

ABSTRACT
of the dissertation
submitted for a degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) majoring in
6D051800 – «Project Management»
by Karina Toleuovna Turkebayeva
on the topic
«Regional diversity, development and growth: evidence from Kazakhstan,
project approach»

Research actuality. In the conditions of globalization and integration processes regional diversity, development and growth are becoming key factors in the sustainability and competitiveness of national economies. The study of these aspects becomes especially significant in case of considerations on the example of Kazakhstan, a country with multinational, multicultural, economic and rich natural specifics, occupying a strategic geopolitical position in Central Asia and on the Eurasian continent.

The increasing pressure of external factors caused by unstable development of global economy, changes in demand and prices for commodities, periodic trade disagreements between leading players in the market, difficult geopolitical situation in the world, has an impact on the economic development of Kazakhstan. Such crisis conditions complicate the effectiveness of regional development and growth, while the importance of government and public administration bodies as the foundation for ensuring sustainability of regional socio-economic development and improving the quality of citizens' life is increasing.

The search for effective government management models that meet modern challenges and economic conditions prompted the country's leadership to prioritize the widespread implementation of project approach as a promising direction in management, that is actively used by the business community and is widely applied in the government sphere in various countries.

In Kazakhstan, the use of project management tools in the work of government bodies is a new relevant direction.

Head of the Republic, Kassym–Jomart Tokayev, during the first meeting of the Supreme Council for Reforms, proposed to consider new approaches to the national planning system: «We are faced with the task of constructing a more flexible architecture of program documents that define the goals and stages of state development in each area. The system will be linked with budget planning and will establish direct responsibility of government agency heads for the fulfillment of set tasks. It is important to ensure the execution of Supreme Council decisions, the implementation of national projects, and introduction of project management principles» [1]. Also, in the first-tier document of the national planning system – National Development Plan of the country in its latest revision,

it is indicated a transition to a new model of public administration, shifting from operational management to project management, concentration on the implementation of strategic documents.

Initiative 7.8 of the Strategic Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan is dedicated to the spread of project approach within government bodies, primarily for application in areas such as development and realization of projects requiring major changes. For the development of programs and projects on cutting-edge topics, such as those related to digital technologies, modern approaches like Agile will be used [2].

In his Address «Economic Course of Fair Kazakhstan», President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev noted: «...to become a truly developed country, we must combine political reforms with deep and comprehensive socio-economic transformation». The upcoming structural economic reforms have been announced. To ensure economic self-sufficiency, it is necessary to realize a number of «truly fateful projects for our country» [3].

In order to effectively implement key areas of state policy in the country, it is planned to introduce a project approach at all levels of administration: republican, regional and local.

Regional development involves the realization of different programs and projects. Integration of project approach into a regional management system has its own specifics and requires particular project management technologies applicable at the macro level. This approach implies the elaboration of concrete measures aimed at stimulating development and growth, taking into account regional diversity, followed by monitoring and adjustment of implemented projects.

In the republic, the issues of applying the project approach in regional management are underexplored. In practice, project management is not utilized to its full extent in the activity of regional government bodies. The project approach within the context of regional management and development of Kazakhstan is considered for the first time.

Thus, the actuality of dissertation research on the topic «Regional diversity, development, and growth: evidence from Kazakhstan, a project approach» is determined by the need for a comprehensive analysis and search for optimal ways for developing the regions, taking into account their peculiarities, and potential of Kazakhstan within the context of modern global tendencies and trends.

The basis and initial data for the development of the topic. The dissertation research investigates the issue of using a project approach in managing regional development. Certain aspects of these issues have been considered in the works of both domestic and foreign scientists.

Significant contributions to the theory and practice of management system have been made by Western researchers such as Taylor F.W., Weber M., Wilson W., Frederickson H.G., Fayol H., Gilbreth L.M., Gantt H. et al.

In the conditions of limited global research on the management of state and its regional structures there are plethora of theoretical elaborations on the application of specific project management tools, including those that have been adapted from the business sector as part of isomorphic transformations. In particular, there is an extensive base of scientific works on state planning and program-targeted management, which became the starting point for the introduction of project methodologies in the administrative sector: Ackoff R. L., Ansoff I. H., Cleland D. I., King W.R. and many others.

Research on project management varies in the depth of topic exploration. The most successful practices of implementation and development of project management in organizations are covered in publications of professional managers recognized at the global and Kazakhstan levels. H. Kerzner, C. Gray and E. Larson, R. Mulcahy, J. M. Juran, M. Wideman, P. Dinsmore, K. Heldman, J. V. Sutherland, D. J. Anderson, G. Diethelm review and analyze the essence of the project, project management approaches and methodologies, factors of project success and failure, risks and opportunities, project quality, artificial intelligence in project management, maturity of project management in the organization, etc.

Separate theoretical and methodological problems of regional project management in the Republic of Kazakhstan are reflected in the works of authors such as Tsekhovoy A.F., Sabden O.S., Narbaev T., Baizakov S.B., Turkebayev E.A., Khusainov B.D., Nurlanova N.K., Brimbetova N.Zh., Kunitsa S., and others.

The purpose of this dissertation is a substantiation of theoretical and methodological basis of project approach in management of regions, development of a methodology for calculating regional competitiveness index (RCI) and a model of regional project management, the elaboration of practical recommendations on an improvement of regional project management system.

In accordance with this goal, the following objectives have been set:

- Investigate the theory and methodology of project approach in government management of regional development of the Republic of Kazakhstan (RK).
- Form a statistical database on indicators characterizing the development level of Kazakhstan's regions.
- Identify the main factors affecting the benefits of government programs and economic development projects.
- Assess the level of project management maturity in government bodies of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
- Based on project approach, formulate a methodology for calculating regional competitiveness index (RCI) for global competitiveness index (GCI) of Kazakhstan.
- Suggest ways to increase the competitiveness of regions and recommendations for an accelerated implementation of project management to ensure their development.

Research object – process of realizing a project approach in the development and growth of Kazakhstan's regions.

Research subject – institutional conditions, economic relations, organizational and managerial practices that are formed during the implementation of project activity in regions.

The research theoretical and methodological basis is the scientific work of scholars in the field of project management, regional management, regional economics and development. In the course of dissertation work, a complex of research methods was used: historical-genetic method, modeling methods, econometric, statistical, correlation, regression, factor analysis, comparison, index method, survey and other research methods.

Research information base: Addresses of the President of RK, legislative and regulatory documents, normative legal acts, statistical material from the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reform of the Republic of Kazakhstan, analytical reports of the World Economic Forum, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, United Nations, Institute for Management Development, World Bank, international professional standards for project management.

Econometric calculations: software packages including Stata 8.0, Statistica and R studio.

Scientific novelty of research. Scientific novelty of research consists in solving a relevant scientific task associated with the formation and justification of theoretical and methodological foundations of project approach, aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of project management in the context of regional diversity, development and growth.

Basic propositions for thesis defense:

- The conceptual provisions of project approach in government management of Kazakhstan regional development were substantiated;
- Factors affecting the benefits of government programs and regional economic development projects were determined;
- The causal relationships between the variables of regional development and growth were identified using correlation and regression analysis;
- An empirical analysis and assessment of project management maturity of Kazakhstan regional executive bodies with ranking of country's regions by the level of project management maturity were conducted;
- It was proposed the methodological innovation in terms of developing the methods for calculating the regional competitiveness index;
- Author model of regional project management was elaborated;
- Recommendations for state regional structures on the optimization of project mechanisms and tools to improve managerial practices in the regions of Kazakhstan.

Theoretical relevance of research results. Theoretical importance and contribution of this research is the systematization and supplementation of accumulated knowledge about regional project management, the application of project approach in government and public management of regions, taking into account the regional diversity of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The author contributes to the advancement of regional science by proposing the elaboration of methodology for assessing RCI and a project management model of regional development, with consideration of Kazakhstani context. Theoretical results of this study can be used in the educational process when designing educational programs on the specialty of «Project Management», in particular, in the educational and methodological complexes of disciplines «Project Management», «Managerial Economics», «Technological Entrepreneurship», «Regional Economics», «Regional Economics' Management».

Practical significance of study. The results obtained during the study can be applied in the elaboration of national projects, government programs and development plans, as well as normative legal acts and documents on the implementation of project activity. Target consumers and stakeholders: Ministry of National Economy, Ministry of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace Industry, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Central government bodies, Local executive bodies, other government agencies, departments and research institutes.

Approbation of study results. Basic research results were presented and discussed at conferences:

- Project Management Development – Practice and Perspectives 9th International Scientific Conference on Project Management in the Baltic Countries, Riga, Latvia, April 23-24, 2020;

- Proceedings of Satbayev Readings «Satbayev Readings – 2020» Volume II, RK, Almaty, 2020;

- IEEE International Conference on Smart Information Systems and Technologies (SIST) 4-6 May 2023.

Materials and data of the research work were used within the framework of projects No.BR05236639 «Kazakhstan's path to a knowledge-intensive economy based on the third technological modernization: strategy, models and mechanisms of development» (2018-2020) and No.BR10965247 «Study of factors, features and dynamics of demographic processes, migration, urbanization in Kazakhstan, development of digital maps and forecasts» (2021-2023) of RSE «Institute of economics» of Science Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The results implementation is confirmed by the act.

Publications. Basic results of research work were published:

- 1 article in an international peer-reviewed scientific journal that has a CiteScore percentile of at least 25 in the Scopus database;

- 4 articles in scientific publications recommended by the Committee for Quality Assurance in the Field of Science and Higher Education of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- 2 articles in collections of the above-mentioned international conferences.

Scope and structure of the thesis. This thesis consists of five chapters (introduction, 1-3 chapters, and conclusion), references list, and appendixes. The total volume of the study is 151 pages of typewritten text, including 22 tables and 34 figures. The list of sources used contains 179 titles.

The main content of the dissertation.

The introduction presents the relevance of the dissertation work and its main provisions.

In chapter 1 of the dissertation, a theoretical review of regional diversity, specific characteristics, and competitive advantages of the subjects of the Republic of Kazakhstan is conducted, the issues of applying a project approach in regional management, existing project management approaches and methodologies are examined, also the stages of its formation within the global development context and national framework are considered.

In chapter 2, the state of economic development and project management in the regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan is analyzed, the coefficients of country and interregional inequality, along with the dynamics of indicators and impact on the benefits of government programs and projects are determined, national projects and programs of regional development, digitalization, and support of small and medium-sized businesses are studied, the project management maturity level of country's local executive bodies is assessed.

In chapter 3, the author proposed a methodological innovation in terms of developing the methods for calculating the regional competitiveness index, ensuring a balanced formation of the global competitiveness index of Kazakhstan, identified the ways to improve the efficiency of project management in the regions of country and presented a model of project management for the development of region.

In conclusion, the main results and findings of the dissertation work are provided.