

The Development of Higher Education and Its Impact on The Economy and Cultural Diversity in Uzbekistan

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Abstract: Over the last three decades, the internationalization of higher education has emerged as a focal point in the advancement of educational systems in Uzbekistan. Recognized as a predominant strategy for the enhancement of higher education, internationalization has also become a pivotal element contributing to the development of the national economy and fostering mechanisms for cultural diversity within the national education system. This paper presents a comprehensive overview of the processes involved in the internationalization of higher education in Uzbekistan within the framework of ongoing reforms in the higher education sector. Specifically, it delves into the role played by the internationalization of higher education in Uzbekistan, aiming to shed light on the historical progression of this phenomenon, its current status, and the underlying motivations driving the internationalization efforts in the country.

Keywords: Internationalization, Higher education, Strategy, Reforms, development

Introduction

The influence of globalization and internationalization has been pivotal in shaping the course of the 21st century. Internationalization is transforming the landscape of higher education, while globalization is, in turn, reshaping internationalization [1.5-31]. Over the past 25 years, the process of internationalization has evolved from a marginal phenomenon to a global scale, emerging as a primary strategy and dominant trend in higher education [2]. This strategy plays a crucial role in integrating the higher education systems of countries into the global higher education landscape, influencing their development in the process. The global scope of internationalization in higher education encompasses diverse characteristics in nations worldwide, with particular significance observed in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The attention to the internationalization of higher education in the Republic of Uzbekistan has grown significantly since gaining independence. Post-independence, Uzbekistan, like other nations, embarked on comprehensive development efforts, recognizing the pivotal role of literacy in the progress of a state. Subsequently, the Republic of Uzbekistan initiated substantial reforms in the educational system to enhance the population's literacy. Within these reforms, the internationalization of higher education manifested through endeavors such as studying abroad, fostering international relations, implementing global standards in the higher education system, and promoting integration in higher education.

The need for qualified specialists in the wake of independence prompted Uzbekistan to establish special funds and grant programs to facilitate access to higher education for young people and enhance their qualifications in developed countries. These initiatives included sending talented students to higher education institutions in developed nations, creating a skilled workforce equipped with modern knowledge adhering to global standards. Concurrently, improvements in living standards led citizens to express a desire for individual study in foreign countries.

Post-independence, the Republic of Uzbekistan underwent a transition towards democracy and a market economy, emphasizing increased international cooperation in diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations with developed nations. This collaboration resulted in the establishment of foreign universities and branches in Uzbekistan. Since 2016, efforts in higher education have intensified, aligning with global standards. Uzbekistan, like many countries, has aimed to elevate the activity of its higher education institutions to meet international requirements. Successful integration into the global higher education sphere has become a focal point in Uzbekistan's higher education policy. Notably, the emphasis has shifted towards increasing the number of foreign universities, branch campuses, and collaborations with developed countries. Recent

years have seen a concerted effort to enhance the international prestige of higher education institutions in Uzbekistan, as underscored by the approval of the "Concept of Development of Higher Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030" through the Presidential Decree on October 8, 2019 [3].

Introduction:

The concept stipulates that a minimum of 10 universities in Uzbekistan should attain international recognition. Currently, the higher education institutions in Uzbekistan are actively pursuing international status under the guidance of the government. The internationalization of higher education is identified as a vital instrument for ensuring Uzbekistan's economic stability. Against the backdrop of extensive reforms in higher education, this phenomenon reflects the distinctive aspects of internationalization.

The research endeavors to explore the intricacies of the internationalization of higher education in Uzbekistan, seeking answers to why it holds significance for the country. The paper aims to illuminate the distinctive features, importance, and the extent of implementation of internationalization in Uzbekistan. Specific attention will be given to efforts dedicated to the development of higher education, as well as the rationale behind the internationalization of higher education in the country. The study assesses the impact of internationalization on the overall development of higher education in Uzbekistan, offering a significant contribution by shedding light on the ongoing process.

While internationalization of higher education has been addressed by various Uzbek researchers, including Eshchanov R, Hodzhaniyazov S, Matlatipov G [4], Khushnazarov M [5], and others, there is a notable gap in theoretical insights provided by scientific studies in Uzbekistan. Despite its mention in local and international scientific articles, a comprehensive theoretical examination of the peculiarities, importance, current state, and rationales of internationalization in Uzbekistan is lacking. This research seeks to fill this void, offering a detailed exploration of the peculiarities, current state, and rationales of internationalization in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing preliminary evidence from interviews with executives of foreign universities operating in Uzbekistan. Additionally, it incorporates documentation and statistics to provide a holistic view of Uzbekistan's efforts in internationalizing higher education. A literature review informs the discussion and analysis, focusing on the theoretical foundations of the internationalization of higher education in Uzbekistan. The analysis identifies the benefits for Uzbekistan within the context of internationalization efforts.

Literature Review

The concept of internationalization has been prevalent in higher education for several decades and has evolved into a global phenomenon. Most scholarly research on internationalization of higher education has been conducted in the US, Europe, and Asia. While Central Asian countries, including Uzbekistan, have started investigating this concept, there remains a scarcity of theoretical literature supporting internationalization in Uzbekistan. Therefore, this study relies on global academic sources to analyze the theoretical underpinnings of internationalization. Various definitions of internationalization exist, reflecting the complex nature of this phenomenon [5]. This definition further developed describes internationalization as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of higher education [2]. Numerous scholars, have contributed to understanding internationalization, being significant sources for comprehending its rationales. Despite the wealth of international research, there is a dearth of theoretical literature on the internationalization of higher education in Uzbekistan[2]. This study aims to contribute to the growing body of scientific literature on internationalization in the context of Uzbekistan within the global academic community.

Discussion

The initiation of the internationalization processes in higher education within the Republic of Uzbekistan can be traced back to 1991[4]. However, the concept of internationalization in Uzbekistan is not a recent phenomenon, with historical roots extending back to medieval times, possibly even earlier. Throughout history, Uzbekistan has been referred to by various names such as Turkestan, Movarounnahr, and

Turan. The medieval era, particularly the golden age of Movarounnahr, saw the emergence of numerous scholars who significantly contributed to global civilization. During this period, the establishment of madrasas in Mavarounnahr played a crucial role in developing education programs that later evolved into higher educational institutions.

Bukhara, known as the city of madrasas and a center for scientific activities, attracted students from around the world during Amir Haydar's reign. This historical account reflects early forms of academic mobility, a key indicator of internationalization, wherein students from diverse regions completed rigorous training courses in Bukhara and returned home with acquired knowledge. The internationalization of higher education in Uzbekistan, therefore, can be viewed as having a historical foundation [6].

Nevertheless, the theoretical framework for the internationalization of higher education as a 21st-century concept only gained prominence after 1980 [7]. The year 1991 marked a new era for the Republic of Uzbekistan as an independent state, necessitating the adoption of internationalization concepts in alignment with national interests. Post-independence, Uzbekistan underwent comprehensive development, similar to other nations globally, implementing extensive reforms across various societal domains. In this transformative period, the emphasis on education reform, particularly in higher education, played a pivotal role.

The first five years of independence were characterized by the preparation for a strategic leap, marked by the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education" in 1992. This period also witnessed the study of the best educational models globally, culminating in the formulation of ideas for the national education model. The subsequent development of the "National Program of Training Personnel" in 1997 served as the foundation for fundamental reforms in the education system, emphasizing a two-stage higher education system comprising undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

To address the need for qualified specialists, the Republic of Uzbekistan focused on establishing international relations with developed countries and studying advanced international experiences. Special funds were created to send talented young individuals to prestigious universities abroad, facilitating the transfer of modern knowledge back to Uzbekistan. Initiatives such as the UMID Foundation and later the "Istedod" Foundation, established based on "Umid" and "Ustoz" funds, played a crucial role in promoting internationalization [8].

Living standards improvements resulting from economic, political, and cultural reforms further expanded opportunities for individuals in Uzbekistan to pursue tertiary education abroad, leading to the emergence of student migration. The qualitative improvement in living standards, coupled with existing push factors, became a significant driver of this phenomenon.

Recognizing the importance of training talented specialists equipped with modern knowledge, the Republic of Uzbekistan emphasized principles aligned with the demands of the time. Cooperation agreements were signed with foreign countries to establish their higher education institutions and branches within Uzbekistan, resulting in the active presence of foreign universities. The period from 1991 to 2016 witnessed the establishment of seven foreign universities in Uzbekistan, making international cooperation a priority in the country's foreign policy.

The internationalization of higher education in Uzbekistan encompasses various aspects, including studying abroad, the development of international corporations, the widespread incorporation of international criteria into the higher education system, the promotion of integration, and the modernization of the national higher education system. The features of this internationalization process initially manifested through the adoption of new normative and legal documents, the development of international cooperation, the mobilization of young people to foreign countries through special funds, and the establishment of foreign university campuses, among other factors.

The process of internationalizing higher education, emerging as a distinctive strategy of the current era, stands as a crucial priority for the sustainable advancement of Uzbekistan. The internationalization of higher education plays a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of education, the competency of educational institutions, and the socio-economic progress of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Notably, the internationalization efforts in Uzbekistan possess unique characteristics. An analysis reveals that the higher education reforms primarily target the fulfillment of national interests.

The endeavors of the Uzbekistan government to augment the presence of foreign higher education institutions serve as a means to offer modern education to the citizens of Uzbekistan. This initiative aligns

with the objective of meeting the demands for skilled professionals equipped with knowledge and skills relevant to the 21st century. The collaboration in higher education also plays a crucial role in fostering diplomatic relations with developed countries, and the establishment of foreign universities contributes to economic development.

Currently, international relations occupy a prominent position in the Republic of Uzbekistan's policy on the internationalization of higher education. Over the past three years, cooperation has entered a new phase of development, underscoring its pivotal role in the internationalization of higher education. While collaboration is a key feature of this process, another noteworthy aspect is the persistent desire of citizens to pursue individual studies in foreign universities. Despite the establishment of numerous foreign universities within Uzbekistan, there remains a prevalent aspiration among the Uzbek people to study abroad. The increasing outflow of students from Uzbekistan to foreign countries signifies the enduring existence of significant push factors motivating this trend.

In recent times, the Republic of Uzbekistan has placed a significant emphasis on attracting foreign students. The appeal to foreign students is intricately linked to the quality of education and educational services offered. While prioritizing national interests in the internationalization of higher education, it is imperative for Uzbekistan to reassess its services and grant programs to effectively draw in foreign students. Recognizing this need, Uzbekistan has undertaken gradual reforms in this domain. Notably, foreign students are now afforded opportunities such as paying an equal amount of tuition fees as local citizens and being eligible for enrollment in universities within the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Despite these initiatives, the international inbound student rate in Uzbekistan remains at 0.0% (UNESCO Institute for UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2019), indicating a need to revise and enhance opportunities for a more extensive involvement of international students in Uzbekistan's universities. Achieving this goal will undoubtedly pose challenges due to the intensifying global competition among universities [9]. To navigate this, Uzbekistan should draw upon the advanced experiences of developed countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and European and Asian nations.

The Republic of Uzbekistan aims to transform its higher education system into a regional educational hub implementing international education programs in Central Asia over the next decade [3]. The presence of numerous foreign higher education institutions within Uzbekistan serves as a catalyst for realizing these aspirations. Preparing local universities to admit a diverse array of international students is crucial. To align the educational process with international standards, continuous improvement of normative documents and educational programs is essential.

The importance of the internationalization of higher education for Uzbekistan is underscored by several far-reaching factors. Firstly, it has evolved into the principal strategy and dominant trend in higher education development. Additionally, it serves as a crucial component for the development of the national economy and acts as a mechanism for promoting cultural diversity and national identity.

While contributing to the development of higher education and ensuring economic progress, the internationalization of higher education is notably recognized for fostering cultural diversity and national identity. Some researchers view it as the application of Western standards to national educational programs. Currently, it has transformed into a principle that integrates Western standards into practice, promoting the national higher education system, language, and culture. Uzbekistan should be attentive to these nuances, as the peculiarities of internationalization lead to a more profound integration of its higher education system, national language, and national culture into the global civilization.

In conclusion, the internationalization of higher education has assumed growing importance on the global stage. It not only contributes to the development of higher education in Uzbekistan but also ensures the competitiveness and stability of Uzbekistan's universities in the global arena. This process introduces a fresh methodology to the content of higher education in Uzbekistan, aligning it with international standards and garnering international recognition for its higher educational institutions. Internationalization is instrumental in transforming Uzbekistan's higher education system into an educational hub that conducts international education programs. To realize this vision, Uzbekistan must elevate the quality of education to meet international standards, enhance university infrastructure, and focus on developing educational programs and services that attract foreign students. Participating actively in global higher education is a key factor for

Uzbekistan's success, and the internationalization of higher education should serve as the mechanism promoting its national higher education system, language, and identity.

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