them at a pedagogical committee that I chair (Kyrgyz headteacher).

However, the procedures described seemed to focus on deciding operational objectives, which should help a school to pursue educational goals set by central government and stipulated in national legal frameworks.

Tajikistan

In a similar vein, headteachers in Tajikistan emphasised their activity in developing strategic plans for their schools, including the achievement of both short- and long-term goals. Often the achievement of those goal was dependent on the personality and leadership ability of a school head. Those heads who appreciated their jobs and were innovative leaders aiming at implementing more than their jobs' terms of reference included appeared to be the ones able to transform schools despite limited autonomy and lack of funds. Thus one head interviewed explained:

When I was appointed head, this school was dark and tiny, with lessons in three shifts... then I set out to persuade the local administration to build a new building, and – look! – three years later, it is the only four-storeyed building in our town (Tajik headteacher)!

Finally, another Tajik headteacher emphasised the connection between the extent of a school's autonomy and its ability to plan and set goals:

There is no harm in planning and we [headteachers] are the first to set ambitious goals, but they are hard to achieve. Our school is not free enough for that (Tajik headteacher).

7.3. Autonomy from Intervention: Ex Post Evaluation

The latter quotation provokes questions about the procedures adopted by national ministerial structures in order to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of decisions made at central and local (school and local administration) levels. I have found that the ministerial commissions coming to schools for *ex post* evaluation often had a broad agenda lacking in specific criteria for evaluation. However, checking on student achievements was always top of the list. The results of formative assessment conducted by a school might well serve inspection purposes. The goal of formative assessment is to monitor student learning to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning and, apparently, by school inspectors to write a report on school. Thus formative assessment may serve well to contribute to the overall understanding of education quality in a school.

In practice, according to Freinkman (2010), it may be difficult to use indicators directly related to the quality of public services provided, such as the results of formative assessment, to evaluate the quality of education children receive. The reasons for those difficulties are twofold – first, the quality of services may be difficult to measure by tests alone, and second, there may be a strong political resistance on the part of schools to switch from process-oriented to result-oriented assessments (p.126).

Headteachers across the three countries focused on education sector inputs such as the availability of teachers, textbooks and furniture, blaming governments for shortages. It appeared that the general assumption among educators in the region was that better inputs would automatically translate into better outcomes (*ibid.*, p.126). Ambiguity in school evaluation criteria drove what seemed to be common experience for heads in the three states – to anticipate ministerial or *raion* education administration visits as occasions calling for intense and anxiety-ridden preparation.

Ex-Post Evaluation: Documentary Analysis

Tajikistan

The main legislative document that stipulated *ex post* evaluation of schools in Tajikistan appeared to be the State Programme on Education Development for 2010-2015 approved by Edict №254 of the Government of Tajikistan on 29 April 2009. Term 9 of this Programme listed actions to be undertaken in order to build the national education evaluation system and included ‘internal and external evaluation procedures for education quality assessment to be introduced...the existing standardised tools of student attainment evaluation to be enhanced; a structure for education quality evaluation to be established; qualification requirements for education managers to be reappraised’, etc.

In compliance with this framework paper, the external *ex post* evaluation system was designed as a set of procedures a school should pass once every five years in order to get its status confirmed (so-called ‘attestation’), accreditation of the standardised assessment and monitoring and evaluation activities. Meanwhile, the internal evaluation system should comprise school self-assessment, ongoing monitoring of students’ attainment and, finally, standardised testing. The latter as part of the internal evaluation system appeared

to be based on the standardised tests developed by The National Test Centre and administered at each educational stage completed by students of national schools in Year 4, Year 9 (or 10) and Year 11.

The framework paper discussed above was the programme for implementation in 2010-2015, and hence, the introduction of national standardised testing into the practice of schools in Tajikistan remains only a prospect.

Uzbekistan

The decree N406, dated 12 August 1993, by the Cabinet of Ministers, on Educational Establishments Attestation and Accreditation, stipulates the objectives of ‘attestation’ similar to ones found in Tajik legislation. Thus, through the process of attestation an educational establishment confirms its present status or applies to be granted a new one (*e.g.* lyceum, gymnasium, college, university, etc.) (Att. 3, Sec.1, *ibid.*). The Ministry of People’s Education is required to develop guidelines and procedures for school attestation (Item 5, Sec.I, *ibid.*). A school may have these procedures applied once every five years according to a ministerial plan or by the request of the educational establishment. As well as information and advice on how to use the guidelines, the Ministry provides regional education administrations a framework for launching an experts’ committee, which technically provides a school’s attestation (Item 5, Sec.II, *ibid.*).

The experts’ committee is required to develop a report on the results of a school evaluation, including the results of student attainment, information on pedagogical staff training, school building and laboratory facilities, librarian fund, etc. (Item 7, Sec II, *ibid.*). However, no standard assessment criteria were found in legislature, but rather some guidelines about what aspects of an educational establishment should be assessed. If a

school fails attestation, then it will either be reorganised, or closed fully/partially, and its educational licence suspended (Item 9, Sec. II, *ibid.*). Furthermore, the Decree N372, issued by the Cabinet of Ministers, dated 5 August 2004, requires all schools in the republic to comply with these guidelines developed by the Ministry of People's Education.

Kyrgyzstan

Neither the Law on Education⁴² nor the state Educational Standard N554 dated 23 July 2004 stipulates exact procedures for *ex post* inspection of schools. The National Education Development Strategy 2012-2020 suggests that the procedures inherited from Soviet times persist. Thus, in order to initiate a school inspection, the Ministry issues a decree (*prikaz*: Rus.) that the regional education authorities must implement (*i.e.* arrange a school appraisal) under the supervisions of one or two officials from the Ministry of Education (2012, Sec.V). This practice seemed not to allow a system for monitoring and evaluating policy outcomes to be established, and, hence, education policy decision-making in Kyrgyzstan appeared to be deprived of not only evidence from schools but also essential statistics and information. Therefore, the establishment of Education Management Information System was top of the agenda in the Education Development Strategy 2012-2020 (*ibid.*).

⁴² The Law on Education adopted in 1992 and last amended in 2009 is the main legislative act that provides for state education policy, basic principles of education and the conditions of functioning of the education system.

Ex-Post evaluation: Survey Analysis

Ex post evaluation of schools by the ministry and ministerial units appeared to be connected to student formative assessment policies. Thus, schools reported being obliged to submit the results of student attainment testing (*conrolnyi srez znaniy*: Rus.) to the upper education administration bodies. Therefore, it was important to investigate the locus of decision making in relation to student formative assessment (see Table 7.3).

Table 7.3 Locus of Student Formative Assessment (number and percentage of schools)

		Country name		
		Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Head or School Board	N	16	6	4
	%	31.4%	12.2%	18.2%
Local Education Authority	N	32	28	12
	%	62.7%	57.1%	54.5%
Regional Educational Authority	N	0	2	0
	%	0.0%	4.1%	0.0%
Ministry of Education	N	1	0	4
	%	2.0%	0.0%	18.2%
Other	N	1	4	0
	%	2.0%	8.2%	0.0%
Missing	N	1	9	2
	%	2.0%	18.4%	9.1%
Total	N	51	49	22
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Question asked: ‘*Who do you believe has primary responsibility for making decisions about student formative assessment?*’ Options provided included School, *Raion* (Local) Educational Administration, Regional Educational Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other.

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

As Table 7.3 showed, across the three states, over half of schools surveyed reported that student formative assessment procedures were stipulated primarily at a local education administration level. This was reported by 62.7 per cent of schools in Kyrgyzstan, 57.1 per cent in Tajikistan and 54.5 per cent in Uzbekistan. Some Uzbek schools (18.2%) reported the Ministry of People’s Education to be in charge. The responsibility of schools

in this regard appeared to be quite limited in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, where respectively 12.2 and 18.2 per cent of schools reported having a say on student attainment assessment. Kyrgyzstan was an outlier, with a much higher proportion of schools (31.4%) reporting enjoying some autonomy in this issue.

Ex-Post Evaluation: Interview Analysis

Kyrgyzstan

According to documentary analysis, school monitoring and *ex post* evaluation was not a precisely defined procedure with indicators and/or standards developed, against which Kyrgyz schools could be assessed. Following the logic of the traditional procedure of education management in the country; the MoE would issue a *prikaz* that the local educational administrations were required to arrange a school *ex post* audit. Nevertheless, as interviews showed, it was not unknown for the Ministry of Education to participate in these inspections (a term used on the ground by the educators as translated from Russian). Interestingly, the lack of clarity and transparency in school *ex post* evaluation criteria was raised by the officials themselves in the Ministry of Education of Kyrgyzstan during the course of data collection for this study:

Last time I told the minister that she could not send me anywhere until I knew what exactly to evaluate at school. Why should I go... having no idea what exactly to look at in school? (Education Specialist at MoE, Kyrgyzstan);

Despite levels of anxiety caused by the anticipation of inspections by the upper education administrations, school heads underlined that often such inspections were mere formalities:

Schools are usually inspected by the raion education administrations; in my school. They know us well, we know them, if there is no incident, their visits are rather a formality (Kyrgyz headteacher).

Tajikistan

Among heads across the three countries, one of the Tajik headteachers sounded the most positive about *ex post evaluation* by the ministerial units:

Our school is regularly monitored by the raion education administration. It seems to be natural to me: a school does not exist on its own, it exists within a system, all elements of which should work together (Tajik headteacher).

And also:

Of course they come to inspect us. Managing a school is my job, their job is to inspect my work, so we live...in a cycle (Tajik headteacher).

However, this positivity might well imply that school leaders and bureaucrats might form informal networks and personal ties, which might serve as a foundation for institutional stability. Thus, the heads seemed to manage to utilise networks and personal ties for extracting and sharing information. These structures appeared to be so functionally useful that they stood out as the integral parts of the institutional school environment. In fact,

this appeared to be a kind of strategy to cope with the problem of ‘bounded rationality’⁴³.

Heads referred to this as follows:

The place is small – everybody knows everybody. I have been around for so long, that people in RaiOO know me and I know them. We can always talk and understand each other (Tajik headteacher).

There is a more detailed account of school monitoring and evaluation in Tajikistan in Chapter 8, which is devoted to issues of accountability in education.

Uzbekistan

It is no surprise that Uzbek heads and teachers were reluctant to comment on *ex post evaluation* of schools by the Ministry of Education; one memorable answer contained a striking metaphor:

*I am not an architect of this kingdom [i.e. the school], I am just a builder.
The government designs how the kingdom should look, I implement their design, and they should rely on me (Uzbek headteacher).*

⁴³ Bounded rationality is the idea that in decision-making, rationality of individuals is limited by the information they have, the cognitive limitations of their minds, and the finite amount of time they have to make a decision. It was proposed by Herbert Simon as an alternative basis for the mathematical modelling of decision-making (see Simon 1991).

7.4. Autonomy from Intervention: Sanctions and Rewards

Sanctions and Reward: Documentary Analysis

In the legislative frameworks adopted in the three countries no direct references were found to how heads should be rewarded for accomplishments or punished for non-compliance. Serious breaches in the code of conduct by a headteacher or any school staff member – those leading to property damage, financial fraud or harm to students' health – would be judged according to the national criminal code. Across the three countries the only administrative sanction that could be applied for professional failure appeared to be a headteacher dismissal.

Sanctions/Rewards: Survey Analysis

As stated above, dismissal is the main form of punishment reported across the region. Survey data showed that a school played virtually no part in the dismissal of the headteacher. A similar pattern of headteacher dismissal emerged across the three countries that was not different from the pattern of headteacher appointment (see Chapter 4). Consequently the patterns of headteacher dismissal observed were the same in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan; a deviation emerged in Uzbekistan, where the headteacher dismissal issues was under the control of both an oversight Ministry and its regional unit (Chapter 4). This item has been extensively discussed there. Here 'headteacher reward' has been taken for consideration.

Salary is the most obvious extrinsic reward (*cf.* Tomlinson, 2000) that a school headteacher receives. This is also a reward that a school could regulate if it were to be granted some degree of autonomy in human and financial resource management. As has

been already discussed in Chapter 4, the differences observed in bonus systems across the three countries were particularly commented on by the respondents (see Chapter 4). That chapter explores whether the headteachers in the three countries might have been entitled to any other rewards, not related to headteachers' earnings. In cases where this system exists initiated by the central governments in the states concerned, this could serve as an additional incentive for heads to comply with pre-set norms and standards. As the documentary analysis showed there was no indication of additional material incentives in legislation. Hence, this might well be left to the discretion of local government. The survey explored headteachers' perception whether heads could ever be rewarded in the three countries. The results are reported in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4 The Headteachers' Rewards for Excellence in Performance per Country (number and percentage of schools)

		Country name		
		KG	TJ	UZ
Yes	N	23	14	11
	%	45.1%	28.6%	50.0%
No	N	28	30	11
	%	54.9%	61.2%	50.0%
Missing	N	0	5	0
	%	0.0%	10.0%	0.0%
	N	51	49	22
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Question asked: 'May a headteacher be rewarded by the upper education administration units?'

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

Sanctions and Reward: Interview Analysis

Kyrgyzstan

A major concern in relation to *ex post evaluation* described above was expressed in focus groups with education policy-makers in Kyrgyzstan. They argued that external

evaluations had never led to any efforts by policy-makers or administrators to understand existing learning gaps and consider how these could be filled. Moreover, one of the drawbacks mentioned was how little school inspection results informed the decisions made by local educational officials and ministerial authorities. Educational authorities struck heads as being rather busy “hunting for witches” (the words of a focus group participant, Kyrgyzstan, 2011). A local counterpart of the World Bank Project commented in her interview:

There was not a single minister [of education] who would fail to demand a school's rating. What for? For punishment, of course! There is no pattern of assistance to schools, there are sanctions and punishments only. When Ms B was the Minister she simply fired eleven heads in the region that “underperformed” according to one set of audit results (Education Consultant, World Bank project, Kyrgyzstan).

Among the heads interviewed in the three countries, Kyrgyz heads voiced the most dissatisfaction with their remuneration and burden of responsibility. Headteachers' salaries below the national average were perceived as punishment rather than reward, while the nature of heads' responsibilities meant that they could not enjoy autonomy to the full (see Santalova 2010 for further details).

Teachers do not want to become heads. All responsibility is on us, school heads, while the money is little. It is much more convenient to work as a teacher, not to have the burden of worrying about the whole school (Kyrgyz headteacher).

I have long worked at my school, and plan to go on. I know I am good at it, and GorOO know it too. I shall look at whomever they find to replace me if/when I retire, and at where they find someone ready to take all the responsibility (Kyrgyz headteacher).

Tajikistan

In contrast to the Kyrgyz heads interviewed, Tajik heads sounded motivated by their work, and less dissatisfied with remuneration, despite the fact that the average teacher's salary in Tajikistan was yet very low. They clearly defined themselves as civil servants, and appreciated peoples' and government's trust in them. Headteachers in Tajikistan were often promoted to upper administrative positions in local authorities or in parliament. As Steiner-Khamsi stated (2012), "In many countries... it is a political rather than a professional mandate to serve as school director" (p.460). Although Steiner-Khamsi referred presumably to the heads' role in arranging elections and schools serving as precincts, yet schools were springboards to educators' prominence in politics. For instance, there was one remarkable example of this in Tajikistan:

I am a normal headteacher, promoted to become an MP, is that not a reward? I used to devote myself 100 per cent to my school, now I shall devote myself 150 per cent (Tajik headteacher)!

Some respondents still valued the traditional system of non-material incentives prominent during the Soviet period.

I was granted a medal of 'Excellence in Education', with a certificate but no monetary reward attached. Nevertheless, I felt proud. [It] was a boost

for my self-esteem, a sign of the government's appreciation of my work (Tajik headteacher).

Rewards are not exactly what we are working for at school. If one serves self-interest, disappointment comes; but if one is ready to work for others, enjoyment is the result (Tajik headteacher).

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the practice of headteacher appointment by ministerial units rather than selection on a competitive basis had endured from Soviet times in the three countries. This may be viewed as a mechanism of state control that allows governments to curtail autonomy delegated to schools in some other respects (e.g. human resource management, financial resource management), but also as a reward mechanism. It is possible to become a head in the three states only as a result of career progression, and it is perceived by heads in Tajikistan in particular as a reward *per se*.

When I was promoted to this position I was so unhappy, I cried. I didn't want to take it, but it was a sign of great trust; and then I promised myself that it would be the best school in the area and I have kept my promise (Tajik headteacher).

Uzbekistan

The same practice of headteacher appointment brings similar implications of rewards and sanctions in Uzbekistan as it does in Tajikistan. To be appointed as a head appeared to be a reward *per se*. Thus, a head in Uzbekistan reported:

There are only highly regarded people in heads' posts (Uzbek headteacher).

Meanwhile, an atmosphere of total control could be sensed in heads' answers. Despite having been promoted by the upper educational administrations, heads appeared to have their 'hands full' with state regulations and guidelines. Thus one head described it:

All school processes are regulated and prescribed...final students' assessment by the Decree of the Cabinet of the Ministers, formative students' assessment by the Regulations of the Ministry of People's Education, and teachers' attestation by the the Educational Law (Uzbek headteacher).

The rewards listed by an Uzbek respondent included one that seems peculiar to outsiders. In passing, she revealed an important socio-economic reality:

Recently the school was presented a beautiful carpet for good results achieved in cotton-picking (Uzbek headteacher).

Cotton is a prime cash crop in all three countries, but in Uzbekistan in particular. Annually, during the cotton-picking season, activity in all spheres of public life seems to be subordinated to it. It is normal for students, alongside the employees of public agencies – schools, hospitals, etc. – to join the cotton-picking. Hence, a lot of instructional time in September-October is sacrificed to crop collection throughout Uzbek educational

institutions.⁴⁴ Although students' involvement in cotton-picking in Uzbekistan, and to a lesser extent in Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan, has been common practice since Soviet times, governments tend to avoid endorsing the persistence of the custom. No notice of it was found in state documents studied for this thesis – in contrast to media reports.

7.5. Autonomy from Intervention: External Indicators to Evaluate Outcome

The most widely spread procedure of school evaluation against some standard or benchmark is summative assessment of its students. This is the measurement of student attainment through standardised tests at the end of an instructional unit with the intention of using the results to inform parents and society, and to make adjustments to managerial and pedagogical practices in school. Without a regular assessment of learning outcomes school accountability is reduced and, with it, improving education quality becomes less certain (WB 2010). Meanwhile, scholars warn that too much reliance on high-stakes testing may bring a 'default philosophy' in education (Gunzenhauser 2003): that is, "[The] tests designed to be part of a system of accountability drive the curriculum, limit instructional innovation, keep educators from establishing their own priorities and visions" (p. 52). This section examines the extent to which standardised tests have been incorporated into national educational practice in the three countries studied.

⁴⁴ According to a news website Uznews.net, banned in Uzbekistan, the daily norm set in 2013 was 40 kg of cotton per person, a year when the cotton collection season lasted until November 15: "Every morning several dozen of educators in Jizzak [town] are forcibly taken to the fields to pick cotton. In particular, they are 15-20 employees taken from a boarding school number 32, a music school, a kindergarten "Ziff" as well as the local branch of the Association for the Blind" (Published on-line 05.11.13; downloaded from <http://www.uznews.net/news>).

Summative Assessment: Documentary Analysis

Kyrgyzstan

All students take a standardised exit exam at the end of secondary school. The tests are administered by the school, and the results sent to the Ministry of Education. Participation in annual standardised tests occurs at Years 9 and 11. The Ministry of Education must analyse school assessment results and return them to schools, while schools must use the results to make pedagogical and operational adjustments (SABER Country Report, WB, 2012). The assessment of student learning using other standardised tests usually at the end of secondary school is voluntary, and administered by a ministerial agency, the Centre for the Assessment of Education and Methodologies (The Regulations N 389, MoE, 1998).

Tajikistan

The legislative framework for student assessment in Tajikistan is similar to the Kyrgyz one: tests are developed by the ministry and administered by schools at Years 9 and 11. Other standardised tests are sporadic, and occur mainly as aid-funded pilot projects. For instance, in 2008 a National Student Assessment Centre was established within a WB project on Educational Sector Modernization. The same year the Centre developed and administered standardised tests in Tajik language and maths at Year 4 in 103 schools in twelve towns of Tajikistan. Furthermore, Tajikistan aims to develop and incorporate standardised tests for student assessment across the country by 2015, as was stated in the National Education Development Strategy 2010-2015, approved by the President of Tajikistan (2009 CoM Tajikistan).

The legislative framework for student assessment in Uzbekistan appeared to be more sophisticated than that in either of the other two states. Thus, the system of monitoring and evaluation of education quality consists of three stages, which include (i) students' educational attainment assessment; (ii) complex monitoring; (iii) educational system monitoring. Monitoring and evaluation take place at the class or school level in accordance with the Regulations on Ranking System of Year 5-9 Students' Attainment developed by the Ministry and State Testing Centre and adopted at schools since 2010-11. This ranking system is at the core of the state educational standards for compulsory schooling. This system consists of indicators designed to measure students' understanding of topics, their ability to apply knowledge received, think creatively, analyse and make independent decisions (Vahobov, 2013).

The other mechanism of education quality monitoring and evaluation in Uzbekistan named by Vahobov (*ibid.*) was the so-called 'Contest of Knowledge' (Uzb.: *bilimlar bellashuvi*). These contests of knowledge, similar to olympiads in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, are conducted annually in sixteen subjects of the state curriculum at four stages – at school level, when all students volunteer to take part, *raion* (or town), region and republic level. The main objectives of such competitions, as Vahobov states, tend to include systematic analysis of how the state educational standard is being implemented; finding and filling knowledge gaps; identifying gifted children; developing an atmosphere that encourages and rewards such children and their tutors (*ibid.*).

Summative Assessment: Survey Analysis

Although there were ongoing efforts to modernise a system for student assessment across the three countries, an enhanced system seemed fully established in none of the three states. While standardised tests had been quite recently introduced, student assessment was not a new initiative. The headteachers' survey investigated the extent to which schools in the three countries had been delegated decision-making powers about student assessment. Heads in the three states were asked about the locus for setting student assessment policies. Their answers were summarised in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5 Locus for Student Summative Assessment Policies (number and percentage of schools)

		Country name		
		Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Head or school board	N	19	14	7
	%	37.3%	28.6%	31.8%
Regional Education Administration	N	1	6	0
	%	2%	12%	0%
Ministry of Education	N	27	24	14
	%	53%	49%	64%
Other	N	2	3	0
	%	4%	6%	0,0%
Missing	N	2	2	1
	%	4%	4%	4%
Total	N	51	49	22
	%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Question asked: 'Who do you believe has primary responsibility for making decisions about summative assessment of students?' Options provided included School, Regional Educational Administration, Provincial Educational Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

Half of respondents in Tajikistan (49 per cent), 53 per cent and 64 per cent of respondents in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan correspondingly reported the central MoE as the principal decision-maker in this regard. Qualitative data analysis showed that, although Tajikistan was less advanced in introducing standardised tests than Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the trend toward the centralization of summative assessment was regional.

Summative Assessment: Interview Analysis

Uzbekistan

As was reported by the respondents, Uzbek headteachers could receive a bonus for every student who was ranked first, second, or third in a knowledge contest. In other words, heads were likely to be rewarded extrinsically or intrinsically for focusing on a few top-performers. This type of elitist education in Uzbekistan, as well as in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan where olympiads were part of general practice too, seemed to be supported and promoted by the state since Steiner-Khamsi (2012) called olympiads “the most important criteria for promotion” in education:

The olympiads are extremely popular and winning them constitutes the most important criteria for promotion. If a teacher wins an olympiad for a particular subject matter all other requirements (leadership skills, ethics, grades of students) become inconsequential. Furthermore, if the teacher wins a high-level olympiad (provincial or national level), she or he is directly promoted to higher ranking positions such as lead teacher or methodologist... It is important to bear in mind that these promotion criteria...have been in place since the 1970s (p.463).⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Although Gita Steiner-Khamsi (2012) refers here to Mongolian schools, this quotation is relevant to experiences observed by the author in Central Asia. Mongolian and Central Asian schools share many common features, having been established to serve the Soviet political regime.

This argument was supported by evidence derived in this study: participation and winning the top prizes at olympiads continued to be the main criteria for rewarding both headteachers and teachers across the three countries:

Rewards depend, first, of course, on student performance, whether the pupils of my school show good results at olympiads and in the national competition “Bilimlar bellashuvi” (Uzbek headteacher).

Together with top places taken at olympiads, Uzbek headteachers named school rankings in the national assessment system as an indicator of their work and its quality. Data collected in 2011 showed that a school-ranking system must have been in place, since it was mentioned by several respondents in Uzbekistan. However, it did not seem to have had any impact on the perception of education quality by heads in the country:

Last year our school was given seventeenth place out of 53 schools ranked, this year we have moved up and are fifth (Uzbek headteacher).

However, many headteachers in Uzbekistan seemed to continue to assess the quality of education by inputs, and not by outcomes. Like Tajikistan, Uzbek students did not participate in international attainment studies; this might have contributed to outdated perceptions of the quality of education in both republics. Teachers interviewed or observed in Uzbekistan openly expressed their joy following a decade of improvement in school supply:

Education quality is fine. Our children have the textbooks required. Last year we set up a new computer class, now children can learn [using] new computers (Uzbek headteacher).

Tajikistan

An analysis of interviews given by Tajik headteachers did not reveal that they were concerned with the quality of school education; they were either badly informed due to the absence of standardised tests in Tajikistan, or they believed that their schools had a much broader role in society than just providing students with knowledge. One way or another – rather like the Uzbek headteachers cited above – they appeared to concern themselves with attributes of the educational process, *e.g.* the physical environment of schools, or sending top-performers to olympiads, rather than with overall education outcomes:

My work at school is assessed by different bodies: first, the ministry, then local education administration – and parents, of course. No, not by that [test results], they assess me as a person, as a leader; whether I have managed to build a good team of teachers; whether the brain drain among them is at a minimum. Lessons always conducted according to the timetable; whether the school is warm and bright (Tajik headteacher).

When education quality is assessed at my school inspectors from raion administration look at the physical condition of classrooms, discipline at school, that the combination of education and upbringing proceeds smoothly without interruptions. We also participate in olympiads. Our children do take first places sometimes; that is very good. (Tajik headteacher).

Kyrgyzstan stood out as an exception having taken part in two rounds of the OECD Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) in 2006 and 2009. Without doubt, international quality standards generate local pressures. Thus, PISA studies have had an effect and influenced the way Kyrgyzstan defines education quality. The Kyrgyz heads' discourse about education quality appeared to be the most informed among the three states.

Although information gained in international studies like PISA is usually “too technically flawed to serve as an accurate measure of national effectiveness (Brown, 1998),⁴⁶ and cross- country studies based on performance in standardized PISA examinations conducted by the OECD (Programme for International Student Assessment) face the difficulty of meaningfully comparing outcome or input indicators across countries given vast differences in objectives, priorities, curricula, and sampling (Freinkman & Plekhanov, 2010, pp.118-119), the PISA results were reviewed very seriously in the Kyrgyz Republic. When interviewed, the Deputy Minister of Education of Kyrgyzstan honestly admitted that the results were quite shocking for his country and its educational system:

Well, PISA 2006 was a big shock: 57th place among 57 countries. Besides, the gap between the 56th and the 57th places was so big that, I'd say, a

⁴⁶ According to the processing of PISA data (2009) by the author, 41% of schools chosen for the Kyrgyz sample reported 0-25% of their annual budgets as coming from state funds. Yet the same schools appeared having 'state school' status in the data set. Furthermore, only 38% of schools in the sample reported 76-100% of their annual funding as coming from the state, including 8% of schools being 100% state-funded. This sample is apparently not country representative, where the majority of schools (over 90%) are state-funded with over 80% of their budgets being public funds (NSC, 2010).

couple of other countries could come before us. There was such space. The only excuse is that different indicators were taken into account in scoring (Interview with a Deputy Minister of Education, Kyrgyzstan, 2011).

Furthermore, as the study showed, summary assessments existed in the form of pilots in Tajikistan or had been just launched in Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan became a leader in introducing standardised tests with National Educational Testing as far back as 1994. The National Testing Centre, a structural unit within the Ministry of Education, was still functioning in 2011, but offered tests to school leavers on a voluntary basis. The WB-OECD review considered it crucial that the Kyrgyz Republic established standardised educational goals and a standardised assessment system where ‘exam questions were not known in advance and the assessment [would] help build students’ self-confidence based on realistic levels of achievement’ (WB 2011). It also highlighted that there was not a policy framework for assessment in the country: hence, there was no system in place to provide information on levels of student learning and achievement. Indeed, the latter seems to be the experience in all three countries. This made monitoring trends in education quality over time and holding stakeholders accountable for results problematic (see Chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion of school accountability).

7.6. Autonomy from Intervention: School Performance Compared in League Tables

League Tables: Documentary Analysis

Reference to schools’ performance being compared in league tables available to the public was not found in any legislative frameworks in the three countries. On the one hand, the absence of standardised assessment in the three states should have contributed

to increases in school autonomy from state intervention. On the other hand, it was evident that the trend across the three countries was towards the introduction of standardised tests in the near future. Yet countries appeared to have been given contradictory advice by their international partners: thus UNESCO believes that the balance of assessments should emphasise teacher-designed, classroom-based formative assessments aimed at improving teaching and learning processes (p.4). Meanwhile, the World Bank deems it crucial that the newly emerged countries establish standardised assessment systems, which should provide information on levels of student achievement and help to hold stakeholders (*i.e.* schools) to account for results (p.3, Knowledge Brief, WB, 2011).

Leagues Tables: Survey Analysis

The absence of league tables in the three states did not remove the need to compare schools and inform the public about the attainment of their children. The question of where primary responsibility for these two functions rested in the three countries was asked by means of a questionnaire to headteachers.

Table 7.6 Locus for Comparing School Performance (number and percentage of schools)

		Country name		
		Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Head or school board	N	0	6	1
	%	0,00%	12,20%	4,50%
Regional Education Administration	N	48	36	16
	%	94,10%	73,40%	68,620%
Ministry of Education	N	1	1	3
	%	2,00%	2,00%	13,60%
Other	N	1	1	0
	%	2,00%	2,00%	0,00%
Missing	N	1	5	2
	%	2,00%	10,20%	9,10%
Total	N	51	49	22
	%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

Question asked: ‘*Who do you believe has primary responsibility for comparing school performance?*’
Options provided included School, Regional Educational Administration, Provincial Educational Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

Table 7.6 showed that there was a high degree of agreement across the three states in heads' perceptions about the primary responsibility for comparing school performance: 94 per cent of schools in Kyrgyzstan, 71.4 per cent of schools in Tajikistan and 69 per cent in Uzbekistan agreed that Regional Education Administrations (*RaiOO*) were in charge. The same level of education administration was also in charge of *ex post evaluation* of schools and optimising sanctions and rewards.

Furthermore, it was important to investigate whether schools were in charge of communicating school performance to the public. Table 7.7 suggests some form of shared responsibility for 'spreading the word' about school performance between regional educational administrations and schools themselves.

Table 7.7 Locus for Communicating School Performance to Public (number and percentage of schools), 2011

		Country name		
		Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Head or school board	N	16	6	4
	%	31,40%	12,20%	18,20%
Regional Education Administration	N	32	28	12
	%	62,70%	57,10%	54,50%
Provincial Education Administration	N	0	2	0
	%	0,00%	4,10%	0,00%
Ministry of Education	N	1	0	4
	%	2,00%	0,00%	18,20%
Other	N	1	4	0
	%	2,00%	8,20%	0,00%
Missing	N	1	9	2
	%	2,00%	18,40%	9,10%
Total	N	51	49	22
	%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

Question asked: 'Who do you believe has primary responsibility for communicating school performance to public?' Options provided included School, Regional Educational Administration, Provincial Educational Administration, the Ministry of Education, Other

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

Thus, Regional Educational Administrations (RaiOO) were perceived to be in charge of communicating school performance results to the public by the majority of schools in all three states: 63 per cent in Kyrgyzstan; 57 per cent in Tajikistan; and 54.5 per cent in Uzbekistan. That schools were primarily responsible for informing the public about their performance role was perceived by 31 per cent of respondents in Kyrgyzstan, 12 per cent in Tajikistan and 18 per cent in Uzbekistan.

Tables 7.6 and 7.7 may well indicate decentralisation of intervention in schools' *ex post evaluation* to the regional level of administration. This, however, may be explained by staff shortages at the ministries in these states, as well as financial pressures impeding lengthy trips by ministerial officials across the republics.

Institutions developed under the Soviet system turned out to have survived in the newly emerged states. Hence, inescapably, many characteristics of Soviet-era institutions still seem to be embedded in the institutions of the newly emerged independent states. The lack of interest educational institutions express toward involving the public into the educational matters is an example of this, and it could be observed across the three states. The concern raised by headteachers was that often school reports (for instance, on students' attainment, statistical information, etc.) stayed within the system for evaluation by professionals, rather than being circulated to inform the general public. Despite this, it seemed that schools somehow tended to correct the situation, taking partial responsibility for communicating audit results to the public.

League Tables Item: Interview Analysis

Tajikistan

The ambiguity in heads' perceptions of league tables resembled what they said about education quality. This practice was new for the countries, and stood out as an invented construct alien to the indigenous teaching profession.

No, there are no [league] tables whatsoever, but parents know anyhow if a school is good or bad. People speak a lot about my school. It's good if they speak a lot about me, and it still feels good up to the point when they're too flattering – then it's bad, as something must have gone wrong (Tajik headteacher).

Nonetheless, the common idea expressed by ministerial officials in Tajikistan was that the lack of educational information – including student's attainment, schools' access to the Internet, etc. – hampered reforms in Tajik schooling.

The National Strategy on Education Development 2015 speaks about the necessity to have an assessment system for students' knowledge, but it is only a future prospect. We, of course, know which schools are good and which need to try harder, but it's not the same thing (Interview with an official in Tajikistan).

Kyrgyzstan

Even though reports on education statistics were produced by the Ministry of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic on an annual basis, considerable doubt existed about their reliability (SABER Country Report 2012, p.7). These reports contained no information on the quality of education across the schools within a district and/or province. Moreover, plenty of other important information was missing. In 1998, Kyrgyzstan pioneered the development of an Education Management Information System, which was designed to provide every level of education administration with all kinds of data required for informed decision-making. Roughly \$200,000 of donor money were invested in software development and hardware purchase for all education administrative units in the country, and the EMIS was handed to the ministry in 1999 (Sagric Consultant Report 1999). According to the report, a National School Survey Coordinator and her team interacted with officials at all levels of education management – supposedly, they were resourced to make best use of EMIS. The beneficiaries at local and central levels had much to gain from access to the latest information. Nonetheless, the system collapsed within a year. In 2011 Kyrgyz education officials interviewed for the purposes of this thesis reported experiencing exactly the same problems of lack of information as twelve years ago.

The minister asks once at a plenary session: “How many schools in Jalal-Abad province have access to the Internet?” How on earth should I know?
Another time a journalist asks: “How much money does UNICEF spend on school equipment? I laugh it off: “I do not count money in somebody’s else pocket” (Interview with a deputy minister in Kyrgyzstan).

Uzbekistan

Uzbek heads interviewed did not contribute much to discussing comparisons of schools' performance. They seemed to assume that the Ministry of People's Education was well-informed, as schools provided all the information required to *Raion* Education Administrations so that it could then be forwarded to the Ministry of Peoples' Education.

We fill in forms and submit them to RaiOO. They accumulate data on all schools in the raion and send to the upper level of administration. (Uzbek headteacher).

7.7. Index of Autonomy from Intervention

Following the common pattern of reporting findings, I computed the index for Autonomy from Intervention for each country based on the quantitative survey data. Although the index proposed here is an approximation, it contributes to comparative analysis of patterns of school autonomy among the Central Asian countries, and suggests whether there is 'space' available for further reforms in educational institutions toward greater autonomy in this dimension.

Table 7.8 Index of Autonomy from Intervention

Country name	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Kyrgyzstan	0.21	49	0.16	.02
Tajikistan	0.27	38	0.13	.02
Uzbekistan	0.22	19	0.20	.05

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

The numerical expression of Autonomy from Intervention, the index that shows the extent to which schools appeared shielded from ministerial *ex post evaluation*, reveals a low (or

‘emerging’ in WB SABER terms, (2012)) level of school autonomy (~0.2 across Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and ~0.3 in Tajikistan). The differences among the means of the three countries along this dimension appeared to be statistically insignificant. Therefore, schools’ autonomy from Intervention in the three countries did not diverge (rather than ‘were converging’, since the three states would have had very similar starting points). In other words, it can be said that schools were similarly shielded from ministerial intervention to some extent only (Table 7.8).

7.8. Conclusions

The findings showed that the existing system of school monitoring (inspection) by the central government was undermined by shortages of funds, teachers and textbooks, discussed in the previous chapters, in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to a greater extent than was the case in Uzbekistan. The other drawbacks of the existing *ex post evaluation* system were that it relied on rather informal procedures, since policy norms – goals as well as indicators of school monitoring and evaluation – were not found to be stipulated in detail in any of the states’ policy documents. Also, the role of informal networks and personal ties appeared to be significant. As a result, ambiguity in school monitoring and evaluation policies and informal procedures led to minimal protection of schools from sanctions and punishments that the ministry might apply. This is one difference between the patterns observed in the West and post-Soviet state of Central Asia – while the introduction of high-stake standardised tests effectively reduced school autonomy in the West, ambiguity and informality in school assessment and monitoring procedures might have brought about a similar result – schools appeared not to be shielded from state interventions. The latter was likely to hamper the exercise of decision-making competences delegated to schools, such as financial and human resource management.

Chapter 8 | School Accountability under Conditions of Partial Autonomy

Accountability has been a watchword in education for decades – for who could be against it? It has not been a reality, however, because accountability is threatening to many and because, even when desired, it is difficult to implement.

(Hanushek & Raymond, 2001, p. 365)

Any degree of autonomy of a public agency does not mean that civil servants (heads/teachers) should be isolated from their societies. Holding school accountable for their results constitutes the other part of the NPM shift in public management.

By accountability we mean “a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgment, and the actor may face consequences” (Bovens 2007: 450). Public organisations are accountable to a number of different forums that apply different sets of criteria, making accountability multiple, complex, potentially inconsistent and ambiguous. Accountability relationships presuppose both that the actor being held accountable will play an active role in providing information about and adjusting his or her behaviour and that the forum holding an actor to account will actively seek information, discuss accountability matters and use the instruments available to correct the behaviour of the actor (Bovens 2007).

Analysis of accountability patterns presented in this chapter is based on the survey of 122 schools; 46 interviews with headteachers and policy-makers; and the content of relevant

legislation. In order to identify both differences and similarities in patterns of accountability observed across the three countries, an analytical framework has been developed. This framework appears to be particularly relevant to school accountability research in the ‘reform laggards’, *i.e.* countries in which NPM reforms were quite recent and/or fragmented and new institutional structures might still be unstable.

8.1. Mechanisms of Accountability: Analytical Framework Development

The debate about accountability and school autonomy, as the two interrelated aspects sketched in Chapter 2, can be seen as a pathway to discussing the principal question of this chapter: how do the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia ensure that public money provided for education is properly spent? This has to be viewed bearing in mind the diverse patterns of decision-making competences delegated to schools across the three countries.

Maurice Kogan (1986) offers three general mechanisms of accountability (p.77):

- Public or state control and managerialism, *i.e.* a managerially accountable school within a local authority;
- Professional accountability – teachers primarily are seen as accountable to one another, that is largely to their colleagues as a group, but also to headteachers;
- Consumerist control stands in contrast to the above two – and it can be based on (i) parental partnership or (ii) the free market.

Before Kogan, Berch *et al.* (1981) had argued that there are three principal types of accountability relationships in education: (i) contractual, (ii) moral and (iii) professional.

By contractual accountability Berch *et al.* (1981, p.20) meant the strictly legal sense of being obliged to render an account to one's employers or to someone in authority (determined by employment legislation). Hence, in public administration literature, this type of accountability has come to be referred to as 'political accountability' (Meijer & Schillemans 2013).

Moral accountability, according to Berch *et al.*, means being answerable for one's actions to those affected by them (*ibid.*, p.21). Leaving aside health and safety legislation and other generally applicable laws, one can argue that a (head)teacher is answerable to pupils and parents only in moral terms. This type of accountability has been omitted in some recent classifications of a public agency's accountability (Bovens 2007, for instance), but appears to be the primary force holding heads to account in the three post-Soviet states of Central Asia.

Finally, professional accountability merits scrutiny. In the pre-1988 English context, Berch *et al.* (1981) referred to professional accountability in terms of an individual teacher being professionally accountable for choosing and pursuing appropriate methods in the classroom (*ibid.*, pp.21-22). The practice chosen should be the best for the children, which means taking into account local circumstances. I have extended the concept of professional accountability to include the practices and codes employed by teachers in Central Asia.

It is notable that the discourse of Kogan and Berch *et al.* was produced before the Educational Reform Act (1988) was adopted in England, and before the creation of OFSTED following the Act 1992, and prior to both main change of the last years, which involved a move towards standardised testing-based accountability (Conway & Murphy

2013) and other quasi-market mechanisms. However, the framework suggested by Berch *et al.* and Kogan appeared to be the best fit for analysing the patterns observed at schools in the post-Soviet context. I found that the educational landscape in these countries closely matched schooling in pre-1988 England. At that time, the contractual obligations for hiring teachers remained with the Local Educational Authorities, the worst sanction that could normally be imposed on a ‘bad’ teacher was her transfer to another school, and the role of schools’ boards of governors was often marginal and routine rather than managerial – to name some features⁴⁷.

In fact, school heads in the three Central Asian states described similar arrangements for managing staff (see Chapter 4), and reported a lack of responsibilities incumbent on the public structures of school management across these states. The main (often the only) responsibility of the boards of trustees (*popechitel’skiy sovet*: Rus.) or parents’ committees in the schools, if any, was fundraising, as further analysis showed. Moreover, educational accountability based on standardised tests and league tables turned out to be non-existent in the three countries.

As mentioned above, the most recent and most cited definition of accountability by Bovens (2007) suggests that ‘accountability is a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences’ (p.450). Application of Bovens’ terminology shows that Berch *et al.* (1981) approached accountability from ‘an actor’s’ side, *i.e.* a (head)teacher being held accountable and

⁴⁷ There was a national ‘black-list’ held centrally, but to get on it a teacher would have had to commit a criminal act and not just be a poor teacher (from discussions with G. Smith, 2013).

experiencing contractual, professional, and moral obligations. Meanwhile, Kogan (1986) took the side of Bovens' 'forum', *e.g.* free markets, state bodies, other teachers, public and parents. These bodies exercise power and/or authority to hold (head)teachers/schools accountable. Furthermore, Bovens (2007) distinguished two senses of 'accountability': a broad one, relating to norms and legislation, and a narrow one, relating to operational procedures, one that "refers to concrete practices of account giving" (p.450). This latter meaning was used for this study.

The survey respondents perceived accountability primarily in practical and personal terms. To analyse data collected in this study, an alternative analytical framework has been developed, which merges the stances taken by Berch *et al.* (1981) and Kogan (1986). This framework is presented illustratively in Figure 8.2, and appears to be particularly relevant for investigating the types of accountability relationships in schools in post-Soviet countries.

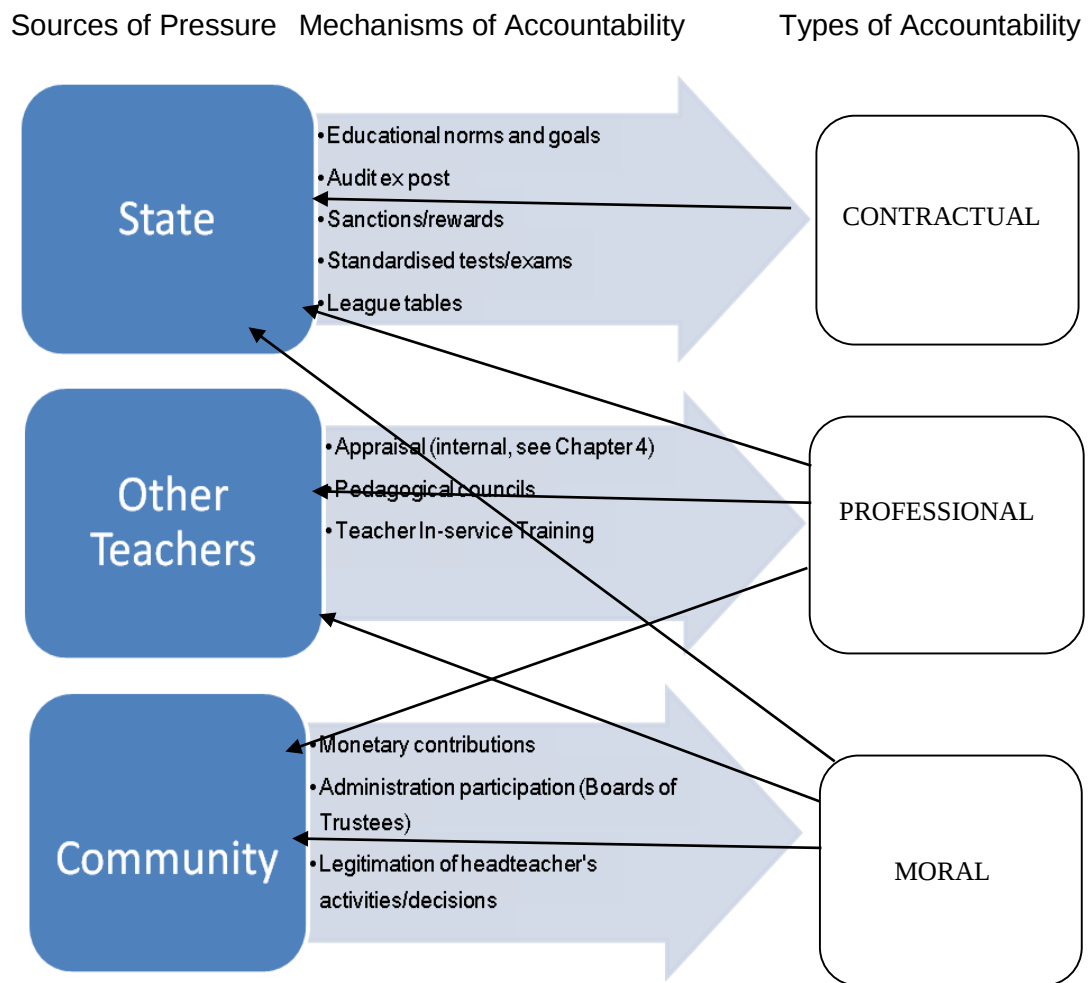


Figure 8.1 School Accountability in the Three Post-Soviet States: Analytical Framework.

Source: Based on Berch *et al.* (1981) and Kogan (1986).

This framework consists of three main segments: sources of pressure; mechanism of accountability; and types of accountability. Sources of pressure – or ‘the forum’ (Bovens 2007) – that hold schools/teachers accountable were chosen from the list developed by Kogan (1986). In the case of post-Soviet countries, the state, other teachers and parents appeared to hold schools/heads accountable (based on the survey conducted for this study).

Following the logic of Boven's definition of accountability – one that emphasises 'concrete practices of account giving' (2007, p.450) – a list of accountability mechanisms has been developed. The objective of this part of the study is to examine the degree of school autonomy from state control in the three countries. Therefore, the mechanisms employed by the state within contractual accountability involve (i) educational norms/goals, against which schools are evaluated, (ii) audit *ex post* by the Ministry of Education (MoE); (iii) sanctions/rewards linked to the results of the audit; (iv) standardised tests/exams to evaluate outcomes; and (v) performance presented in league tables for the public⁴⁸. There are two particular features of these indicators; first, the national ministries have to organize school evaluation as *ex post* activities and, second, indicators include sanctions and/or rewards for school performance. Bovens suggested that *the possibility* of sanctions, not necessarily their imposition, distinguished 'being accountable' from 'providing general information' upon request (2007 p. 451).

Nonetheless, professional group members (*e.g.* other teachers and heads) employ teacher appraisal, in-service training and meetings of the pedagogical council in order to stimulate professional accountability among teachers. Meanwhile, parents represent a new forum in the post-Soviet educational landscape, mainly involved in schooling through monetary and in-kind/service contributions, as well as providing legitimacy to the actions of a head/school. In return, parents, like professional group members, may expect professional and moral accountability from (head)teachers. Overall, the network of accountability relationships and mechanisms is multi-faceted and, therefore, difficult to depict (Fig. 8.2).

⁴⁸ These are also the items included in school Autonomy from Intervention dimension (see Chapter 7).

Turning to the data analysis, the following sections of this chapter have been structured by the types of accountability identified above. First, the discussion concentrates on contractual accountability, one that corresponds with state control and the fulfilment of contractual obligations by (head)teachers. Second, it moves to professional accountability – co-teaching, in-service training, peer appraisal, pedagogical council – encouraged by the body of teachers and other professionals at school. The community of educators, teachers in particular, across the three countries resembled a ‘freemasonry’ accountability-type with members admitted according to their professional occupation and professional codes. Finally, moral accountability is discussed, the type most frequently mentioned by respondents across the three countries. This is the type significantly enhanced by parental participation in the post-Soviet states of Central Asia over the last twenty years. The impact of a free market (also an innovation in these post-Soviet states over the last two decades) appeared limited and its mechanisms underdeveloped (see below). The patterns of accountability observed and registered in Central Asia are summarised in the ‘conclusions’ section.

8.2. Contractual Accountability and State Control

State Control Mechanisms

Under the bureaucratic planned economy of the Soviet regime, school monitoring and assessment were centralised and provided by administrative bodies of the national Ministries of Education. This centralised system of monitoring had persisted for so long that the impression left on all three states remains unmistakable.

Despite administrative and terminological differences among local educational authorities in the three states, there was a common trend observed: it was the local

administration, rather than the national Ministry of Education, to whom most schools most frequently related. It was still the case that headteachers in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan anticipated *raion*/city education administration visits as occasions that called for intense and anxiety-ridden preparation. Indeed, it was not unusual that heads interviewed saw these local inspectors as threatening officials who regularly impinged upon their lives. Yet, in recent years, formal large-scale inspections of schools by committees from the Ministry of Education have tailed off.

Documentary, survey and interview analysis in Chapter 7, including the index of school ‘Autonomy from Intervention’, revealed that schools were rather not shielded from ministerial *ex post* evaluation (~0.2 across Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and ~0.3 in Tajikistan). In fact, schools across the region used the yearly non-standardized assessments to track student performance, which could be used for to compare school performance with school in the same region or in the country; however, the results of those analyses would not be published for public and would only be available to the educational authorities. Countries’ low scores on ‘Autonomy from Intervention’ index demonstrated that the schools in the three states suffered the lack of freedom from the governmental interventions. Furthermore, they appeared to be similarly shielded to some extent only from these interventions, since the differences among the means of the three countries along this dimension appeared to be statistically insignificant (see Chapter 7).

Surprisingly, under conditions of ‘emerging’ autonomy (WB 2012) from state intervention, the majority of heads surveyed across the three countries reported *ex post* audit as ‘very little’ hindrance or a hindrance ‘to some extent’ only: 71 per cent of schools in Kyrgyzstan; 73 per cent of schools in Uzbekistan; and 49 schools in Tajikistan (Table 8.1). This is likely to be explained by the extent of decision-making power delegated to

schools in finance and human resource management (see Chapters 4-5). Nonetheless, Tajikistan stood out with 40 per cent of headteachers, who reported being hindered ‘a lot’ by *ex post* audit; this was the greatest proportion among the three states *vis-à-vis* 29 per cent of schools in Kyrgyzstan and 27 per cent of schools in Uzbekistan claiming that they were impeded by *ex post* audit.

Table 8.1 Ex Post Audit as Hindrance to Headteachers’ Work (number and percentage of schools), 2011

	Not at all		Very little		To some extent		A lot		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Kyrgyzstan	0	0	12	24	24	47	15	29	51
Tajikistan	5	11	3	6	20	43	19	40	47
Uzbekistan	0	0	2	9	14	64	6	27	22
Total	5	4	17	14	58	48	40	34	120

Question asked: ‘Does *ex post* audit (inspections) have a negative impact on your school work?’ Options provided included not at all, very little impact, to some extent, a lot.

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

The question of why mechanisms of accountability employed by the governments in the three states were seen as forming an impediment by a substantially larger proportion of heads in Tajikistan than was the case in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan needs further analysis.

Based on the analysis of school autonomy presented in Chapters 4-7 of this study, Tajikistan possesses the highest degree of autonomy in Fundraising, Structural and Educational Policy dimensions among the three countries. The high proportion of schools dissatisfied with vertical/hierarchical accountability in Tajikistan may indicate heads’ hostility to the procedures of school assessment and evaluation, which remain based on formal procedures inherited from Soviet times. Although such procedures may be well-suited to strengthen the current national power structure, they appear ill-equipped to

provide Tajik schools with the guidance and support required under the novel conditions of significant autonomy in competences related to finance and policy management.

Our school is regularly monitored and evaluated by GorOO (city education administration). These inspections help us to see where we underperform but also put us under great pressure. Any school can be punished by the results of the inspection; and vygovory [written notes of disapproval in the personal file of an employee], of course, produce negative emotions (Tajik headteacher).

Interestingly, a minority, 11 per cent of schools in Tajikistan reported being ‘not at all’ inhibited by *ex post* audit, while in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan none of the schools reported the same (Table 8.1). Indeed, Tajik headteachers interviewed expressed more understanding and appreciation of the monitoring and evaluation functions of the educational administrations.

First, they [education administration] gave me the right to decide, and then once or twice a quarter they come to check how far I have met their expectations. They do not control, they simply check. It is like a mother who gives her daughter the right to decide and then comes to see whether she has done the right thing (Tajik headteacher).

I was given the autonomy to realise all my dreams, employ all my skills and then they [education administration] come and say: ‘Well, time to show what you have done (Tajik headteacher).

The latter quotation refers directly to school autonomy and the accountability linked to it (see Chapter 7 for quotations from Kyrgyz and Uzbek headteachers). Across the three countries, headteachers’ attitudes to accountability seem to have been buoyed by the managerial decision-making competences delegated to them. Several headteachers spoke about their dreams having been fulfilled.

This leads us to the argument by Francis Fukuyama, that no bureaucracy has the authority to define its own mandates and, hence, the fewer and more general the mandates, the greater autonomy the bureaucracy possesses (2013, pp. 356-357). In the same vein, it could be argued that no school could be run without *ex post* audit and *ex ante* regulations and, hence the fewer inspections and more general the mandates might mean the greater autonomy granted to schools. Headteachers in Tajikistan (their largest proportion in the sample) seemed to be satisfied with the way their schools were monitored. It was important to find out what the heads' perception was of the 'mandates' issued for schools.

Thus, the next step in survey analysis focused on the item of *ex ante* regulations and instructions, whether they were perceived as hindrance in headteachers' work. Table 8.2 showed that the three countries were similar in their views taken about the role of educational regulations and instructions in the lives of schools (Table 8.2).

Table 8.2 *Ex ante* Regulations and Instructions as a Hindrance to Headteachers' Work (number and percentage of schools)

	Not at all		Very little		To some extent		A lot		Total
	schoo	%	Scho	%	schoo	%	schoo	%	School
Kyrgyzstan	4	8	20	39	18	35	9	18	51
Tajikistan	5	10	5	10	24	50	14	29	48
Uzbekistan	2	9	3	14	11	50	6	27	22
Total	11	9	28	23	53	44	29	24	121

Question asked: '*Do ex ante regulations and instructions have a negative impact on your school work?*'
Options provided included not at all, very little impact, to some extent, a lot.

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011..

According to Table 8.2, headteachers surveyed in the three countries reported that *ex ante* regulations and instructions caused 'very little' hindrance and a hindrance 'to some extent' in 74 per cent of schools in Kyrgyzstan, 64 per cent of schools in Uzbekistan and 60 per

cent of schools in Tajikistan. Meanwhile, 18 per cent of schools in Kyrgyzstan claimed that they were impeded ‘a lot’ by *ex ante* regulations and instructions; the same was claimed by 29 per cent of schools in Tajikistan and 27 per cent of schools in Uzbekistan. These quite high proportions of schools in the three states concerned with the negative impact of *ex ante* regulations and instructions on school work indicate that central governments in the region tended to regulate schooling processes tightly, and so a loosening of that grip was likely to enhance school autonomy. Conversely, schools micromanaged by the central government through the detailed rules that they must follow appear to be non-autonomous (*cf.* Fukuyama 2013).

8.3. Headteachers’ Contracts and Actual Working Time Allocation

School heads appeared *de jure* directly accountable for the provision of educational services – both teaching and support for children’s social and emotional development – at schools across the three countries. Thus, a contract – or labour agreement, to rely on a more literal translation from the local languages – between the state and a headteacher determined contractual accountability, and the similarities across the countries studied were notable. In practice, both a teacher and a headteacher are legally accountable to officials of the *raion* education administration to which they are contracted. Inspections of schools were usually organised by these *raion* (or city) education administrations and/or the national Ministries of Education. The routine of such school inspections had not changed much since the Soviet times, as reported by respondents. The board of trustees (Rus.: *popechitel'skiy sovet*) is a new administrative unit introduced in education systems in the countries and how far (head)teachers’ contracts will require their subordination to such boards is not yet clear.

Thus, school heads in the region remain the primary locus of school accountability and the ones upon whom sanctions are imposed. However, the heads cannot be held accountable for more than what is specified in their labour agreements. Usually headteacher's terms of reference are included within the legal framework adopted in the country concerned. Analysis of the legislative documents regulating (head)teachers' contractual accountability revealed similarities as well as disparities in the legislative frameworks applied in the three countries. The common terms of reference of a school head in each of the three countries appeared as follows:⁴⁹

- Administrative responsibilities an overarching term that includes providing control and being accountable for all aspects of education and the overall development of a child at a school and for the outcomes of all the activities carried out by the school;
- Staffing and appraisal/attestation of teachers in cooperation with a school pedagogical committee according to state regulations (see Chapter 4 for details);
- Pedagogical component/Educational content relates to forming a school component of the national curriculum in cooperation with a school pedagogical committee, includes providing assessments of children's progress from subject teachers (see Chapter 6 for details).
- Financial responsibilities may well be included within a head's administrative responsibilities, and includes various aspects of school financial activities throughout the region. Thus, in Uzbekistan the emphasis is placed on activities allowed by the republican legislature; in Kyrgyzstan a head is obliged to protect school assets, and in Tajikistan a head has to control the formation and implementation of school budgets (for more details see Chapter 5).

⁴⁹ The list is based on Decree No66 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Kyrgyz Republic on pedagogical staff attestation, dated 20/07/2001; Regulation N352 on a secondary school of the Uzbek Republic dated 19 July 1999.

- Interaction with Community involves heads' activities aimed at establishing partner relationships with the public; this is the area where the most diverse measures were found. Table 8.3 presents examples of different wording used in the legislative documents of the three countries.

Table 8.3 Headteacher's Responsibilities for Community Interaction in the Three Countries

Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Represent school in the local community to protect and advance its interests;	Report to the community and local education administration about financial activities	Cooperate with external community for the benefit of pupils and teachers
Provide school repairs with the help of local self-management units;	Ensure community involvement in school governance;	Report regularly on activities to makhalliya (local community: Uz.)
Decide the school strategic plan together with pedagogical council		

Source: Legislation adopted in the states (see Footnote 10).

These mandatory responsibilities for school heads in the three countries were prescribed by state documents, edicts and regulations, etc., which described responsibilities and rights, without necessarily specifying them in much detail. The extent to which contractual responsibilities were emphasised by the headteachers when they made decisions about time allocation was examined in the survey. Heads were asked to prioritise their contractual responsibilities and to indicate the proportion of their working time spent on each over a regular working week. Their answers were grouped as follows with the proportion of time allocated weekly per activity (see Table 8.4).

Table 8.4 Time Spent by Heads on Contractual Activity in the Three Countries (per cent of working time per week)

Country name		Administrative responsibilities (inc. finance)	Staffing (incl. training, appraisal)	Pedagogical/ education content	Community Interactions	TOTAL (time/week)
		I	II	III	IV	I-IV
KG	Mean	16.6	5.5	11.6	10.9	44%
N=51	Std. Deviation	11.3	2.6	3.3	2.5	
TJ	Mean	18.0	6.6	12.5	11.0	48%
N=48	Std. Deviation	13.0	5.2	3.4	3.9	
UZ	Mean	17.9	3.5	13.0	11.9	48%
N=22	Std. Deviation	10.3	2.7	2.9	3.9	
Total	Mean	17.4	5.7	12.2	11.2	46
N=121	Std. Deviation	11.7	3.0	3.4	3.6	

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

The findings here show that heads surveyed spend just below half (48 per cent in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and 44 per cent in Kyrgyzstan) of their working week on activities prescribed by their contracts and legislative documents setting their responsibilities. As figures show, this trend is common to the three countries. Although there is variation in the time spent on different activities within the countries, the proportions of the working week spent by a head per activity shows significant comparability. Specifically, very similar proportions of the working week were invested in administrative tasks, staffing, pedagogical issues and accountability to the public (*e.g.* through reports, meeting, etc.).

To gain a complete picture of the heads' jobs, it was important to find out to which other activities they devoted significant parts of their working week. Analysis showed a similar range of activities, which included 'reporting to upper administrative bodies', 'teaching a subject'⁵⁰, 'other', including 'self-development'. Table 8.5 reports the distribution of the working week to 'non-contractual' activities as reported by the heads in the three states.

Table 8.5 Time Spent by Headteachers on 'Non-Contractual Activity' in Three States (in per cent of working time per week)

Country name		Teaching a subject	Interaction with upper admin-n	Competing for students	Cooperation with other schools	Head's Personal growth	Other	TOTAL
KG (N=51)	Mean	22.7	14.6	3.5	3.6	8.4	3.2	56
	Std. Deviation	10.1	2.7	2.6	2.6	4.6	4.8	
TJ (N=48)	Mean	14.2	17.4	4.2	3.2	9.4	3.8	52
	Std. Deviation	8.6	3.3	4.4	2.8	5.3	5.0	
UZ (N=22)	Mean	4.0	24.8	3.0	2.3	8.0	10.0	52
	Std. Deviation	5.3	4.4	3.4	3.1	3.4	9.0	
Total (N=121)	Mean	16.0	17.6	3.7	3.2	8.8	4.7	54
	Std. Deviation	11.1	3.7	3.5	2.8	4.7	6.3	

Source: the Headteachers' Survey 2011.

⁵⁰ In order to boost their salaries heads have to teach subjects in addition to their headship. This is the case in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to a greater extent than in Uzbekistan. Thus, the heads' workload in the countries concerned includes subject teaching, which is not common in English schools, except in very small rural schools.

The survey results (Table 8.5) showed substantial differences in the proportions of time allocated to these ‘non-contractual’ activities by the heads. Thus, heads in Uzbekistan reported spending one quarter (24.8 per cent) of their working week on interactions with upper administrative bodies. In Tajikistan this kind of activity takes 17.4 per cent of a head’s working week, while in Kyrgyzstan this activity accounts for only 14.6 per cent. However, the heads in Kyrgyzstan teach subjects themselves for the largest proportion of time among heads from the three countries, amounting to 22.7 per cent of their working week. The allocations of working week time by heads on teaching in the other two countries are much lower: just above 14 per cent in Tajikistan and only 4 per cent in Uzbekistan.

These differences are not related to the particularities of contract legislation adopted in the countries. In fact, they are hardly mentioned in detail in any legislative document analysed for this study. Nonetheless, according to the survey, ‘on the ground’ Uzbek heads spend one quarter of their working time liaising with upper administrative bodies, while Kyrgyz heads spend almost 15 per cent of their working time and Tajik heads over 17 per cent of their working week on being accountable to upper administrative bodies.

Furthermore, despite no contractual reference to teaching by a head, Kyrgyz principals spend over one quarter of their weekly time on teaching a subject in order to boost their salaries, while Uzbek heads teach about 4 per cent of their working week only. Tajik heads reported spending 14.2 per cent of their working week on teaching one or several subjects.

The fact that such differences in the amounts of working time devoted by heads to various activities are not reflected in their contracts, suggests the limits to the role played by contractual accountability in these schools.

8.4. Total workload as evidence for contractual accountability

It is difficult to pin down the extent to which contractual accountability influenced headteachers' allocation of their working week. Their efforts to specify the proportions of working time spent on specific activities, shown in Table 8.6, reveal some ambiguity in the heads' attitudes to their contractual responsibilities. In the same vein, there was considerable variability in responses to the survey question about the headteachers' total weekly workload. Nonetheless, the findings showed greater variability in heads' weekly workloads *within* the countries than between them (see Table 8.6).

Table 8.6 Total Workload of a Headteacher in the Three Countries (hours per week)

Country name	Median	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Kyrgyzstan	48	50,3	51	15,4
Tajikistan	56	60,2	48	28,1
Uzbekistan	56	58,3	22	12,4

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011..

The total workloads reported by the respondents in Kyrgyzstan ranged from 17 hours per week to 98 hours per week; similarly, in Tajikistan from 18 to 139 hours per week. The latter figure, which leaves only four hours' sleep a night for seven days a week, seems rather exaggerated. Because of such extreme – and probably unreliable – answers in some cases, and the small dataset size, the median (instead of the mean) is probably a more accurate measure of the central tendency in total workload of heads in each country. Thus it appears that headteachers in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan tend to work 56 hours per week,

while in Kyrgyzstan they work 48 hours. This difference of eight hours – or one working day – places Kyrgyzstan the closest to the official ‘contractual’ workload time of 36 hours per week stipulated for a head in the three countries, though significantly higher.

8.5. Low remuneration for teachers and contractual accountability

Data presented in Table 8.7 (extremely long hours in most cases) correspond with the findings of Chapter 5, where combining headteacher and teacher roles appeared to be a means to increase salaries (see Chapter 5; also Steiner-Khamisi & Silova, 2010). Furthermore, many studies have highlighted inadequate teacher salaries as one of the strongest factors undermining the status and prestige of teaching in Central Asia (DeYoung *et al.*, 2006; Johnson, 2008; Steiner-Khamisi *et al.*, 2008).

In general, heads in the three countries used words such as “insufficient” and “meagre” to describe teacher remuneration. According to Steiner-Khamisi *et al.* (2008), a teacher’s salary in Kyrgyzstan constituted just 62 per cent of the national average salary, *i.e.* it was below the country’s minimum subsistence level. Teachers’ earnings have actually decreased in comparison to average national earnings since 1989, making Kyrgyz teachers of the least value out of all the Central Asian States. (UNICEF 2010) (See Figure 8.2).

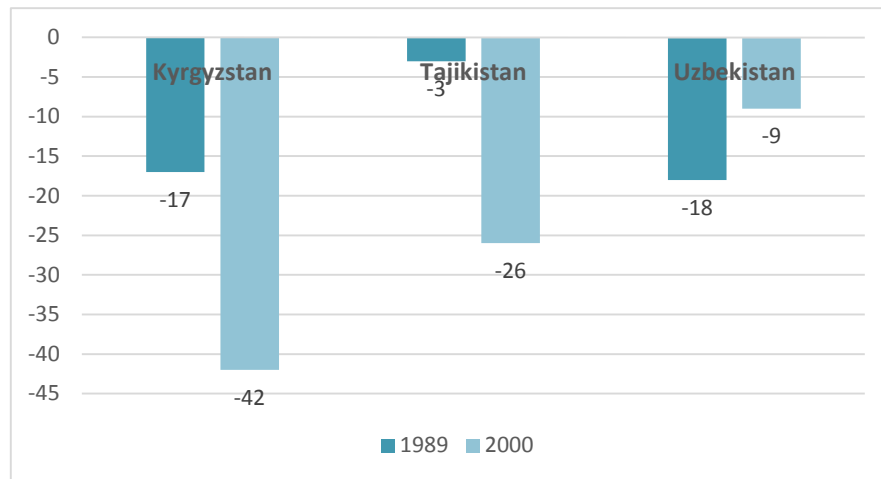


Figure 8.2 Teachers' Earnings in Central Asia in Relation to Average Earnings, 1989 and 2000

Source: UNICEF 2010

In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan teachers' salaries leave much room for improvement as well. In Uzbekistan, the better case, a teacher's monthly salary on average amounts to \$200, and in Tajikistan \$60-\$70 only. Kyrgyzstan appeared to be just above Tajikistan with a teacher's salary on average about \$100 per month (based on interviews conducted in 2011).

Analysis of survey data across the countries showed that in Kyrgyzstan the largest proportion of headteachers (80 per cent) claimed that low teachers' salaries were a significant hindrance to schooling quality and teacher accountability. This correlated with the findings of the World Bank-OECD review, which highlighted that 'low teacher salaries (60 per cent of the average civil service salary) are a barrier to improving performance. Teachers are not motivated to perform and there are significant barriers to attracting and retaining trainees and young teachers, particularly in remote areas (WB 2011, p.1). In Tajikistan 31 per cent of respondents believed low remuneration hindered 'a lot'; but only 3 per cent of respondents expressed the same opinion in Uzbekistan (see Table 8.7). Previous research found that low pay for heads in Kyrgyzstan outweighed the

impact of all other factors on the pool of potential school leaders in the country (Santalova 2010).

Table 8.7 Low remuneration of (head)teachers as a hindrance to their work (number and percentage of schools)

	Not at	Very little		To some extent		A lot		Total
		N	%	N	%	N	%	
Kyrgyzstan	0	1	2	10	20	40	78	51
Tajikistan	0	4	8	14	29	31	63	49
Uzbekistan	0	3	14	16	73	3	14	22
Total	0	8	7	40	33	74	61	122

Question asked: ‘Does low teacher’s remuneration have a negative impact on your school work?’ Options provided included not at all, very little impact, to some extent, a lot.

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011.

In the same vein, concerns about low remuneration were particularly articulated in Kyrgyzstan, where 80 per cent of headteachers declared it an obstacle to quality work. In Tajikistan almost two thirds (63 per cent) of heads were dissatisfied with the overall low level of teachers’ remuneration and more than three quarters of the remainder (28.5 per cent) reported it as a hindrance ‘to some extent’ only. In contrast, the majority of Uzbek headteachers (73 per cent) were concerned only ‘to some extent’ about teachers’ remuneration. These differences may well reflect the fact that teacher remuneration in Uzbekistan is the highest across the three states (as stated above). Despite being paid after several months’ delays – as appeared still to be common practice in Uzbekistan in the 2000s – it is substantial and competitive with other salaries in the country, which remains primarily agrarian (based on an interview with an educationalist in Uzbekistan, 2011):

Teachers do not complain much because, although with a delay, they eventually receive a considerable amount of money, sometimes around \$800-\$1000. They can buy something substantial (Uzbek educationalist).

Likewise, a USAID consultant in educational finance, involved in reforms in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, commented on low teachers' pay in those two states:

In rural areas only teachers and doctors are paid real money from the budget. People are keen to keep salaried jobs despite being poorly paid. Something is better than nothing (Interview with a Regional Coordinator in a USAID Project).

The prevalence of salary concerns among Kyrgyz respondents over those in Tajikistan is striking since salaries in Kyrgyzstan are higher than ones in Tajikistan. It is not clear what accounts for this discrepancy. One possible explanation may relate to the different extent of school autonomy in finance management in the two countries presented in Chapter 5. As the analysis shows, heads in Tajikistan enjoy a higher degree of financial management autonomy than those in Kyrgyzstan. Thus, respondents in Tajikistan appear to be more empowered to reward teachers and reallocate funds (*ibid.*, p. 27).

I have already calculated everything and left the application with the raion education administration. When teachers return from their summer vacations, I shall distribute envelopes with some rewards found from savings. It won't be much, but otherwise they would return with no money left after the summer. Then, every little will help (Tajik headteacher).

Headteachers interviewed, particularly in Kyrgyzstan, stated that they wanted two-way accountability in which the state is accountable to schools with respect to the resources provided adequately to support them. Headteachers blame the states for giving a low priority to education funding:

It is difficult. My school is between two fires: local educational authority and local self-administration. Plenty of responsibility and little funding. If the state continues to overlook schools, in 10-15 years there won't be much left apart from walls (Kyrgyz headteacher).

To sum up, the data suggest that the payment-contract connection is likely to affect the relative emphasis on contractual accountability among (head)teachers in the three countries. The problem of low (head)teachers' remuneration might make the most impact in recruiting a new cohort of school leaders, when the present ones would be retired (cf. Santalova 2010).

8.6. Shortage of teachers and contractual accountability

Apart from the impact of financial issues, contractual accountability was also hindered by the shortage of teaching staff across the three countries. The supply of teachers, the demand for them and management procedures in the three countries were described in detail in Chapter 4. In brief, there is a massive shortage of teaching staff in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and slightly less in Uzbekistan (although no official data available on the Uzbek situation):

I have to attract young specialists. It is very difficult. Young people do not want to work at schools. The salary is meagre and work is plentiful (Kyrgyz headteacher).

Staffing is the number one problem facing schools. Once told that 'personnel decide everything',⁵¹ now we realise in full what it means (Tajik headteacher).

Teachers...I have enough teachers at my school (Uzbek headteacher).

Furthermore, because of the shortage of teachers and heads in all three republics, teachers are hardly ever dismissed; on the contrary, they are sought after by school boards and educational authorities, in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in particular.

I have never fired a teacher over my whole career. They leave of their own accord, and my task as a head is to make them stay (Tajik headteacher).

Today, schools, including large ones, face major problems caused by the teaching shortage. There are teachers who work in several schools at once (Tajik headteacher).

Some teachers commute across the border to Kazakhstan every day. They get much better paid there. I managed to convince a couple of them to work part-time at my school here [in a Kyrgyz school located near the border] (Kyrgyz headteacher).

8.7. Impact of 'marketisation' on teachers' accountability

Recently, there has been extensive research on competition as a means to enhance accountability in public services (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000; Hood *et al.*, 2004). However, particularities of contractual accountability found in education in the three post-Soviet

⁵¹ A famous phrase, 'Personnel decide everything', is attributed to Josef Stalin in 1935. This reflected the essence of a one-party regime, the wellbeing of which depended, according to Stalin, on the correct selection and appointment of party members as managers: <http://www.opoccuu.com/040511.htm>.

states do not appear to support Silova's proposition (2009), that 'market-based competition and increased surveillance by the state subjected teachers to greater accountability in the post-Soviet states' (p.369). This study shows that, despite 'decentralisation ... reforms, which have swept the post-Soviet education space since the early 1990s' (Silova 2009, p.369), the market did not appear to have a primary role in holding teachers to account in schools in the three post-Soviet countries. Although the impact of quasi-market mechanisms on teachers' accountability apparently influenced teachers' behaviour and attitudes in England after the introduction of the Education Reform Act 1988 (Whitty 2006), it appears less relevant in relation to teachers in the post-Soviet states of Central Asia. Several factors explain this difference.

The major quasi-market reforms introduced in England include parental choice and competition among schools. Neither phenomenon is at all common in Central Asia outside national capitals. First, geographical circumstances in the region are challenging. There are vast areas of mountains, steppe or desert; the infrastructure of roads and public transport has deteriorated or is partially developed. Hence, it is difficult for children to commute to different schools. Second, all three countries concerned are primarily agricultural, and schools in the countries are usually scattered, with one or two per village – there is limited scope for school choice. Third, until very recently there was no financial incentive for schools to attract more students, *i.e.* to compete and enhance training standards, primarily because school funding – including (head)teachers' salaries – did not depend much on numbers of students (see Chapter 5). Finally, the shortage of staff in the region (see Chapter 3) puts most schools in a situation of 'survival' rather than 'thrift'. As is often suggested, cooperation may aid survival better than competition does under resource constraints (human, financial, etc.). This is supported by the survey evidence. As one can see in Table 8.6, headteachers across the three countries reported spending

roughly equal (but small) proportions of their working week on competition strategies and on cooperation with other schools. Thus, in Kyrgyzstan heads report more time invested in cooperation than competition.

Furthermore, since the supply of teachers is limited, those in work may not be too worried about meeting their contractual responsibilities as a result of the pressure of a competitive market. This may be particularly true for those who are approaching retirement. In Kyrgyzstan a nearly retired head interviewed no longer sounded enthusiastic about his work. He was holding the post because no other jobs were available. Career changes for people over 50 appear difficult in the region⁵².

I have been a head for many years. It is not long before I retire. I do not know any other work. There are many heads of my age and above whose retirement is approaching and who are stuck in post (Kyrgyz headteacher).

A similarly significant impairment to contractual accountability appears to afflict holding other senior staff responsible. Nonetheless, this seems to be a trend in other countries too. Although some countries have managed to maintain the high status of the teaching profession – notably Finland, where only one in ten applicants becomes a teacher (McKinsey 2007) – most countries report concerns about ageing teacher staff, declining salaries and staff shortages (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2005). These factors are unlikely to contribute to strengthening teachers' contractual accountability.

⁵² The official unemployment rate in Kyrgyzstan is 7.7% (4.8% in Tajikistan and 2.5% Uzbekistan), though that is much lower than survey-based figures. The primary reason for the difference is low access to unemployment benefits and functioning labour market programmes. Public Employment Services in the three states are severely limited by underfunded labour market programmes and understaffing (Kuddo (2011) Unemployment registration and benefits in ECA countries, World Bank).

8.8. Professional Accountability and Control by Other Teachers

Berch *et al.* (1981, p.21) argue that teachers have been placed by society in a position of trust, which has to be earned rather than taken for granted. Fukuyama argues that many professions appear to be self-regulated, due to the fact that (1) it may be difficult for people from outside their profession to judge the quality of their work; and (2) their education may embed a strong normative element, in which service to the profession and broader public goals seems to be paramount (2013, pp. 354, 358). Thus, a doctor, for example, is supposed to act primarily in the interests of the patient and not seek individual benefit primarily. In a similar vein, teachers as educated professionals may be likely to be trusted with greater autonomy because of an assumption (or hope) that they follow internal norms to serve the younger generation.

For instance, Berch and her colleagues (1981) suggest that, in the context of England in the pre-1988 era, the teacher's responsibility was to select an approach best suited to his/her children. Thus, an individual teacher was professionally accountable for selecting and implementing appropriate practices (*ibid.*, p.21). But this form of professional accountability was superseded in England by the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988. It appears that, from the vantage point of politicians and the state, accountability may be about increasing external influence and control over professionals.

Meanwhile, central control was a starting point for education professionals in the post-Soviet countries. In these countries, for over 70 years, in-class practices were prescribed by the national curriculum and teacher guidelines developed by the centre in Moscow (see Chapter 6). These guidelines were reinforced in teacher-training courses – including in-service training programmes – provided by state educational establishments. Trust in professionals seemed to be non-existent at the central level. However, the opposite picture

might have been observed at the community level. According to Barabanov and Baranov (1996) the Soviet-based perception of teachers as the ‘gate-keepers’ to opportunity and future prosperity for children was deeply rooted in the Central Asian communities. Cases of corruption and code violations by teachers over the last two decades may have weakened such traditional glorification of teachers as knowledge-bearers (*cf.* Silova & Bray 2005). From the perspective of teachers in CA states, accountability rather appears to be about securing the renewal of trust, and so they tend to use greater discretion delegated to them.

Like others, the teaching profession wishes to preserve as much autonomy as possible, and resists attempts to control its activities. Educational institutions tend to be particularly set in their ways, partly because of the classroom privacy that guarantees a ‘loose coupling’ (*cf.* Fullan 1993) between reforms initiated by administrators and changes in school practice. As a consequence of such privacy and the lack of generally acknowledged criteria for evaluating teaching, there is a general ambiguity regarding the weight given to teacher appraisal in these countries. According to the analysis presented in Chapter 4, teachers’ appraisal and evaluation were delegated to schools. Across the region teachers are appraised by their colleagues, and, as a result, may be promoted up the salary scale. Promotion is likely to be based on considerations other than solely classroom performance.

Thus, across the countries surveyed, a teacher’s qualifications, her attendance at training courses, her students’ contribution to ‘medal sets’ won by her school at subject olympiads and other events influenced her chances of promotion (see Chapter 3). Moreover, a teacher’s image, her professional reputation and support that she might enjoy from her colleagues appear to be important, as reflected in the responses given by headteachers to

the open-ended question, ‘Who do you rely on in your professional activities?’ The question allowed multiple responses, which have been grouped in Table 8.8.

Table 8.8 The Agency Headteachers Rely on in Their Daily Work, 2011

	Teachers at school among others		Authorities among other professionals		Myself and teachers-colleagues		Missing
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Kyrgyzstan	36	71	14	27	11	22	6
Tajikistan	37	77	30	63	7	14	5
Uzbekistan	5	23	3	14	10	45	8

Question asked: *Who do you rely on in your professional activities?* It was an open-ended question; data do not add to 100 per cent because multiple choices were allowed.

Source: The Headteachers’ Survey 2011..

Respondents’ answers to this question filled three major overlapping categories. As shown in Table 8.8, 71 per cent of survey respondents in Kyrgyzstan mentioned their teaching staff as those upon whom they place most trust in their daily activities; the same question resulted in 77 per cent of respondents mentioning other teachers in Tajikistan, as did 23 per cent in Uzbekistan. A significantly lower proportion of respondents referred to officials in answering the same question: 27 per cent of respondents in Kyrgyzstan and 14 per cent in Uzbekistan. However, in Tajikistan 63 per cent of headteachers reported that they relied upon education administration officials among others in their activities. The final category incorporated responses which included ‘*myself, my experience, my knowledge*’ as well as ‘*myself and my team*’. This final category may indicate that there was a lack of trust among headteachers surveyed in that they might prefer to rely on themselves rather than on other professionals/officials. The analysis showed the least number of responses of the latter kind in Tajikistan (14 per cent), and the highest

proportion of responses indicating a mistrust of the professional arena among heads in Uzbekistan (45 per cent of respondents), while Kyrgyzstan was in the middle with 22 per cent of respondents relying predominantly on themselves.

Although it may appear that only a weak connection exists between professional accountability and trust in the form of relying on your colleagues to fulfill professional obligations, reported in Table 8.9, there is some evidence that heads' comments demonstrate the prevalence of professional accountability over either the contractual accountability determined by state control or the impact of marketisation. The following quotations support the latter interpretation:

There should be competition among teachers, of course, since they get paid for their lessons at the end of the day, but a teacher is an intellectual primarily; moral and psychological rewards are above all for him. When a teacher is praised, when his work is noticed [by his colleagues], he grows wings. It has nothing to do with money. (Tajik headteacher).

When a teacher is good, I ask her to organise an open lesson that other teachers can watch as a learning experience. It encourages competition, as the others try harder to prove to other teachers and to prove to me that they are not worse, and so I ask them to open up their lessons next time (Kyrgyz headteacher).

When a teacher comes to school, I see whether he has come to stay or is a one-day moth who believes he can make money at school; they [the latter] do not stay at school long. There should be a love of children and teaching (Tajik headteacher).

Daniel Lortie in *The balance of control and autonomy in elementary school teaching* (1969) found that primary teachers are largely concerned with intrinsic rewards and thus relatively immune to hierarchical authority (cited in Berch *et al.*, 1981, p.55). When interviewed, heads referred to non-material incentives, which helped them first choose teaching and then continue in the profession for many years thereafter (*cf.* Santalova 2010). Intrinsic rewards are especially important in teaching where people value professional and moral accountability above contractual obligations.

Sometimes – figuratively speaking – I have to punch raion administrators to persuade them to issue a ‘gramota’ (certificate of excellence) to a good teacher. It is a big incentive in teachers’ work. (Kyrgyz headteacher).

Nowadays the attitude to schools and teaching is different; it has changed for the worse. Those who remain teachers are patriots. They are indeed the patriots for their profession. I am a patriot. I love children. I cannot imagine my life without school. (Kyrgyz headteacher).

The notion of ‘patriots’ in the case of professionals devoted to teaching as an occupation is not new. ‘Pious patriots’ was the term Garvin (2005 cited in Conway & Murphy 2013, p.12) used deftly to summarise the professional identity of primary teachers in the first few decades of post-independence Ireland. This may indicate that a special historical phase of national development may make teachers’ self-identification as ‘patriots’ much more likely.

Apart from individual professional accountability at schools, it is important to distinguish collective professional accountability. Previously it has been mentioned that the atmosphere in many schools surveyed across the three states left an impression of a secret teaching society, that some kind of freemasonry ruled the staffroom. Each school preserved the practice of regular meetings of its pedagogical staff under a banner of a so-

called ‘methodological unit’ (Rus.: *metodobiyedineniye*); the latter usually consisted of a headteacher and a pedagogical council (Rus.: *pedsovet*).

Both were practices adopted in Soviet times, and promoted discussion and collective agreement on decisions about any methodological, content, or teaching issue. Also ‘open lessons’ have always been a part of the educational environment at schools in the region, and teachers always discussed their practices with colleagues. This type of transparency in the code of teachers’ conduct at school and in the classroom puts a teacher in the position of seeking professional appreciation of her work by her colleagues.

Another indicator of teacher’s professional accountability is the headteachers’ determination to ‘grow teachers within [their] schools’; they also mentioned other strategies employed in looking for teachers to fill vacancies. Headteachers appeared personally responsible for teachers’ in-service upgrading, even though legally this responsibility belongs to the state.

I am trying hard. The pedagogical committee and myself, we encourage those teachers who work in good faith to give open lessons [lessons visited by other teachers], seminars, and also develop methodological recommendations for younger staff. Youngsters feel inspired, even incentivised, by their example (Tajik headteacher).

As a school headteacher I have to find both a common language for my teachers and ways to increase their pay – then they will teach better. When I go, I do not want people to say, “She was so-and-so.” Quite the opposite! I want people to say, “She was truly a good headteacher, and tried hard for our children, for the sake of society” (Tajik headteacher).

The last quotation serves as a good lead into the discussion of the third type of accountability analysed in this study: moral accountability.

8.9. Moral Accountability and Parental Participation

A schoolteacher's terms of reference are included in her labour agreement, as discussed under contractual accountability above. However, apart from these formal procedures, which give the appearance of strong accountability, there is a flow of unofficial transactions between school (head)teachers and the community (parents, students) (Berch *et al.*, 1981). Interviews conducted for the purposes of this study revealed that most headteachers perceived their own and teachers' accountability in moral rather than professional or contractual terms.

I am working hard as a headteacher and my salary is low, but pupils should not suffer at all. For I have no right not to help them learn as best I can and use my low salary as a justification. If my salary dissatisfied me I would have found another job (Tajik headteacher).

Despite meagre salaries, despite huge class sizes – there are 38-45 children in each class – teachers stay at our school, and I hope that'll remain the case (Tajik headteacher).

Few formal accountability procedures were found in schools studied in the three states. It was the informal communication system that created most of the accountability pressure on teachers and heads. Additionally, the fact that heads are appointed, and not selected on merit, seems to contribute to the high level of moral accountability observed among heads interviewed.

I remember that when I was appointed by the head of RaiOO, Mr R, there were parents, teachers against my appointment. I remember on my first day I cried several hours behind a closed door, then dried my tears and promised myself that under my management the school would be exceptional in all respects. I had to prove that I could work well, that I was

the best head and with me the school would reach the top. And I think I have managed to prove that over 20 years of my headship (Tajik headteacher).

Across the three states, headteachers and officials appeared keenly aware that parents may no longer be kept ‘out-of school’. Analysis of the interviews showed that headteachers’ attitudes to parental participation – or the lack of it – were divided. One group of respondents appeared positive about parents’ participation, and so treated them as partners:

There are two teams whose support a head should win: a team of teachers and a team of parents. If you manage to win the support of both teams, you will not be scared by storms (Tajik headteacher).

My teachers, my deputies and my parents are three pillars of my school empire (Kyrgyz headteacher).

In contrast, the other group of headteachers interviewed feared that recent pressure for accountability was being used to encroach upon their evolving autonomy. This group appeared dissatisfied with parents’ lack of attention to schools’ needs, un-readiness to help and ‘use-and-abuse’ behaviour.

Nowadays parents assess a school from the material side, whether there are computers, whether it is warm and well-lit, and only secondarily do parents appear to have educational questions. Why? Because now parents, who have some money, do not rely on school much. What they rely on are additional training courses, and they are proud that their children receiving such extra services elsewhere (Tajik headteacher, Dushanbe).

You ask if parents are interested in the school. No, they are not! They need to be contacted and stimulated all the time (Kyrgyz headteacher).

The explanation for such contrasting attitudes may be found in Plowden Report issued in 1967 by the Department of Education and Science, England.⁵³ First, the report pronounced that parental interest in education was good for children and helpful to schools. Second, the report underlined the importance not merely of involving parents but also of staff imparting to them an understanding of the educational process: “The school should explain that parents can take an informed interest in what their children are doing. Parents will not understand unless they are told” (DES, 1967, p.163)

Of course, extensive research into parents’ attitudes is needed in order to explain the diverse patterns of their involvement in schooling across the post-Soviet states. Nonetheless, the statements of the Plowden Report were echoed in interviews given by headteachers in Tajikistan in particular, a country where heads appeared to enjoy the highest degree of autonomy among the three states across a number of dimensions:

When we started working with the parents’ committee, parents began to appreciate our efforts too. Any parent will be willing to support a school if she sees that it scores above average (Tajik headteacher).

We work both inside and outside our school, because outside we work a lot with mahallya (local community: Taj.), and with parents. They help our school a lot (Tajik headteacher).

Analysis of secondary data and personal observations shows that the regional educational authorities – like many headteachers and teachers – found themselves the victims of their own traditions of reticence and silence towards the local community. Repeatedly over the

⁵³ Downloaded from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/plowden/plowden1967-1.html> on 2 October 2013.

last twenty years, questions arose about educational reform to which local authorities failed to respond, leaving individual teachers to cope with change and explain it to parents. Meanwhile, stemming from concerns inherited from the Soviet era, most parents were afraid of being seen as troublemakers or asking the ‘wrong’ type of questions. Reluctance to voice concerns was the norm.

As has been generally noted, the official status of a parents’ organisation is likely to provide an accepted source of legitimacy for their involvement in a school, as well as creating pressure for accountability. Legislation in the three states contains multiple references to boards of trustees, community involvement in school management and public governance. Survey findings show that a significantly smaller proportion of schools in Kyrgyzstan (29 per cent) and Uzbekistan (23 per cent) than in Tajikistan (57 per cent of schools surveyed) had parental units registered as legal entities and incorporated in school management structures (Table 8.9). Data presented in Table 8.9 correlate with feedback from Tajik heads provided in interviews, where heads sounded particularly encouraging and enthusiastic about parental involvement. Also a much higher proportion of Tajik heads reported that they expected parental associations to be registered as legal persons (*i.e.* to be able to have a bank account, establish administrative procedures, etc.): 71 per cent of heads surveyed in Tajikistan, against 57 per cent of those in Kyrgyzstan and 27 per cent in Uzbekistan (see Table 8.9).

Table 8.9 Parental Bodies Registered as Legal Entities in the Three Countries (number and percentage)

	Yes		No		Missing	Total
	N	%	N	%	N	N
Kyrgyzstan	15	29	29	57	7	51
Tajikistan	28	57	17	35	4	49
Uzbekistan	5	23	14	64	3	22
Total	48	39	60	49	14	122

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011..

Nonetheless, the majority of heads interviewed reported some type of parental organisation at their schools. However, questions about the roles played by these parental units revealed that their functions and responsibilities were not well-defined. It appeared that their involvement mostly centred on fundraising and other financial matters.

Of course we do have a board of trustees. But their role is minor, since they no longer collect money. Now officially there are only two sources of funding for schools: the state and local budgets (Kyrgyz headteacher).

Somehow, the board of trustees and the parents' committee merged. When parents' payments were officially banned, their role diminished (Kyrgyz headteacher).

We do have a parents' committee, but their role is not big. They are under our authority, so to speak (Tajik headteacher).

It would be great to increase the role of the boards of trustees (Uzbek headteacher).

Table 8.10 Heads' Expectations of Parental Involvement in School Activities (number and percentage)

		Kyrgyzstan		Tajikistan		Uzbekistan	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Fundraising	N	41	10	39	8	14	6
	%	80%	20%	80%	16%	64%	27%
Finance review	N	39	12	42	6	14	8
	%	76%	24%	86%	12%	64%	36%
In-kind contributions (time, labour, etc.)	N	51	0	47	2	21	1
	%	100%	0	96%	4%	95%	5%
School management	N	44	7	44	5	14	8
	%	86%	14%	90%	10%	64%	36%
Staff selection and appraisal	N	23	27	32	15	4	18
	%	45%	53%	65%	31%	18%	82%
Demand reports on student performance	N	49	2	49	0	20	2
	%	96%	4%	100%	0	91%	9%
Demand school ranking	N	44	7	42	7	18	4
	%	86%	14%	86%	14%	82%	18%
Register as a legal body	N	29	22	35	9	6	13
	%	57%	43%	71%	18%	27%	59%

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011..

The findings shown in Table 8.10 indicate that, across all the schools sampled in the three countries, heads tend to have similar expectations of parental participation, and, hence, behave in similar ways to see these expectations fulfilled. Thus, across the region parental participation is primarily connected to money-raising activities (80 per cent of heads in

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and 64 per cent in Uzbekistan). Naturally, parents' ability to invest some money or resources in-kind into scarce school budgets was highly appreciated. Meanwhile, parental participation in staff selection and appraisal was expected by less than half of heads (45 per cent) in Kyrgyzstan, two thirds of heads in Tajikistan (65 per cent) and one fifth (18 per cent) of respondents in Uzbekistan. Given headteachers' preferences, it was no surprise that parents felt more comfortable participating in raising extra resources for the schools than in other possible types of involvement. Although heads claimed to welcome parental involvement in school management (86 per cent of heads in Kyrgyzstan, 90 per cent in Tajikistan and 64 per cent in Uzbekistan), and in requesting reports on student performance (96, 100 and 91 per cent respectively), and wanting to know a school's relative performance (82-86 per cent of respondents across the three states), analysis of legal documents and interviews showed that the development of mechanisms of public accountability (*e.g.* league tables) was still awaited, and parents were not yet forward in involving themselves in curriculum and/or administrative issues. As a result, headteachers felt deprived of parents' support, and voiced disapproval of such a lack of interest. As one head put it:

The present time is such that many parents pay no attention to the upbringing of their children. They believe that a teacher is required to play a twofold role of teacher and parent (Kyrgyz headteacher).

8.10. Conclusions

This chapter draws together observations that show that if a public agency is given Autonomy from Intervention (Chapter 7), Finance Resource Management Autonomy (Chapter 5), or autonomy in any other dimension, then there must be some adjustments

made to how that agency is held accountable for its decisions to the state and local communities (primarily parents and their children).

When a higher administrative authority makes all the decisions, *i.e.* tells the schools in the countries concerned what to teach, what books to use, whom to hire, etc., then accountability is achieved simply by monitoring how well schools comply with regulations. In these circumstances very limited autonomy in an education system is registered – or none. However, this study showed that schools in the three post-Soviet republics were given autonomy (at least to some extent) in making decisions in certain areas of their operation (see Chapters 4-7). Furthermore, according to Chapter 7, schools appeared to be shielded to some extent (the average Autonomy from Intervention Index being -0.3 across the three countries) from *ex post* intervention by state structures in their activities. Hence, a different kind of accountability may be emerging.

In view of the absence of any legal obligations to the public in (head)teachers' contracts, aside from health and safety legislation and some other generally applied laws – teachers and headteachers in the countries concerned are still answerable to pupils and parents primarily in moral terms. Respondents in the countries concerned reported that moral accountability counted for more with them than did other types of accountability, contractual or professional. Moral and ethical values shared by teachers appeared to be the principal mechanisms to hold them accountable for what their decisions produce in the form of educational achievement and parental satisfaction with the educational process.

Meanwhile, state accountability to teachers and schools in the countries concerned was not necessarily maintained. According to respondents in the three republics – and in Kyrgyzstan in particular – the state structures were more likely to impose sanctions than

to provide support and issue rewards. The main concern expressed was the generally low level of teachers' salaries in the republics, which were often below a living minimum in the country. If post-Soviet governments continue issuing regulations, dictating the curriculum and then insisting on external evaluation of schools' work, as is seen in Uzbekistan in particular, a country may risk losing the bulk of the commitment and enthusiasm that heads and teachers would otherwise have to offer. Meanwhile, according to Sahlberg (2007), the Finnish educational system has flourished, *inter alia*, because of the flexibility and accountability rooted in high quality teaching force and trust-based professionalism.

In order to be able to mitigate the effects of a system of management 'inherited' from the Soviet times, with the tendency of ministerial structures to lose control over schools in the region, the general public may be required to become more interested and involved in schooling. However, as the analysis has shown, the external quest for accountability within the Central Asian context is still very limited. Nonetheless, the process has been launched. National legislation in all three countries was adjusted so that, for instance, public school governance was introduced. Although in practice school boards of trustees appeared to be quite underdeveloped in the post-Soviet states, heads interviewed seemed to be willing to develop them further.

The three states need to restore public trust in schools and the teaching profession. This may require that public accountability forums be more visible, tangible and powerful (Bowen 2007 p.465). Twenty years of reforms in the region studied show that it is hard to transform education mechanically simply through administrative measures. The process of making schools decision-making more autonomous about major aspects of their functioning (Chapters 4-7) has challenged existing pyramids of coordination and accountability (K. Verhoest, M. MacCarthaigh, *et al.* 2010).

Chapter 9 | Explaining the Findings

Learning is also a matter of forgetting what is no longer needed – something in which postcommunist citizens have had to become especially expert. Postcommunist Europe is rich in human capital and, to varying degrees, rich in what may be the most important current denomination of political capital: acceptability in principle.
(Outhwaite and Ray 2005, p.86)

The dimensions of school autonomy that have been analysed in this thesis sharpen our understanding of the phenomenon of educational decentralisation and how it was implemented in the newly emerged states in Central Asia. In conceptualizing decentralisation along six axes this analysis helps to explain its effects more generally as a governance strategy (see documents analysis in the empirical chapters). At the same time, recognizing that it is important to consider the context in which decentralisation takes place, the governance strategies of educational decentralisation implemented were analysed from a historical and comparative perspective. As Margaret Archer (1976) recommends, the time and place in which decentralisation policies have been adopted are important for understanding the rationales behind the process as well as the specifics of policy outputs.

In this chapter the aim is to explore the similarities and differences among educational policies in the three countries, their implications, and the extent to which the trends observed in education systems of these countries may be explained by the premises of the neo-institutional theory.

9.1. Paradox of School Autonomization

Decentralisation seldom actually occurs, but seems instead to be absorbed into the existing centralized or semi-centralized structure of educational governance around the world (*cf.* Weiler 1990). There is no clear-cut demarcation between decentralisation and autonomy. The concept of decentralisation basically denotes the distribution of authority and responsibility from the centre to more peripheral units (Lundquist 1987). However, this shift of responsibilities does not necessarily result in a higher degree of autonomy for the recipients (Johansson & Johansson 1994 cited in Ronnberg 2007, p.218). This was reflected in the approach to the autonomy of a public agency analysed by Verhoest et al (2004).

The research findings on the patterns of school autonomy analysed in the three countries show that the state continues to play the central role in the governance of public schools, particularly through its ongoing control over educational content, textbooks provision and teaching methods. Through prescriptive curricula and centrally-legitimized textbooks the newly emerged countries of Central Asia tried to create a new sense of social cohesion and unified national identities (see Silova, Johnson and Heyneman 2007; Mitter 1997; Linz 1993). Furthermore, the importance of education not only in terms of creating and maintaining national identity but also in economic development suggests that this is an area from which the state will not willingly withdraw.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ For the discussion of education in economic terms, namely that it provides economically necessary qualifications (see Wolf 2002) and on schooling and work in the democratic societies (see Carnoy & Levin 1985). Furthermore, there is a substantial body of comparative research that explores the relationship between education and economic growth (see Hanushek, Link and Woessmann 2011; Heyneman and Todoric-Bebic 2000; OECD 2012).

Conversely, the delegation of managerial autonomy in human and financial resources to schools in the three countries serves as evidence of governmental strategy to distribute certain kinds of decision-making power over schooling between schools and local communities. In this case, it was decision-making to deal with areas in which there were a shortage of resources: money and teachers. It could be said that local decision-making authority to make hard choices regarding the allocation of limited financial resources, was accompanied by the decentralisation of blame and responsibility from the state to the local level of schools (Ball 1998, p.124). As shown by the in-depth analysis of this study the ‘decentralized-centralisation’ in the three countries reflects inherent tensions between policies that promote local autonomy and those that continue to satisfy the political desires for central control.

The phenomenon of ‘decentralised centralisation’ in the western democracies was fuelled by the New Public Management doctrine, which proclaimed agentification, autonomisation and corporatisation of mostly executive tasks (see Pollitt et al 2001, OECD 2002), but still preserved the ‘steering’ function for central governments. Thus, Trevor Fisher among other scholars perceived the centralisation of power in English education after the 1988 Education Reform Act. Fisher (2012) finds that the power shift to the centre has been accelerated recently; that “the rhetoric of the all-powerful head teacher in control of the school has been contradicted by centrally determined priorities...and the power of the media to represent the school to its community by performance tables” (p.231). In a similar vein, Gustav Karlsen (2000) described the educational landscape in Western Canada and Norway as follows: “Setting central goals and standards for outcomes are tasks for the central level and therefore centralisation, while the means and the responsibility for implementation are local duties and therefore decentralisation” (p. 534).

This raises the question how far powerful global trends might have translated into national policies in the three states. As Farrel and Oliveira (1993) put it: “The irony in the case of developing countries is that choices are reduced, the price of mistakes is higher and conditions for success are more limited. Yet to overcome these problems they have to be more efficient than industrial countries have been” (p.22). Following the logic of neo-institutional theory employed here to explain the patterns found, education as an institution can be claimed to be made of ‘taken-for-granted’ scripts, rules, and cultural norms and values, which are legitimized in a particular community, country or region (Wiseman, Astiz, Baker 2013, p.34). In this way, educational systems in highly non-Western communities (*e.g.* Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) might well attempt to align their educational system’s structure and policies with a Western model (*ibid.*, p.35). This might be particularly likely in countries, where supra-national organisations were very actively promoting changes in the regulatory and institutional framework that stressed decentralisation (Astiz *et al.* 2002, p. 70).

9.2. RQ 1: What is the Extent of School Autonomy in the Three States?

The three empirical chapters (Chapters 4-6) explored the first research question: to what extent has autonomy along the six main dimensions of decision-making authority been delegated to public schools in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. The measurement of school autonomy was based on the analysis of the headteachers’ survey administered to 122 schools and 46 interviews with educators in the region. The analytical framework employed was the taxonomy of public agency autonomy developed by Verhoest *et al* (2004), which was adapted in this study for the purposes of measuring autonomy in an educational establishment.

During the last two decades the three countries underwent processes of decentralisation and de-regulation. Thus, the importance of local self-governance and school self-regulation was emphasised in the political discourse of the three states. Policy reforms could have been initiated in a bottom-up manner, as in Russia in particular, where a progressive teachers' movement launched the reforms (Eklof and Dneprov 1993). An alternative trajectory of policy reforms involved a move 'backwards' towards the educational institutions existing prior to the imposition of the Soviet model. Thus in Czechoslovakia and Hungary educational policies revitalized the highly selective *Gymnasien*, borrowed from the Prussian educational model (Cerych 1997). Neither of these approaches - bottom up reform or a return to previous arrangements – were possible in the three post-Soviet countries of Central Asia, where mass or formal schooling appeared only under the Soviet regime. The absence of any endogenous models pushed the states to seek solutions in reform packages modelled from the outside.

After the fall of state socialism and the end of the Cold War, Fukuyama (1992) argues, it became evident that the only winning model of governance was that of liberal democracy. The cultural and economic superiority of the Western way was built into the theories of national development in the post-Soviet era, particularly with regard to less developed nations (Bain 2005, p. 45) including Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Their nation-state borders had been defined in the 1920s under the Soviet regime. Furthermore, the Western model was lent (vs. "borrowed" suggested by Steiner-Khamsi (2008)) through numerous international organisations such as the World Bank, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Asian Development Bank, etc., which pumped foreign aid into the region in the second half of the 1990s (Silova and Steiner-Khamsi 2008). Silova (2005) argued: "In the context of increasing international aid relationships, the Central Asian education space has become swamped with policies 'traveling' across

national boundaries” (p.49). This included elements common to all countries across the region; decentralisation of educational finance, privatization of higher education, market-driven text-book provision, increased educational choice, standardized student assessment and so on (Silova and Steiner-Khamsi 2008, pp.19-22). In the case of the three states, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank promoted an “education reform package” through structural adjustment policies and conditionality attached to loans (*ibid.*), and hence, the top-down reforms were introduced into the systems of former Soviet states in Central Asia.

Structural and policy initiatives introduced in the three countries were explored from different angles along six dimensions of school autonomy in Chapters 4-6, and found to follow quite similar pattern of school autonomy across the three states (see Figure 9.1). Figure 9.1 summarises the quantitative account of the six dimensions of school autonomy explored in the three countries. These six dimensions of school autonomy are:

1. Human Resource Management Autonomy – whether the agency enjoys managerial autonomy with respect to human resources management;
2. Structural Autonomy – the extent to which the agency is shielded from influence by the government through lines of hierarchy and accountability;
3. Financial Resource Management Autonomy – whether the agency enjoys managerial autonomy with respect to financial management;
4. Fundraising (Financial) Autonomy – the extent to which the agency depends on governmental funding or on its own revenues;
5. Policy Autonomy – to what extent the agency itself can take decisions about processes and procedures it must conduct to perform externally prescribed services;

6. Autonomy from Intervention – how free the agency is from *ex-post* reporting requirements, evaluation and audit provisions with respect to decisions made.

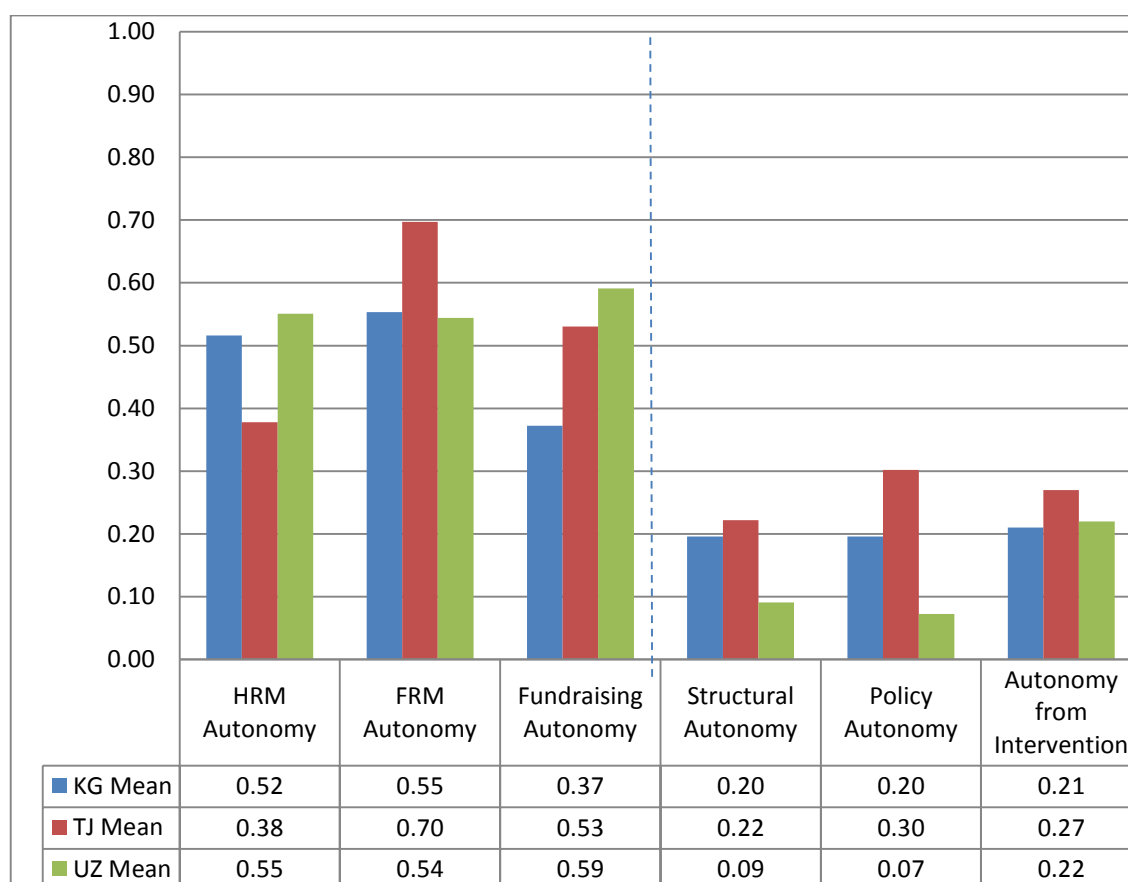


Figure 9.1 Means of School Autonomy in Six Dimensions in the Three Countries

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

As can be seen in Figure 9.1 there are two groups of school autonomy types. One is the left half separated by a dashed line in the chart, with the dimensions of school autonomy, which demonstrate the level of decision making competencies delegated to schools across the three states. The second half to the right from the dashed line in the chart includes dimensions, which characterise school autonomy as the exemption of constraints on the actual use of decision making competencies of the school in the three states of Central Asia. As can be seen in the chart the three dimensions on the left – Human Resource

Management Autonomy, Financial Resource Management and Fundraising Autonomy – appear to be the ones where significant decision making power delegated to schools. This is particularly so in Tajikistan along the Financial Resource Management dimension.

By contrast, the exemption of constraints on the actual use of decision making competencies of the school – the Structural Dimension, Policy Dimension and Autonomy from Intervention – appear to have quite low levels of autonomy. While the first group of dimensions includes degrees of responsibility for hiring and firing of teachers, formulating and executing budgets, appraising and promoting teachers, raising private funds and deciding about allocation of private funds, the second group in the chart involves degrees of authority to set educational goals, decide about subjects to teach, textbooks to use and classroom practices to follow as well as to hire or fire the headteacher. These items represent the major functions through which the central state still exercises control over schools and restricts autonomy delegated to schools in the managerial area. However, the Autonomy from Intervention, which focuses on school autonomy from ex-post audits by the ministerial authorities, shows that standardised tests and the comparison of schools in performance league tables have not yet become common practices across the three republics.

Nonetheless, as the study shows, headteachers in the three states are the subjects for sanctions by the MoEs and continue to be appointed by the upper education administrations. Monitoring and evaluation of schools are done on an ‘ad hoc’ basis by the ministries (less so in Uzbekistan, where the procedures are documented to a greater extent, than in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) and the assessment of students’ attainment often sporadic (to a lesser extent in Kyrgyzstan that participated in the international

assessments (PISA 2006, 2009) than in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) are unlikely to enhance school autonomy in the region.

To some degree there was a shift in the locus of accountability from school evaluation and monitoring by ministerial authorities to local sources of monitoring by the *raion* education authorities as well as by school headteachers and other teachers (*i.e.* school self-assessment). Although the latter has not been reflected in detail in the legislative frameworks in the three states, nevertheless, the headteachers interviewed in these countries referred to moral accountability towards pupils and their parents as the primary force of holding them accountable for the outcomes of schooling. Meanwhile, as analysis indicated, in the three states market mechanisms in this regard appeared to be secondary and not highly effective to date (see Chapter 8). Thus the centralisation of policymaking authority in regard to educational goals, subject content, classroom practices and hiring of head teachers has not been accompanied by any systematic measure of accountability for educational performance.

Meanwhile, the managerial competencies related to human and financial resource management appear to be delegated to schools to a considerable extent in the three states (see HRM dimension and FRM dimension). The Fundraising dimension, which captures how much a school is dependent not only on state funding but also on revenue from extra-curricula activities, shows a considerable deviation from zero; this may well be interpreted that schools have been charged with the responsibility to seek extra-budget funds in the three states, though the amounts raised are usually very small.

Nonetheless, this particular freedom may cause concern. As this study has shown, since schools were allowed to raise private funds, they appeared to be under pressure to raise

the level of extra-budgetary resources attracted, and this then led to greater use of business methods in public education. As was seen, across the three countries this caused the establishment of private classes, where tuition would be charged, within mainstream public schools (to a greater extent in Kyrgyzstan than in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan: see Chapter 5). Schools seemed to become more entrepreneurial in order to raise their own funds because of dwindling state financing, yet often at the expense of education equality. Therefore, it appears to be essential that schools are accountable.

Hence, one of the findings of the present research shows that, although educational policies in the three post-Soviet states were aimed at the delegation of responsibilities to the school level, they promoted autonomy in relation to certain functions, and, at the same time, tended to maintain central control over others.

Following the theoretical framework of historical institutionalism, this might well be explained by the institutional inertia persisting from Soviet times. As Kissane (2009) states, “The former Soviet [totalitarian] system has disintegrated in name only; many of the same structures remain in place” (p.227). Traditionally education in the three countries has been subject to rigorous central regulations. In order to avoid losing their grip over educational systems after the collapse of the Soviet Union, central governments in these countries may tend to regulate the processes of education transformation by numerous legislative fiats (in Uzbekistan in particular) in the areas of policy and school structures in particular. Thus, it could be argued that a persistent legacy of Soviet times has overcome efforts at educational transformation in post-Soviet countries over the course of the last generation.

The other standpoint on the way educational reforms developed in the post-Soviet states dwells on the NPM doctrine. According to NPM, the ideal type of a public agency scores highly on managerial autonomy and low on policy autonomy and *ex ante* control (Verhoest & Lægreid 2010, p.276). Hence, sociological institutionalism states that “organisations embrace specific institutional norms or practices because the latter are widely valued within a broader cultural environment” (Hall and Taylor 1996, p.949).

I have examined to what extent this ideal type can be found in the education practices in the three states and what the implications of such transformations may be. Table 9.1 summarises a qualitative account of the six dimensions of school autonomy explored in the three countries: (i) human resource management, (ii) structural, (iii) financial (source of funding), (iv) financial resource management, (v) policy and (vi) interventional. Using World Bank terminology (WB SABER 2012), the extent of school autonomy in these countries has been assessed as ‘latent’ (minimum level of autonomy), ‘emerging’ (low level of autonomy), ‘established’ (high level of autonomy) or ‘mature’ (maximum level of autonomy). In case a country was at the edge of two benchmarks, both benchmarks were combined (*e.g.* ‘emerging/established’).

Table 9.1 Summary Table: Degrees of School Autonomy in the Three States along Six Dimensions

Dimensions	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
	Established	Emerging/Established	Established
1. <i>Human resource management autonomy</i> – whether the agency enjoys managerial autonomy with respect to human resources management;	Teachers legally are appointed and deployed by the regional education administration (MOE unit), but schools select a teacher, appraise her, may reward her and promote to an upper pay-scale.		

Dimensions	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
2. <i>Structural autonomy</i> – the extent to which the agency is shielded from influence by the government through lines of hierarchy and accountability	Latent	Latent	Latent
	Headteachers are appointed and deployed by MOE and/or regional education administration; staff composition is prescribed by MOE regulations, parents associations/committees are for money-raising purposes primarily		
	Emerging	Established	Established
3. <i>Fundraising autonomy</i> – the extent to which the agency depends on governmental funding or on its own revenues	Central funding accounts on average for 80 per cent of school budgets; the remaining 20% are paid from the local governments and/or raised by schools; schools are authorised to conduct income generating activities	Central funding accounts on average for 90 per cent of school budgets based on per student formula; schools are authorised to conduct income generating activities	Local budgets funding accounts on average for 80 per cent of school budgets; the remaining 20% are paid from the central government and/or raised by schools; schools are authorised to conduct income generating activities
	Established	Established/Mature	Established
4. <i>Financial resource management autonomy</i> – whether the agency enjoys managerial autonomy with respect to financial management;	Schools participate in budget formulation and implementation; carrying out of virements is possible in pilot schools; operations with the private funds are strictly regulated.	Schools participate in budget formulation and implementation; carrying out of virements is possible; operations with the private funds are mildly regulated	Schools have individual bank accounts, budget formulation and implementation are regulated but schools participate; operations with the private funds are mildly regulated
	Latent	Latent/Emerging	None/Latent
5. <i>Policy autonomy</i> – to what extent the agency itself can take decisions about processes and procedures it must conduct to perform externally prescribed services	Two-tiered national curriculum (incl. State and School components), national educational standard, textbooks recommended by MOE, teachers trained in state run TIT institutions	Two-tiered national curriculum, (incl. State and School components), national educational standard, textbooks recommended by MOE, can be purchased or rented at school, teachers trained in state run TIT institutions and NGOs	Two-tiered national curriculum (incl. State and School components), national educational standard, textbooks strictly recommended by MOE, teachers trained in state run TIT institutions only

Dimensions	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
6. <i>Autonomy from Intervention</i> – how free the agency is from <i>ex-post</i> reporting requirements, evaluation and audit provisions with respect to decisions made	Latent	Latent/Emerging	Latent
	There are on-going efforts to establish a system of standardised tests; currently student assessment is organized at school level and through Olympiads at upper administrative levels, school M&E is sporadic provided by regional educational authorities and/or MOE. There is no system for regular school assessment in place yet and no system in place for informing parents and society about education system performance.		

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011.

Analysis presented in Table 9.1 showed a complex picture of school autonomy in the region. Overall, this might be described metaphorically as the central agencies doing more “steering” and the local schools and teachers more “rowing”, and this is the statement which holds true for all three countries. This begs the question of whether there is convergence (or divergence) in the patterns of school autonomy observed in the countries concerned, which is the second research question of this study.

9.3. RQ 2: Is There Convergence (or Rather Non-Divergence) in the Three States?

Despite evidence for the persistence of national differences, as presented in this research and in other comparative studies (see Arnott & Menter 2007; Helgøy, Homme & Gewirtz 2007), convergence theory continues to appeal to many commentators worldwide. But Pollitt (2001) offers a guarded view: he argues that convergence in practical terms is something of a ‘myth’ (p.933); yet the idea of convergence remains useful on its own terms, since it helps ‘distinguish the wood from the trees’ in the eyes of numerous stakeholders, including policy-makers, bureaucracies, multilateral organisations and researchers (pp. 940-43).

According to Pollitt (2001), the degree of convergence/divergence depends on the focus or level of analysis, and on how the indicators to be compared are chosen: conclusions about convergence at one level do not necessarily mean convergence at another (p.938). A recent study exploring regulatory policies pursued within the education systems of five European countries (Belgium, England, France, Portugal and post-socialist Hungary) concluded that policies had indeed converged at the level of rhetoric: “The policies of the last 20 years in the countries studied have certain commonalities: increasing school autonomy, the search for a ‘happy medium’ between centralized and decentralized decision-making; the introduction of more or less free choice for parents or, even, quasi-market mechanisms; the development of diversification in educational offerings and the introduction of evaluation mechanisms or, even, regulation by results” (Maroy 2009, p. 81). The qualification Maroy offers is important: “However, these transformations take place to various degrees, with various rhythms and intensities and levels of coherence” (*ibid.*). Thus, as the present study reveals, the implementation of similar-sounding policies – apparently convergent ones – in different settings does not necessarily lead to uniformity of outcomes (see also Pawson & Tilley 1997, Pollitt 2001). My analysis further refined understanding of the converging transformations taking place in the three post-Soviet states with respect to the reasons and motives for ‘*various degrees*’, ‘*various intensities*’ and ‘*levels of coherence*’ (Maroy 2009, p. 8).

In order to answer the second research question, whether there is convergence among the three countries, the criteria used to judge whether states’ policies are similar or not should be clarified. For the purposes of this research, I have defined policy convergence as the growing similarity of policies over time. According to Holzinger and Knill (2005), a general distinction should be drawn between similarities in (1) policy outputs (the policies

adopted by governments) and of (2) policy outcomes (the actual effects of policies in terms of goals achieved) (p.776).

1. Policy Outputs

According to Hoberg (2001), there are four types of forces that may lead to policy convergence among nation states: (i) parallel domestic pressures; (ii) emulation (when a government finds another country's policy attractive and so adopts it); (iii) international legal constraints; and (iv) international economic integration (p. 127). In any of these cases, governments are the principal agents reacting to pressures, whether domestic or external, economic or legal. Hence, it is important to study what governments do in terms of policy outputs (Holzinger & Knill 2005). So, legislative enactments and regulations were examined in each of the three countries and reported in the 'documentary analysis' section.

Analysis showed that all four factors listed above were relevant to the cases of the three states. Thus, domestic pressures in the form of constraints on financial and human resources across the three states were observed and discussed in interviews. Emulating policies 'made in the West' seemed the best possible way of replacing the policies of the centralised Soviet state and prescribed guidance from Moscow: this was the perspective shared across the region. In the period of 'de-sovietisation' and 'de-ideologisation', Western policies in education, especially those informed by New Public Management approaches (NPM), involved challenging central government control and emphasising greater autonomy at subordinate levels in order to promote cost control, efficiency, service quality and consumer empowerment (Helgøy, Homme & Gewirtz 2007, p.198).

Legal constraints primarily came in the form of the conditions attached to the loans distributed to the three states over the last twenty years. Approval for the next transfer of loan funds depended on the extent to which local stakeholders had fulfilled the conditions (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi 2008). As beneficiaries of foreign aid, the three countries have encountered these constraints at different intervals over the last two decades (Uzbekistan to a lesser extent than Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) (*ibid.*).

‘International economic and educational integration’ was a slogan adopted across the three states in Central Asia and beyond (see Fimyar 2010). Even though national identities were being reconstructed, and, accordingly, national uniqueness was emphasised by advanced textbooks and curricula prescribed by national capitals, all three states wanted to be included in the modern world of educational reforms, as reflected in the rhetoric of the countries’ educational laws (see Chapter 4).

Hoberg (2001), on the one hand, expressed doubt about the capacity of nation states to maintain distinctive policies in the modern world with intensified international trade, mobile capital and widespread circulation of ideas, which have forced national policies to conform to international standards (p. 127). In the world of the newly emerged nation states in Central Asia there are clearly many examples of this. The World Bank and the current EU Commission insist on certain types of institutional reforms, for instance, the shift to a per capita formula in education funding across the three states studied (see Chapter 5), as conditions for receiving assistance. As Jones (1998) puts it, “The [World Bank]’s preconditions for education can only be understood as an ideological stance, in promoting an integrated world system along market lines” (p. 152). Thus, so-called coercive isomorphism (Powell & DiMaggio 1991) of educational institutions occurred across the three states, when pressure to adopt a particular common form came from other

bodies – especially international aid organisations – which could exercise power over state governments and schools.

Yet, in the same work, Hoberg warned that institutional constraints inside states could be more powerful than external pressures for conformity. Under conditions of significant uncertainty, such as those observed in Central Asia over the last two decades, the most efficient coping strategy appeared to be adopting the policy reforms and practices employed by other organisations that had succeeded under disadvantaged circumstances. This could be observed both at the macro-level of national governments and at the micro-level of schools in the three states. This could serve as an example of the mimetic isomorphism proposed by Powell and DiMaggio (1991). This study found that schools often imitated each others' structures and practices, for instance, the Tajik and Kyrgyz practice of copying lists of textbooks, and encouraging parental participation through similar organisational forms etc. Thus, the governments of the three states practised coping strategies aimed at establishing organisational structures that seemed useful in the neighbouring country in order to cope with similar challenges and to pursue similar objectives.

Third, in a sphere such as education, professionals play a leading part in ensuring the implementation of educational change, whether characterised as 'a process of tinkering' or as a full-scale 'transformation' (Kissane 2009, p.226). A continuous theme throughout the Soviet and post-Soviet eras has been the centrality of a well-developed network of professional training institutions and centres for setting norms among education specialists. As a result of centralised training and certification under the Soviet regime, a teaching pool of almost interchangeable professionals was created in the Central Asian region. It may be argued, based on the propositions of DiMaggio and Powell (1991), that

the similarities of norms and dispositions possessed by teachers in the three states promoted normative isomorphism among schools and their practices in these states.⁵⁵ These normative influences, inculcated through teacher training and certification, helped to overcome variations in tradition across the countries of the Central Asian region. Through this process the impact of culture and custom on organisational behaviour, which had always been strong across the region, appeared to be restricted (*e.g.* near gender parity has been achieved in primary education enrolment across the three countries despite a traditional Islam-driven view of women's roles).

Homogeneity in the transitional processes undergone by the three countries was encouraged by teachers, especially headteachers, since they shared similar norms. They would have been the main 'carriers' of the new managerialism crucial to transforming the organisational regimes of schools (Grace 1995). However, since educational professionals (and education policy-makers in particular) exposed to the same norms and values under the Soviet system formed the critical mass of educational leaders in all three countries, it is not surprising that policies introduced in the three different national contexts remained very similar. Yesilkagit & Christensen (2010) emphasized the importance of historical and institutional context for policy makers deciding how to design regulatory administration:

It is striking to what extent solutions with deep roots in the administrative tradition of each country are preferred.... [P]olicy makers are constrained by

⁵⁵ Rico Isaacs (2014, forthcoming) states that leadership in general in Central Asia persists in using formal institutions and norms; thus, the legitimization of political parties' or country leaders' informal personal power is usually achieved through frequent constitutional changes - suggests that the formal is important (p.23).

vested interests within specific policy fields.... By choosing types of administrative structures that are already in operation and well known to policy makers, they have certainty as to how they will affect these interests. The reason is that policy makers in government and parliament make these design decisions in situations with considerable uncertainty as to how the arrangement will work. In order to reduce this uncertainty, they are attracted by institutional blueprints that are known by them and in addition tried out in national practice (p. 71).

This explanation is supported by evidence offered by headteachers of 122 schools in the region, who gave the number of years they had been employed in the educational sector and as heads in particular. The figures below indicate that, on average, headteachers in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have been employed in education for 28 years, and in Uzbekistan for 26 years; hence, the majority of the heads surveyed were trained under the Soviet rule in one of the pedagogical institutions, and continued to be employed in maintained schooling, eventually to reach the principal position. It seems likely that this eminence was attained by a professional sharing the norms and values from the old centralised system as commonly – or almost as commonly – in any one state as in the other two.

Table 9.2 Mean Number of Years in Education and Headship in the Three Countries

Country	N		Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
Uzbekistan	22	In education	26.36	28.00	9.97	9	45
		In headship	9.18	6.50	7.80	1	28
Kyrgyzstan	51	In education	28.25	28.00	6.84	13	45
		In headship	10.08	8.00	7.16	1	30
Tajikistan	49	In education	28.20	28.00	6.24	13	45
		In headship	9.37	8.00	7.38	1	38

Source: The Headteachers' Survey 2011..

The findings showed that the institutional structures in education within the three states were similar after two decades of independence. This may well have contributed to the introduction of non-divergent policy outputs in education across all three states (policy outcomes are discussed below). The limitation of this study is that the status of school autonomy has been measured at one only point in time – in 2011 when the data were collected. Therefore, the assumptions about the pre-1991 period employed in this study were based on secondary sources. Thus, one of the assumptions about the similar starting point for all three states and the similarities recorded in school autonomy patterns in 2011 may well suggest that the policies have not diverged (rather than converged) over the last two decades.

2. Policy Outcomes

Analyses presented in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 led to the conclusion that the patterns of school autonomy observed in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan reflected major similarities. Thus, in each country schools implemented similar policies aimed at: (a) increasing or maintaining significant state control over structural and policy dimensions; and (b) delegating to schools managerial autonomy along the dimensions of human resource management, financial resource management and fundraising autonomy (see Figure 9.1).

In fact, the dimension of financial resource management had the highest degree of decentralisation out of the six dimensions studied across the three countries. These findings suggest that the convergence of the three post-Soviet republics could be characterised as moving toward a functional division in which educational policy is

increasingly centralised, at the same time as responsibilities for managerial and local operational functions are decentralised. The findings from the three post-Soviet states support Outhwaite and Ray's (2005) observation: "Everything was tossed up into the air [after the fall of the Soviet Union but] it fell down again into relatively familiar [US and UK] structures and patterns (pp.23-24). Hence, it appears that, despite rather contrasting starting points, the newly independent Central Asian states and established democracies in the West are likely to be converging on a model of educational reform incorporating policy centralisation but operational decentralisation.

While it may be possible to discern a set of principles underlying school autonomisation in the West – free market economics, managerialism or public choice, for instance – this still needed to be translated into policy texts and school practices in the post-Soviet republics. Ball (1994, cited in Ball 1998) wrote in this regard:

"[National policy is] a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalising theories, research, trends and fashions and not infrequently ailing around for anything at all that looks as though it might work. Most policies are ramshackle, compromise, hit and miss affairs, that are reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected through complex processes of influence, text production, dissemination and, ultimately, re-creation in contexts of practice (p. 126).

Ball continued by summarising previous research on how policy ideas may also be received and interpreted differently within various contexts, meaning political and ideological architectures, national infrastructures and business cultures (1998, p.127). He

concluded that comparative educational research and theorisation on the “formation, reception and interpretation of policy” was thin on the ground.

Although my data show no divergence in educational policy reforms across the three countries, within this broad pattern we can detect a number of differences. In the next section of this chapter, I describe the extent to which school autonomy dimensions were constituted differently in the three societies, and offer some explanations for these differences.

9.4. RQ 3: What Might Explain National Differences?

In order to answer the final question of this study, what institutional elements may account for the differences observed in the organisational structures and practices of state schools across the three countries, it is important to elaborate on the drivers of education decentralisation in Central Asia, and to understand the possible causes for variations in the patterns observed. Despite the realisation of similar policies adopted by isomorphic structures present in the three states,⁵⁶ the policy outcomes revealed some variations (see Table 9.1 and Figure 9.1). Thus, (i) Tajik state schools reported a higher degree of autonomy than schools in the other two states, particularly along the financial and fundraising dimensions of school autonomy; (ii) Uzbek state schools reported the lowest degree of autonomy among the three states along the policy dimension and the structural dimension. Meanwhile, enjoying probably the most liberal political regime among the three, (iii) Kyrgyzstan might possibly have ended up with a pattern in part closely

⁵⁶ Thus the study of political regimes in post-Soviet Central Asia by Isaacs (2014, forthcoming) suggests that “a commitment to a unilinear route to modernity...and an eventual convergence with the West” remains at the heart of the developments observed (p. 25).

resembling those found in developed countries, but held an in-between position among the three countries and revealed a pronounced degree of school autonomy along none of the dimensions employed in this study.

Legacy of past policies and institutional elements in the three states

Theories of path dependence, according to which past developments constrain current options (Hausner *et al.* 1995, Stark & Bruszt 1998, cited in Outhwaite & Ray 2006, p.27), suggest one way of capturing and explaining diversities observed in the patterns among the three states. Should path dependency exist, one could find that when there a preponderance of agencies of a certain type or with a similar degree of autonomy established, politicians would be more likely to follow the path (so to speak) and choose this established institutional design as a template for future agencies (Yesilkagit & Christensen 2010, pp. 66-67). Thus, Yesilkagit & Christensen (2010) provided evidence for the importance of cultural-historical explanations.

Theorists of post-socialism often emphasise the extent to which the common experiences of socialism left a powerful impact that continues to shape the experiences of post-socialist societies (Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008, p. 322). In addition, there is a specific argument about the importance of a shared history. Thus, Gille (2004, cited in Stenning & Hörschelmann 2008) emphasised the significance of the post-war history *shared* by the Eastern European states (p.322). However, in the case of the three post-Soviet states of Central Asia, the post-socialist turmoil of the last two decades has had an impact on these countries almost as significant as the effect of their common experiences of socialism. Thus, the three states underwent uneven development and diverse

experiences of nation-building over the last two decades, which may relate to different degrees of school autonomy among the three states.

- (i) Tajikistan: the highest degree of school autonomy among the three states along the financial resource management dimension and the three dimensions on the exemption of constraints on the actual use of decision making competencies of schools in the country.

Among the three countries, Tajikistan experienced the greatest socio-political strains and volatility in the course of its emergence from under Soviet rule. A bloody civil war broke out shortly after the USSR's collapse in 1991, and lasted until 1997. After the 1997 peace agreement, Tajikistan was considered to be 'a delayed reformer with liberalization of trade and financial sector policies, but institutions remain weak' (Pomfret 2012, p.406). Nonetheless, among the three countries Tajikistan registered the highest degree of school autonomy in the financial resource management dimension (see Fig. 9.1). Furthermore, Tajikistan stood out as a country with the highest level of schools independence from state intervention among the three states, *i.e.* the structural, policy and interventional dimensions of school autonomy in Tajikistan appeared to be higher than the ones in the other two states, despite being quite low in general (see Fig. 9.1).

Even though the conditions of maintained schooling may have changed, one might expect that heads and teachers in Tajikistan would be reluctant to adjust to new norms and market principles, particularly those which could destabilise the equilibrium that has emerged – as historical institutionalism and path dependence would predict. (Pierson & Skocpol 2002, Thelen & Steinmo 1992). As Kathleen Thelen observes, "Once a set of institutions is in place, actors adapt their strategies in ways that reflect but also reinforce the logic of

the system” (1999: 392). Actors see themselves as gaining only if they maintain their course, and policies therefore survive because, although alternatives may be attractive, the costs involved in changing direction radically are seen as potentially too high compared to maintaining the status quo (*ibid.*).

Nearly all definitions of institutions treat them as “relatively enduring features of political and social life (rules, norms, procedures) that structure behaviour and that cannot be changed easily or instantaneous” (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010, p. 4).⁵⁷ Mahoney and Thelen (2010) point to the fact that an idea of persistence is built into the definition of an institution and, therefore, the theories of new institutionalism, sociological, rational choice and historical, are so much better in explaining continuity rather than change (*ibid.*). Nonetheless, Tajikistan stood out as a leader in the extent of autonomy granted to schools among the three states.

One plausible explanation is that in a highly insecure financial situation Tajikistan is extremely dependent on outside sources coming from multilateral organisations and donor agencies for funding social services such as education. Under these circumstances, the need to obtain financial support vital for the educational sector’s survival creates greater pressure for change than do institutional constraints, which tend to favour the status quo. Thus, Tajikistan remains the poorest and least developed of the three countries. It is only now beginning to show improvement in the areas of poverty alleviation and state integration (see also Niyozov & Bahry 2006). Nonetheless, under the present

⁵⁷ A theory of gradual institutional change by James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen in *Explaining Institutional change: ambiguity, agency, and power*, Mahoney and Thelen (eds.), 2010, Cambridge University Press.

political regime that only weakly resembles democracy (see Matveeva 2012, unpublished), Kissane (2009) evaluates the Tajik case as follows: *“Though the situation in Tajikistan is difficult, the government appears determined to improve the country’s weak education system. The case is best described as the implementation of aggressive educational policies”* (p.238).

In Tajikistan education restructuring was not the priority during the civil war years. When some stabilization had been achieved, the central government that emerged continued to be under a high risk of being replaced by its opponents. According to Yesilkagit & Christensen (2010) governments under such circumstances are more likely to design agencies with a higher degree of formal autonomy (p.66). This might well explain why Tajikistan undertook further reforms for greater school autonomy along the policy, structure and intervention dimensions.

Furthermore, institutions established under the Soviet regime were significantly undermined during the civil war years in Tajikistan. As soon as peace was achieved, the government opted for decentralisation policies, because decentralisation seemed to promise to contribute to the stabilisation of civil society, as well as bringing foreign aid money into the state school system. Hence, initially Tajikistan’s preference for decentralisation was motivated by economic and political incentives, which appeared to be the strongest among the three states. Furthermore, Tajik institutions, which had been trampled over during the civil war, might possibly not demonstrate the same ‘stickiness’ and hamper educational transformation to the extent that institutions in Kyrgyzstan and

Uzbekistan could, not having experienced the disruption of civil war⁵⁸. As Richard Pomfret (2012) wrote: “In Tajikistan the civil war destroyed the planned economy and effectively privatized economic activity without the institutions” (p.405). Similarly, educational transformation in the country ‘without the institutions’ appeared to be more applicable and sustainable than that in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan with institutions in place.

- (ii) Uzbekistan: the lowest degree of autonomy among the three states along the policy and structural dimensions, but a similar level of managerial and fundraising autonomy to that in the other two countries.

In the case of Uzbekistan, schools reported having a particularly low degree of autonomy along policy and school structure dimensions, even in comparison to low levels in the other two states.

A theoretical model that may explain the finding was suggested by Barrington Moore (1966, cited in Outhwaite and Ray 2006), who argued that the ways in which the transition from agrarian to capitalist and industrial societies proceeded tend to have crucial consequences for their political structures: early and spontaneous capitalisation of agriculture and ensuing processes of industrialisation prove conducive to political democracy (the English and North American models), while industrialisation imposed by

⁵⁸ The effects of civil war in Tajikistan went beyond the scope of the present thesis; for descriptive analysis of the war and post-war period in Tajikistan see Matveeva, A. ‘Tajikistan: DDR in the Context of Authoritarian Peace’ (2012) in Antonio Giustozzi (ed.) *DDR: bringing the state back in*, (London: Ashgate Publishing); ‘Tajikistan: Revolutionary Situation or a Resilient State?’ EUCAM Policy Brief, December 2009; ‘Tajikistan: Stability First,’ *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, July 2009, <http://www.tfd.org.tw>.

state policies, on backward and extended territories in particular, tends to lead to authoritarian patterns of political rule (Italy, Germany, Japan) (p.86).

Uzbekistan enjoyed significant economic investment over the Soviet period from Russia, just as much as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. This was organized in line with Lenin's doctrine that the transformation of the underdeveloped states of Central Asia into socialist industrialised states and later into communist ones, avoiding the capitalist stage of development, should be undertaken at the expense of the proletariats of developed countries, *i.e.* Russia, Ukraine, etc., which appeared to be better developed (Full Collection of works, Vol. 41, p.240). Despite such capital investment in Uzbek industrialisation, it was rated one of the least industrialised Soviet republics in the Soviet era.⁵⁹ In 2010 Uzbekistan remained largely rural: 63.7 per cent of Uzbekistan's population lived in rural areas (WB data <http://search.worldbank.org>). Currently Uzbekistan operates under the leadership of an autocratic president, whose government had developed into "one of the most repressive of the region" (Cooley 2008, p.70). As predicted by Moore (1966, cited in Outhwaite and Ray 2006), Uzbekistan's authoritarian political rule so far has been resistant to external shocks albeit of different hues and shades (*e.g.* 'colour revolutions' in the neighbouring Kyrgyz Republic) and internal pressure (*e.g.* Uzbekistan's Andijan uprising) (Isaacs 2014, pp. 23-24). Moreover, according to Isaacs, all Central Asian states – with the exception of Kyrgyzstan post-2010 – have firmly established authoritarian regimes (*ibid.*).

⁵⁹ According to Specher (2008), between 1940 and 1970 gross industrial output grew twelve times in the USSR as a whole, but only 8.5 times in Uzbekistan (p.22) in Specher, M. (2008) *The Political Economy of Reform in Central Asia: Uzbekistan under authoritarianism*, Routledge.

Furthermore, qualitative analysis of legislative fiats across the three states showed that the Uzbek legal framework along autonomy dimensions was elaborated to the greatest extent among the three, *i.e.* consisted of the largest amount of legislative fiats. This has been triangulated through interviews, when Uzbek respondents reported having their “hands full” with state regulations. According to Francis Fukuyama (2013):

Autonomy...is inversely related to the number and nature of the mandates issued by the principal [Government]. The fewer and more general the mandates, the greater autonomy the bureaucracy possesses. A completely autonomous bureaucracy gets no mandates at all but sets its own goals independently of the political principal. Conversely, a nonautonomous or subordinated bureaucracy is micromanaged by the principal, which establishes detailed rules that the agent must follow (p. 357).

Greater school autonomy is an institutional transition at a micro-level that has to rely for direction upon a macro-level transition based on socio-political reforms (McLeish 2003). Following this logic, education democratisation in an authoritarian regime is simply impossible without the prevailing ideology either being changed fundamentally or collapsing (see McLeish 2003 for the supportive cases of South Africa, Latvia and East Germany).

Although currently operating under an authoritarian regime (*cf.* Cooley 2008), Uzbekistan cannot be labelled a ‘non-reformer’ (Pomfret 2012, p.408). Richard Pomfret (2012) continues with specifying a key distinction between Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic or Tajikistan that is ‘the former’s legislative record is less reformist but its implementation is more effective’ (p.407). This might explain well the extent of school autonomy in Uzbekistan comparable to one in the other two less authoritarian states along the

dimensions of human resource and financial resource management, as well as fundraising. Moreover, under the conditions of limited capacity of government officials, and education administration in particular, autocracies proved to demonstrate better results than those in so-called ‘defective’ and ‘highly defective’ democracies (*e.g.* Ukraine and Russia respectively) (Orenstein 2008, p.80). As the present study showed, a quite low capacity of government officials in the post-Soviet countries, has been crucial to the outcomes of institutional transformation in education across the three states.

Fukuyama (2013, p.354) suggests that the capacity of government officials should be measured by the level of education and professionalization of the bureaucracy. As noted above, a high proportion of headteachers as well as education officials in all three countries – including Uzbekistan – were trained under the Soviet regime. Hence, they were inculcated with the norms and accepted the rules of a command economy. As data on the level of school managerial autonomy illustrates, autocracy in post-Soviet Uzbekistan has scored not lower than more democratic regimes in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Thus, Uzbekistan with an authoritarian political system has been able to implement the delegation of managerial and fundraising responsibilities to the school level without facing substantial popular resistance.

- (iii) Kyrgyzstan: in-between position, with an elevated level of school autonomy in none of the dimensions studied.

Historically Kyrgyzstan was one of the first to benefit from planned industrialisation at the expense of the proletariats of the more developed republics, as Lenin had advocated. Already in 1940 gross output of large-scale industry began to leave agricultural output behind, amounting to no less than 50.2 per cent of the overall economy (Encyclopaedia

of the Kyrgyz SSR 1989). As a result of Soviet policies, Kyrgyzstan received highly technological enterprises integral to the Soviet Union's defence complex. These were accompanied by well-educated population, strong administrative institutions and educational establishments. Thus Kyrgyzstan appeared to be the most industrialised republic among the three states concerned. By proportion, Kyrgyzstan had also the largest non-native population among the three states: in 1979 26 per cent of the population were Russians, and they constituted over 50 per cent of the urban population (*ibid.*). There was no surprise that the influence of the Russian Federation persisted in post-1991 Kyrgyzstan. The Russian language was introduced in the Kyrgyz Constitution as a language of international communication, while Kyrgyz was labelled a state language.

Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan appeared to have the least authoritarian government in the region (see Isaacs 2014, forthcoming). Weber's concept of Sultanism never materialised in Kyrgyzstan, having been checked by the two 'colour revolutions' over the last two decades⁶⁰. This may explain why indicators of school autonomy in Kyrgyzstan appeared to be higher than those in Uzbekistan, in most dimensions at least (see Figure 9.1).

Nonetheless, the extent of school autonomy in Kyrgyzstan appeared to be below that in Tajikistan. As evidenced in interviews, headteachers' perceptions of reform and nostalgia seemed to be deeply rooted in the Soviet-based perception of teachers as the 'gate-keepers' to opportunity and future prosperity for children. In times, when the traditional glorification of teachers as knowledge bearers (Barabanov & Baranov 1996, p.78) had

⁶⁰ See Cummings & Ochs 2002 for a discussion of 'sultanism' in the context of Turkmenistan, by which is meant President Niyazov's extensive personality cult.

disappeared, Kyrgyz headteachers demonstrated a persistent historical memory reflected in frequent references to “the good old days”.

Teachers, school leaders and bureaucrats might continue to pursue practices inherited from the Soviet times in teacher training, school monitoring, teacher appraisal, etc. – as disadvantaged groups they were likely to resist change in environment characterised by high level of uncertainty as the benefits of change could not be persuasively demonstrated (Hannan & Freeman 1977, p.931 cited in Krasner 1988). Despite the high value apparently accorded to education⁶¹, severe underfunding of schools over the last two decades has significantly damaged the prestige attached to being a teacher or headteacher; Kyrgyz respondents perceived themselves as ‘forgotten by the state and policy-makers’ (see Santalova 2010 for more details) and demonstrated quite low motivation to stay in a headship role. As Maier (2005:148) observed, teachers who have been accustomed to predetermined content and sufficient funding find it difficult to take on responsibility for new educational goals faced with scarcity.

Headteachers in Kyrgyzstan were the ones, who spoke most about ‘mutual accountability’ between schools and the state vs. schools being held accountable to the state. This appeared to be a significant concern, since the legislative fiats adopted by the central government suffered from unsatisfactory implementation at the level of local authorities. The latter appeared to be delegated extra responsibilities for providing school education as a result of administrative decentralisation (*cf.* The Kyrgyz Law on Self-Management 1992). Thus, the special monitoring committee of Government of the Kyrgyz Republic

⁶¹ There was a strong belief in Central Asia that education was an asset and something to be valued ‘as a symbol of modernity, educational credentials, vital to opportunities for employment and promotion in practically all occupational sphere’ (Korotaeva & Makarova, 2007, p. 585).

reported (Report N530 dated August 14, 2009) that the task ‘*to provide young teachers with zero interest loans for property acquisition or building a house*’ (acc. to the Law on Teacher’s Status N9 dated 14.01.2001) was implemented in Aktala *raion*, Naryn region only; the task ‘*to provide school teachers with benefits for transportation costs and utility bills covering*’ (acc.to Article 8, *ibid.*) was implemented in 11 out of 55 *raions* of the country; in the same vein, providing of a teacher with a land plot for building a house at the place of her job attachment (acc. to Article 7, *ibid.*) was fulfilled in 14 out of 55 *raions* of Kyrgyzstan (Education Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2014-2020, p. 8).

The lack of mechanisms of the interpretation of legislative fiats into the practices of local administrations accompanied by the low capacity of government officials may well explain why the systemic change in education in Kyrgyzstan appeared to be an ongoing oscillation between decentralising and centralising tendencies over the last two decades.

9.5. Conclusion

Few issues are as important for the discipline and profession of public administration as service improvement (Boyne 2003, p.389). This is particularly relevant to education. The introduction of education sector reforms are often justified by the aim of improving the quality of education services. The introduction of quasi-market mechanisms to education by many western democracies in line with the New Public Management (NPM) doctrine seems to be guided primarily by this objective. The same trend has been observed in education policy in post-Soviet states of Central Asia, which drew considerable inspiration from international organisations (*cf.* Silova & Steiner-Khamsi 2008).

This study provides an empirical picture of the ways in which the NPM doctrine policies have been implemented in the context of post-Soviet states in Central Asia. Specifically,

a shift of managerial responsibilities to a school level and holding operational policy competencies at a central government appears to be a regional trend. Furthermore, the data present evidence on the extent of school autonomy along six dimensions in the three states.

The implications of the shift towards education decentralisation have been studied and explained. Based on a mixed method this evidence is drawn from three sources: surveys, interviews, and legislative analysis, though the methodologies used suffer from a variety of weaknesses (see Chapter 1). With this qualification in mind, based on the analysis undertaken, it is possible to identify some important messages regarding academic theory and education management practice.

The first message is that neo-institutional theory, particularly historical institutionalism, has been supported by the evidence from the post-Soviet states. Despite quite diverse trajectories of the countries' political, economic and public sectors development over the last two decades, the policies promoted in education appear to be not diverging in both outputs and outcomes across the region. The three countries demonstrated persistent path-dependency through their inability to overcome institutional inertia, so that operational policy and structure dimensions have not been decentralized, combined with the effect of declining fiscal and bureaucratic capacity at the centre, so that managerial matters have been delegated to a school level. This trend was regional.

The second message is that, the patterns observed in the three post-Soviet states displayed similarities to the patterns observed in education systems of the developed western democracies. Hence, the view that the structure of the post-communist welfare states is problematic, and that the particularities of their transition with budget cuts on top of the

communist legacy and a hodge-podge of different approaches do not allow these states to be classified (*cf.* Orenstein 2008), has not been supported by the evidence. Education institutions in the three post-Soviet countries investigated conformed to a general West European pattern.

It should be stressed that, following the break-up of the Soviet Union and independence, all three countries faced formidable challenges in the education sector, including maintaining free and compulsory secondary education against a backdrop of sharply falling funding allocations to education (ADB, 2004, p.91). Particular harm was done by the underfunding of school budgets: teachers' salaries were paid only after several months' delay; the funding of such items as school furniture, library provision and building maintenance restarted only in the mid 2000s (see Heyneman, DeYoung, 2004). Governments talked about policy in terms of opportunities for openness and greater financial investment in education; yet, as Kissane (2005) stated, 'none of the states had matched rhetoric with significant financial assistance to the sector' (p.57). As Margaret Archer in her seminal work *Social Origins of Educational Systems* stated: "the impression that education and educational change can be explained by reference to group goals and balances of power alone is false. Conceptions of education...and their implementation are limited by the existing availability of skills and resources" (1979, p. 3).

Decentralisation promoted by international organisations was one method of coping with pressing financial constraints. Despite resistance to change from various institutional elements, the delegation of competencies in fundraising and financial resource management to schools for resources mobilisation for basic education appeared to be a core motive for adopting school autonomy policies. Simultaneously, this allowed the governments to avoid blame and win some public favour.

Despite theoretical debate and the political impetus to change, teachers in the post-Soviet states often appeared to be stubborn opponents of reforms (*cf.* Holmes 1986). Holmes (1986) also argued that Soviet teachers [including ones in the countries concerned] perpetuated the traditions of education more rigidly than their counterparts in other countries (p.56). Furthermore, the Soviet legacy inherited by the three states involves a high level of teachers' professionalisation.⁶² One interpretation of the research findings on the post-Soviet republics, would suggest that, even released from the grip of central administration in some areas, school teachers often continued to function under the new dispensation as they had done under the Soviet regime, a tendency in line with historical institutionalism and path dependence (Pierson & Skocpol 2002; Thelen & Steinmo 1992).

However, whereas many instances of individual schools and teachers implementing innovative strategies were observed over the course of data collection (and some were the subjects of interviews), they stood out rather as isolated best-practice examples. The broader picture remained one of a system constrained by institutional history and limited human and financial resources; in Kyrgyzstan this situation seemed to be further aggravated by the absence of any political will.

In each of the three countries, systemic changes introduced in education formed what may be termed a process, as long as it is understood as long-term and non-linear in character. Reforms within each process required frequent revision as they impacted not just upon organisational structures, but upon important elements in the environment; this impact in turn generated the need for further refinement in the initial reform (McLeish 2003, p. 165).

⁶² Professionalisation is interpreted here as an established cognitive base and legitimatisation of the occupation that became possible through the development of common organisational norms among 'pedagogues' (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p.71).

Educational reforms take time to design, implement and test. Twenty years after independence was won and educational transformation started, none of the three post-Soviet countries of Central Asia has yet completed the process of transition, and the changes implemented have just started to be accompanied by systematic efforts to hold schools to account for their educational performance. Thus, it is crucial that the interplay of school autonomy, school accountability and educational performance in the context of developing countries are explored in further research.

Appendix 1

Dimensions and Items of School Autonomy

Autonomy Dimension	Items
1. Human resource management autonomy – whether the agency enjoys managerial autonomy with respect to human resources management;	(i) teacher appointment; (ii) teacher dismissal, (iii) setting teachers' salaries, (iv) rewarding a teacher, (v) teacher attestation, (vi) promotion of a teacher to the highest rank
2. Structural autonomy – the extent to which the agency is shielded from influence by the government through lines of hierarchy and accountability;	(i) whether a school head is appointed by the government; (ii) whether she can be dismissed by the oversight ministry, (iii) whether the school management structure is prescribed by the centre (e.g. number of deputies, reporting lines, school board composition), and (iv) whether there is a parents' association or a school board registered as a legal entity.
3. Financial resource management autonomy – whether the agency enjoys managerial autonomy with respect to financial management;	(i) budget formulation; (ii) budget allocation, including carrying out virements (transfer of funds) across budget lines and arranging for savings to be carried over across academic years; (iii) setting tariffs for ancillary services provided, and (iv) allocation of private funds raised by school.
4. Financial autonomy – the extent to which the agency depends on governmental funding or on its own revenues;	(i) whether there is any proportion of privately raised funds in a school budget
5. Policy autonomy – to what extent the agency itself can take decisions about processes and procedures it must conduct to perform externally prescribed services;	(i) whether a school has the right to decide: what subjects to teach; (ii) how many hours to teach per subject; (iii) what textbooks will be used; and (iv) internally to negotiate the methods of teaching in the classroom
6. Interventional autonomy – how free the agency is from ex-post reporting requirements, evaluation and audit provisions with respect to decisions made	(i) setting educational goals/norms; (ii) whether a school is subject to audit ex post by MoE; (iii) whether a headteacher is a subject to sanctions/rewards; (iv) whether there are external indicators to evaluate outcomes; (v) whether school performance is measured by the Ministry, and 'League Tables' exist.

Source: Author's adjustment from Verhoest et al (2004)

Appendix 2

Outline Curriculum for Soviet General Schools

(Lesson periods per week, by school year, post-1989)

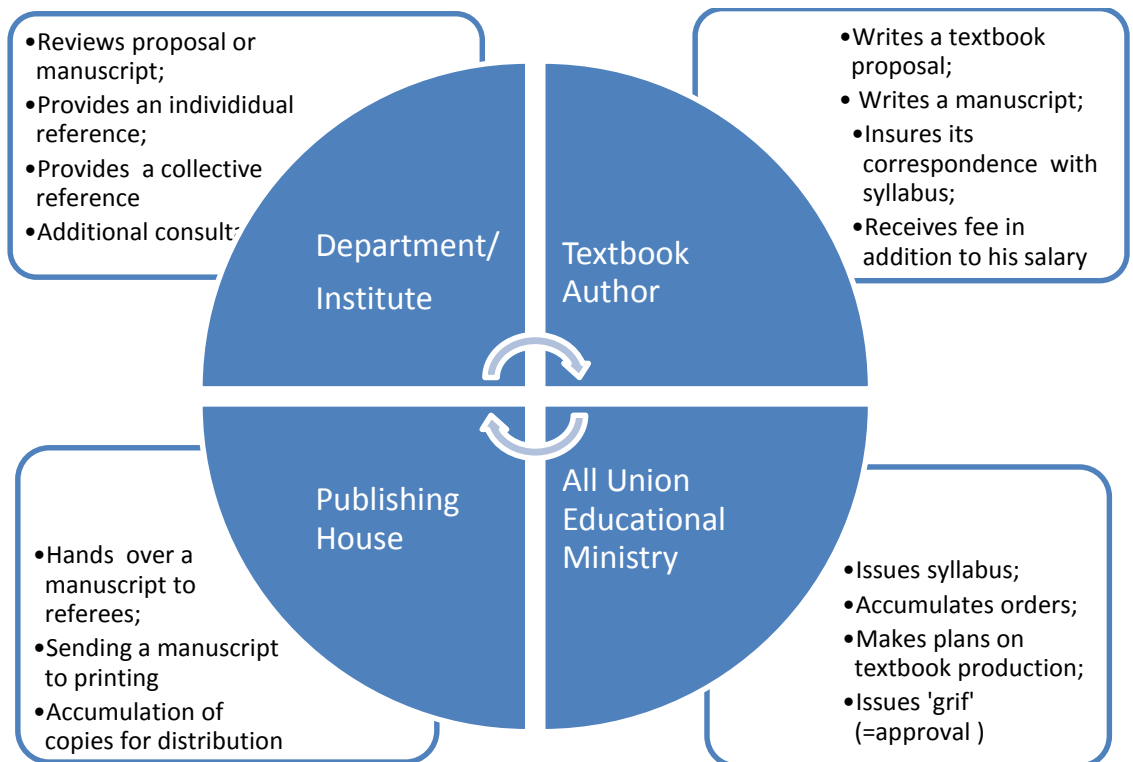
	Stages & Classes											Total
	I				II				III			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Union Component (A)												
Russian Language	0	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	0	23
Literature of USSR peoples	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4
Mathematics	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	51
Natural Science (incl. Geography)	1	1	1	1	2	3	4	6	6	4	4	33
Social Science (incl. History)	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	4	4	4	4	26
TOTAL (A)	6	8	10	10	12	13	14	17	17	16	14	137
Republic Component* (B)	14	14	14	14	14	15	14	11	11	8	10	139
School Component (C+D)												
Compulsory and choice courses, special studies (C)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	6	6	16
Options (D)	2	2	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	6	6	40
TOTAL (C+D)	2	2	2	2	4	4	4	6	6	12	12	56
TOTAL Lesson Periods (A+B+C)	20	22	24	24	26	28	28	30	30	30	30	292
Permitted Study Load (A+B+C+D)	22	24	26	26	30	32	32	34	34	36	36	332

***Republic Component** includes national languages and literature, foreign languages, history and geography of the republic, music, art, labour training and physical education, military training.

Source: Bulletin of the State Committee of the USSR on Peoples' Education, Preschool and Secondary School Education, 1990, No 1, p.p. 17-18

Appendix 3

Textbook Production Institutions and Processes under the Soviet System



Source: Author; based on Walker (1978) and Buga (1987)

Appendix 4. School Questionnaire

[A questionnaire translated into English; not all layout/formatting has been preserved here]

University of Oxford
Department of Social Policy and Social Work

Barnett House, 32 Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1
2ER, England, Tel. 01865 270325, www.spsw.co.uk



SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE Doctoral Research Study

Congratulations! You have been chosen to participate in a doctoral research project initiated at the Department of Social Policy and Social Work of the University of Oxford, UK. The study is about educational decentralization that is the greater school autonomy in the Central Asian Region. There are four countries included: Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The main objective of the study, which will focus on the period of the last decade, is to study various forms of educational decentralization in Central Asia, how they were influenced by fiscal, administrative considerations and what implications for education managers at different levels they had. **The questionnaire should be completed by the head teacher or designate.** It should take about 90 minutes to complete. If you do not know an answer precisely, your best estimate will be adequate for the purposes of the study.

Your answers will be kept strictly confidential.

Thank you very much for your co-operation!!!

Antonina Santalova antonina.santalova@stx.ox.ac.uk

Candidate of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Oxford University

ABOUT YOU

Q1. How many years have you been employed in the educational sector?

Write in a number of years.

Q2. What is your total headship experience (at all schools)?

Write in a number of years.

ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Q3. Please describe your school without mentioning its name or number

Type of School	
What type of community it's located in (village/town, its population)	
Number of students	
Number of shifts	
Number of teachers (full- time)	
Number of teachers (part-time)	
How many of teachers have been at your school for 5 or more years? (write in %)	

Q4. About what percentage of your total funding for a typical school year comes from the following sources? (Please write a number in each row. Write 0 (zero) if no funding comes from that source)

	%
a) State/National Government	_____
b) Local/Regional Government	_____
c) Fees or school charges for extra services paid by parents	_____
d) Sponsorships, parent fund raising and donations	_____
e) Other (write in _____)	_____
	Total 100%

Q5. Are there additional educational services that your school offers at a separate charge?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, what are they?

Who sets the price per service?

Where does money raised go to?

School budget ☐

(tick and explain)

Teacher's pocket ☐

Parent's group account ☐

Other (explain) ☐

Q6. Regarding your school, who has primary (main) responsibility for each of the following activities? (Please tick one box in each line. If more than one level has responsibility, check the highest level)

	Head teacher and/or SchoolBoard	Local/district government	Regional Government	Ministry of Education	Other (Indicate who)
a) Selecting/Finding teachers for hire	☐	☐	☐	☐	
b) Firing teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐	
c) Selecting/Finding head teacher for hire	☐	☐	☐	☐	
d) Firing head teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐	
e) Establishing teachers' starting salaries	☐	☐	☐	☐	
f) Directing a teacher to in-service training	☐	☐	☐	☐	
g) Funding teacher in-service training	☐	☐	☐	☐	
h) Teachers attestation	☐	☐	☐	☐	
i) Teachers attestation – to the highest category	☐	☐	☐	☐	

j) Determining teachers' basic salaries	☐	☐	☐	☐
k) Determining teachers' salaries increases/bonuses	☐	☐	☐	☐
l) Formulating the school budget	☐	☐	☐	☐
m) Deciding on budget allocations within the school (state funds allocation)	☐	☐	☐	☐
n) Deciding on raised funds allocations (private funds allocation)	☐	☐	☐	☐
o) Establishing student disciplinary policies	☐	☐	☐	☐
p) Establishing student assessment policies	☐	☐	☐	☐
q) Approving students for admission to the school	☐	☐	☐	☐
r) Determining which textbooks are used	☐	☐	☐	☐
s) Determining course content	☐	☐	☐	☐
t) Deciding which courses are offered and how many hours per week	☐	☐	☐	☐
u) Establishing student grading policies	☐	☐	☐	☐
v) Determining school organizational structure	☐	☐	☐	☐
w) Establishing community relationships	☐	☐	☐	☐
x) Communicating school performance with students' families	☐	☐	☐	☐
y) Determining number of students in a class	☐	☐	☐	☐
z) Adjust school timetable (incl. holidays, term time, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q7. Are there any activities listed in Q6 that you would want your school to be able to decide but it does NOT at the moment? Yes ☐ No ☐

a) If yes, what are they?

b) Why would this be important?

Q8. Is your school's capacity to provide instruction hindered by any of the following? *(Please tick one box in each row)*

	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Very little</i>	<i>To some extent</i>	<i>A lot</i>
a) Lack of qualified teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Lack of clear education reforming policy	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Shortage of textbooks and library materials	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Shortage or inadequacy of computers	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) Lack or inadequacy of Internet connectivity	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) Lack of funds re-allocation possibility (i.e. virement)	☐	☐	☐	☐
g) Poor heating and lighting systems	☐	☐	☐	☐
h) Too many/too frequent national regulations	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q9. Based on your personal experience, does your school expect parents/community members to... *Tick one box in each line.*

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
a) raise funds for the school?	☐	☐
b) volunteer for school projects?	☐	☐
c) suggest/comment on school management issues?	☐	☐
d) demand information on their children's performance?	☐	☐
e) demand information on school's performance vs other schools?	☐	☐

- f) serve on committees which select school personnel? ☐ ☐
- g) serve on committees which review school finances? ☐ ☐

ABOUT YOUR WORK

Q10. How would you identify your leadership style?

- a) an independent leader Yes ☐ No ☐
- b) Why?

- c) a senior team player Yes ☐ No ☐
- d) Why?

- e) Who do you rely on in your daily work?

Q11. Imagine the situation that you need to form a school budget for the next academic year. What steps would you take to solve this problem?

Q12. As a head teacher of this school, about how many hours per week do you usually spend on each of the following activities?

Please indicate the approximate number of whole hours for each item. Please write 0 (zero) if no time is spent on an activity.

Whole hours per week

- a) Staffing

- b) Representing the school in the community

- c) Representing the school at official meetings

- d) Internal administrative tasks (e.g., regulations, school budget, timetable)

- e) Teaching (excluding preparation)

- f) Discussing educational objectives with teachers _____
- g) Initiating curriculum revision and/or planning _____
- h) Talking with parents _____
- i) Reflecting on competition with neighbour schools _____
- j) Responding to requests from upper authorities _____
- k) Building relationship with businesses _____
- l) Building relationship with other schools _____
- m) Training teachers _____
- n) Negotiating with Trade Unions _____
- o) Personal professional development activities _____
- p) Other activities _____

TOTAL HOURS _____

Q13. Does anybody appraise your work?

Yes ☐

No ☐

a) If yes, who are they?

b) Do you get any additional payment/bonus for exceptional (excellent) work?

Yes ☐

No ☐

c) If yes, what is it or how much is it in proportion to your regular salary?

d) What kind of achievement would be classified as 'exceptional/excellent work' of a head teacher?

ABOUT EDUCATION REFORMS

Q14. Regarding your school, which of the following bodies have a direct influence on decision making about the following activities?

(Please tick as many boxes as apply)

Area of influence

	<i>Staffing</i>	<i>Public funds</i>	<i>School raised funds</i>	<i>Instruction/content</i>
a) Ministry of Education	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Regional/district education authorities	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Head teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) The school's governing board	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) Parent groups (parent association)	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) Teachers' Council	☐	☐	☐	☐
g) Student groups (e.g. youth organisation)	☐	☐	☐	☐
h) Other (_____)	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q15. How would you characterise decision making power of your school in the beginning of 2000s and today? *Please tick one only in each row.*

<i>AREA OF SCHOOL ACTIVITY</i>	<i>No autonomy</i>	<i>Limited autonomy</i>	<i>Full autonomy</i>
<i>2000</i>			
i) Curriculum	☐	☐	☐
j) Staffing	☐	☐	☐
k) Finances	☐	☐	☐
l) School organization	☐	☐	☐
m) External relations	☐	☐	☐

TODAY

n) Curriculum	☐	☐	☐
o) Staffing	☐	☐	☐
p) Finances	☐	☐	☐
q) School organization	☐	☐	☐
r) External relations	☐	☐	☐

Q16. Based on your answers above, would you argue that an overall trend in education reforms in your country is toward decentralization or centralization?

- Centralization ☐
- Decentralization ☐
- Neither centralization nor decentralization ☐

Explain why?

Q17. Have management arrangements of your school been changed to any extent during the last decade? Yes ☐ No ☐

Q18. What governmental initiatives in regard to schools have been undertaken for the last decade period, if any?

What was their impact on your school? *Tick one*

Positive ☐ negative ☐ or neutral ☐

a) Why? *Provide examples*

Q19. Would more responsibilities delegated to a school level have a positive effect on your headship? Yes ☐ No ☐

Why? *Please provide the examples*

Q20. Would you like to add anything about how your school makes ends meet or any other worth-of-telling experiences of your school?

Would you like to be contacted again in regard to this or other Oxford University studies? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, feel free to contact Antonia Santalova in the case of any questions at antonina.santalova@stx.ox.ac.uk

Thank you for your cooperation and help!

Appendix 5. Topic Guide

[Translated from Russian into English]

Abbreviations:

CA – Central Asia

ED – educational decentralization

HT – head teacher

MOE – Ministry of Education

KG – Kyrgyzstan

TJ – Tajikistan

TK – Turkmenistan

UZ – Uzbekistan

My thesis is an attempt to answer the following questions:

- Do recent educational reforms in CA lead to a greater decentralization in education management?
- If yes, what are the implication of decentralization policies on education managers at different levels in four countries?
- Has decreased government intervention enhanced educational leadership in the region?

Introduction

Although reforms regarding decentralization have been going on for several decades, school autonomy remains a key issue on the political agenda of many developed as well as developing countries. Over the past decade most central governments across Central Asia (CA) have begun to decentralize some fiscal, political and administrative responsibilities to lower-levels of government, local institutions and the private sector.

Common background for all four states is the period of over seventy years of highly centralized system under totalitarian regime. All four states became independent in the beginning of the 1990s and suffered drastic decline in GDPs and education funding. There were similar reasons of decentralization, i.e. delegating particular responsibilities to school level (my theory/assumption). The picture of education management practices in these countries today is diverse. (to prove with interviews). My research is a brief insight into causes-and-results of education reforming that has been started over a decade ago in absolutely identical systems of four CA republics.

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE:

- About yourself;
- About the system;
- About schools???

About yourself:

1. Please, introduce yourself (name, position, age, if possible).
2. How long have you been in this position?
3. What positions have been previously in?
4. How many years in total have you been employed in the educational sector?
5. What are your job responsibilities in regard to:
 - setting tasks and objectives for primary/secondary education;
 - school funding;
 - school buildings and classrooms (construction, maintenance, etc)
 - educational content (textbooks, programmes, methodology, etc.)
6. What are the main difficulties in your work?
7. What kind of training would you like to get?
8. Who provides you with the required methodological assistance or any specific expertise required?
9. Who appraises you?
10. Would you consider your wage not/sufficient remuneration for your work? If not, what makes you stay in the position (3 reasons)?
11. Who is in charge of making decision to hire/fire you?
12. What factors could make you leave this position?
13. What was the motivation of taking the post in the MOE?
14. What do you spend the most of your working time on (3 major types of activities and the percent of working time per week spent on each)

About the system

15. What are the ways of communication b/w MOE and Regional/Local educational authorities?
16. Please, describe the system of school education management in the republic:

- institutions/authorities,
 - who subordinates who
 - who hires/fires head/teachers.
17. What is the key role of the MOE in education management in the republic:
 - who sets the goals of education and who approves them,
 - what are the ways of negotiating these goals with school heads,
 - what are the departments in the MOE dealing with school education;
 - where do people come from to the MOE;
 - is it prestigious to work in the MOE today.
 18. What policies have had the most effect on schools for a last decade (2002-2007 in particular)?
 19. Would you agree with the statement that schools are more autonomous today then ever? If yes, then in what exactly?
 20. Would you state that education management has become more centralised or decentralized? And what is the main trend in education policy today?
 21. To what extent could school autonomy affect the quality of education?
 22. What is the role of international organizations in education reforming?
 23. Would you consider this role increasing or decreasing? Is there more or less financial aid? Are there more or less international agencies?
 24. Has MOE a word in adjusting international agencies' conditions attached to the aid? Give an example.
 25. What was the main disadvantage of the Soviet system of school management? (If the interviewee has had job experience during Soviet time).
 26. Would you like to add anything?

MANY THANKS!

Appendix 6. Authorization Request Letter

[translation of the letter from Russian into English; similar letters were directed to the Ministries of Education in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan].

[letterhead] Date: , 2011

To: Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan

The Department of Social Policy and Social Work, at the University of Oxford, UK would like to introduce a research project on education decentralization in Central Asia. This project will be carried out by a DPhil student A.Santalova and supervised by G. Smith, MA B Phil, Reader in Social Policy, Oxford University. The study will include four countries. Uzbekistan has been included into the project together with Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan. This project is a central part of A. Santalova's doctoral study in her Oxford doctorate where she is a full time registered graduate research student.

The main objective of the study, which will focus on the period of independence of Central Asian Republics up to 2007 and aimed to study impact of recent educational reforms in decentralisation of education management in CAR and implications of educational decentralization on education managers at different levels.

All four states have a common background over seventy years of a highly centralized education system under the Soviet regime. All four states became independent at the beginning of the 1990s. The picture of education management practices in these countries today is quite diverse. This study will examine the patterns of education reform in the four countries that began a decade ago in systems that were initially very similar.

It is envisaged that data and information for this research will be collected through number of interviews and survey with basic school directors and other education managers of Uzbekistan. ANY INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WILL BE ANONYMOUS – no names of respondents and/or institutions will be ever mentioned.

In connection with this study we would be most grateful if the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan could encourage participation of Uzbek educators in this research and provide any required support. Please feel free to contact me in the case of any enquiries about this study by email or at the above address/phone in Oxford. Many thanks in advance for your cooperation and help.

Yours faithfully

George Smith, MA B Phil, Reader in Social Policy [email address]

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