

PROBLEMS OF UPDATING THE MECHANISMS OF USING FOREIGN EXPERIENCE IN THE FUNDAMENTAL REFORM OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Annotation. Large-scale socio-economic reforms are being carried out in modern Uzbekistan, one of the directions of which is the modernization of the higher education system. The purpose of the article is to assess the degree of real and potential impact of the reform of Uzbek higher education on the export of educational services by Russian universities. Accordingly, the article examines the evolution of the national system of higher education under President I.A. Karimov (1991-2016), analyzes the new priorities of policy in the field of higher education, designated by his successor Sh.M. Mirziyoyev, reveals their relationship with the change of models of state development carried out in Uzbekistan, identifies the tasks and tools of internationalization of higher education. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is the concept of internal and external internationalization of higher education, the model of elements of the higher education system by B. Clark, the concept of the levels of mass education of higher education by M. Trow.

The authors show the scale and consistency of the challenges in the field of higher education that have formed in Uzbekistan over the 25 years of independence. It is noted that the internationalization of higher education has become a tool for the Uzbek authorities to achieve several goals at once, including improving the quality of higher education, its mass dissemination and promotion of high-quality higher education in the regional centers of the country. The parameters of the internal and external internationalization of Uzbek higher education are shown, the dynamics of which has acquired an unprecedented character for the post-Soviet space. It is emphasized that the policy of rapprochement with Russia, initiated by Tashkent in 2016, created exceptionally favorable opportunities for Russian universities to work in the Uzbek direction and attract applicants from Uzbekistan. Four scenarios of internationalization of higher education in Uzbekistan have been formulated for the medium term.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, higher education system, internal and external internationalization, Russian-Uzbek educational cooperation, export of educational services

Introduction

For almost three decades since the collapse of the USSR, the system of higher education in independent post-Soviet states has undergone significant changes that have determined the formation of their own national model in each country. During the reforms, the post-Soviet countries faced similar problems, solved similar tasks, and, of course, the accumulated experience of the countries is of mutual scientific and practical interest. At the same time, the peculiarities of the national model of higher education, the current approaches of the state to further reforming the system, including issues of internationalization, are important factors determining the achievement of not only the political goal of developing educational cooperation between Russia and the post-Soviet countries, but also the goal of increasing foreign students studying at Russian universities.

Modern Uzbekistan occupies a special place among post-Soviet countries from the point of view of Russia's interests. It is the third largest state by population, the fifth largest economy, Russia's military and political ally, one of the two regional leaders and Moscow's main trade and economic partners in Central Asia. In the field of higher education, Uzbekistan is one of the main export markets for Russia. Interest in modern Uzbekistan is also determined by the fact that with the coming to power in 2016 of President Sh.M. Mirziyoyev a new stage of systemic reforms has begun in the country, including the reform of higher education.

The purpose of this study is to assess the degree of real and potential impact of the current stage of higher education reform in Uzbekistan on the possibilities of exporting Russian education to Uzbekistan. To do this, the following topics will be considered in the work:

- the model of higher education developed in Uzbekistan under the first President I.A. Karimov (1991-2016);
- priorities of the state policy of reforming higher education in Uzbekistan under President Sh.M. Mirziyoyev, its correlation with a more general model of national development;
- priorities, tools and scenarios for further policy of internationalization of the higher education system of Uzbekistan.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study is the concept of internal and external internationalization of higher education [1-3], the concept of elements of the system of higher education by B. Clark [4], the concept of levels of mass education of higher education by M. Trow [5]. The main methods used in the study are:

- reconstruction of the demographic, socio-economic and political environment in which the higher education system of Uzbekistan is developing;
- analysis of the regulatory framework regulating the functioning of the Uzbek higher education system and setting the vectors of its evolution;
- analysis of state policy in the field of higher education, based on the results of the study of the regulatory framework, external instrumental observation, historical-descriptive and political-descriptive methods.

The source base of the research consists of national and international statistics, international agreements, legislative and regulatory acts, official information of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education of Uzbekistan (MVSSO), Uzbek universities and their foreign partners, news resources and analytics of news agencies and information and analytical centers.

A new model of Uzbekistan's development

Under the first President of Uzbekistan I.A. Karimov (1991-2016) were: in politics and security - the strengthening of authoritarian presidential rule, the control of the authorities over the civil community and the media, the preservation of a large combat-ready army and law enforcement services, in the economy - gradualism under implementation of reforms, the key role of the state as an owner and agent of development, the policy of import substitution and support for local producers, in foreign policy - following the principle of balanced equality- remoteness from the world centers of power, focus on bilateral relations [6, p. 95-114; 7, p. 125-127]. Such a model had obvious advantages, especially at the stage of consolidation of the modern Uzbek statehood, among them: a softer transition to sovereign existence; less vulnerability to external financial and economic factors; albeit limited, but progressive development of local industry; large public investments in infrastructure and social system [8]. However, there were also significant negative consequences that not only hindered the effective use of the existing natural, demographic, cultural, tourist, transport, transit and other potential, but also posed the risk of Uzbekistan falling behind the leading states and regions of the world developing on the principles of the knowledge economy and the digital revolution. Among them: monopolism and technological backwardness in various sectors of the economy; unfavorable business environment for the development of private business and attracting foreign investment; weak export opportunities, except for the supply of raw materials; difficult relations with neighbors in the region [6, p. 115-116; 9, p. 141-156]. In general, such a conservative model worked to limit and restrain foreign relations in various fields, although it would be incorrect to say that Uzbekistan was a closed country or a country with a closed economy. Sh.M. Mirziyoyev became acting President of Uzbekistan on September 8, 2016. In the elections of December 4, 2016, he was elected permanent President of the country. At I.A. Karimov, he was the permanent Prime Minister (since 2003), a "man of the system", from whom it was expected rather to preserve continuity. However, in a short period under the new president, the country has embarked on systemic reforms. On February 7, 2017, the "Strategy of Actions on five priority areas of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021" was adopted, defining the general directions of reforms in the medium term. As it appears, the logic of the reform strategy is determined by the key task of achieving accelerated socio-economic modernization through the transition "from a model focused on the domestic economy to a more open, integrated and export-oriented economy"¹. It is this logic that not only the economic reforms carried out by the company are subordinated to (the transition to the night currency regulation; mitigation of the regulatory, tax, administrative burden on business; liberalization of the conditions of foreign economic activity, etc.), but also reforms of public administration, energy, transport, legal system, visa policy, as well as a sharp improvement in relations with neighbors in Central Asia and increased interaction with international development banks, the WTO, the leading economies of the world. The leadership of Uzbekistan conducts a pragmatic course. It does not transfer any specific model to Uzbekistan, but in different spheres it is looking for the best possible solution, the most suitable, taking into account local specifics, and thus introduces into practice different models and technologies taken from international experience. In general, the scale and depth of the current reforms create, in the short term, a huge demand for the higher education system of Uzbekistan to train modern qualified personnel and develop its own scientific and technological schools. It is no coincidence that the reform of higher education has become one of the key reforms in the package under the new president.

Being the heiress of the Soviet system, the higher education system of Uzbekistan underwent certain changes in the logic of the country's political and economic development under President I.A. Karimov and took shape in the form of a unique "Uzbek" model. From the point of view of the horizontal differentiation of the system, at the level of institutions [4], the model "one public system - many sectors" (only state universities, different types of universities) has been preserved in Uzbekistan; over the years of independence, it has become more diversified. If in 1988-1989 There were 43 universities in the Uzbek SSR, of which three universities and 40 institutes, then, according to the beginning of 2016, 82 universities were functioning in the country, of which 32 universities, six academies, 44 institutes.² Most of the new universities appeared as a result of the division of existing universities, the institutes expanded the areas of training and received the status of universities [10, p. 442-445]. There were no non-state universities, despite the mention of such a possibility in Article 4 of the Law "On Education". Uzbekistan started participating in the Tempus program of the European Union to support the reform of higher education in 1994. Two stages were introduced by the 1997 Law on Education: a four-year bachelor's degree and a two-year master's degree. Uzbekistan's participation in the

Tempus/Erasmus+ educational projects was mainly aimed at supporting the introduction of a two-stage system of higher education in Uzbekistan, especially the magistracy, and financing the mobility of teachers and students. On other aspects of the Bologna process and European higher education practices, the authorities took a rather "familiarization-waiting" position.

In accordance with the classification of the level of coverage of youth with higher education proposed by M. Trow (up to 15% - elementary system, up to 50% – mass, over 50% - universal) [5], the level of mass education of higher education in the USSR increased from elementary (11% of the age group 20-24 years in 1960 before the mass (26% in 1990). The given indicator for higher education of the Uzbek SSR in 1990 was 19%, which is closer to the elite model [10, p. 471]. Despite the significant growth of the country's population during the years of independence and a multiple increase in demand for higher education, the leadership of Uzbekistan adhered to an elite model of higher education development, centrally determining annual quotas for admission to universities (both budget and paid places) and at the same time making compulsory secondary specialized, professional education of the population. The indicator of accessibility of higher education according to the UNESCO methodology ("gross enrollment ratio") for Uzbekistan was: in 1991 – 17.5%, in 2000 – 13.07%, in 2005. – 10.07% and varied between 8-9% in 2011-2016. 3 Evening and correspondence forms of education were eliminated. Unsatisfied demand stimulated the outflow of applicants from the country. As for the distribution of authority and management in higher education at the national level [4], Uzbekistan has retained hyper-centralized management of the system by the central authorities, however, without the system of guaranteed distribution to work after training that existed in the USSR years. The Uzbek authorities not only determined detailed recruitment quotas each year in the context of universities, training boards, sources of payment (from the budget or under a contract) and languages of instruction, but also, for example, lowered the cost of training from above or dictated the content of training within the approved state educational standards (maximum the volume of changes to the curricula established by the standard could not exceed 5% of the total study time). Most universities in Uzbekistan were subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Science of Uzbekistan, but a considerable part of them were accountable to the relevant industry departments. At the university level, the key figure in the management vertical was the rector, appointed by the Cabinet of Ministers. The appointment of vice-rectors was carried out by the senior department, the appointment of deans was carried out by the rector, but in agreement with the department.

Internationalization of higher education, the place of Russia and development scenarios

The internationalization of higher education has become a tool for the current Uzbek authorities to achieve several goals at once: improving the quality of higher education, its mass dissemination, promoting high-quality higher education in the regional centers of the country, increasing the political weight and prestige of Uzbekistan in Central Asia. The dynamics of internationalization of Uzbek higher education has acquired an unprecedented character for the post-Soviet space. This process unfolds in two dimensions – internal and external.

The internal internationalization of higher education is understood as "the purposeful integration of international and intercultural components into the formal and informal curriculum for all students studying at the university" [13]. Having taken a course towards the massization of higher education, Uzbekistan made a choice in the field of accelerated internal internationalization, seeking to combine the increase in the volume of training of specialists with the increase in the quality of the personnel produced. One of the means of internal internationalization was the opening of branches of foreign universities in the country. In 2020 There were 22 branches of foreign universities operating in Uzbekistan, whereas in 2016 there were only seven. By 2030, the number of branches of foreign universities in Uzbekistan should increase to 45.

However, branches, despite their rapid growth, so far cover only about 3.5% of the number of students studying in Uzbekistan, and 19 of the 22 branches are located in Tashkent and the Tashkent region. The greatest effect is intended to give a wide implementation of joint educational programs with foreign universities. In 2017, each higher educational institution of Uzbekistan was ordered to establish "partnership relations with leading foreign scientific and educational institutions"⁹. Over the past three years, Uzbek universities, both Tashkent and regional, have launched many joint educational programs with foreign universities. The absolute leaders among partners in joint programs are universities in Russia and Belarus [14]. Programs have also been opened with universities in Poland, China, South Korea and other countries.

The massive introduction of joint educational programs with foreign universities has become an indicator of a radical change in the attitude of the Uzbek authorities to the education of Uzbek citizens abroad and to the development of academic mobility. External internationalization has become perceived as a valuable additional resource for the modernization of higher education. In 2018, the rules for admitting foreign citizens to Uzbek universities were simplified. At the beginning of 2019, the process of nostrification of foreign diplomas of higher education was significantly facilitated. Under the Government of the country in 2018 The El-Yurt Umidi Foundation was established to train specialists abroad, which allocated 985 scholarships for training and advanced training over two years. 461 fellows were sent to Russia.

In the 2019 Concept, external internationalization with an emphasis on improving the quality and international competitiveness of Uzbek higher education is declared one of the priorities. The tasks set, taking into account the low starting positions, are impressive in their ambitiousness: "carrying out systematic work to include at least 10 higher educational institutions of the country in the first 1000 positions" in internationally recognized rankings, "including the National University of Uzbekistan and Samarkand State University – in the first 500 positions"; an increase in the share

of foreign teachers attracted to the country's universities from 1% to 12%; the creation of foreign branches of Uzbek universities and the transformation of the country's higher education system into a "hub for the implementation of international educational programs in Central Asia"; an increase in the share of foreign students in Uzbekistan to 15% (in 2018, their the number in Uzbekistan was only 709 people¹⁰).

The policy of rapprochement with Russia, launched in 2016, created exceptionally favorable opportunities for Russian universities to work in the Uzbek direction and attract applicants from Uzbekistan. In April 2017, a framework inter-governmental agreement on cooperation in the field of healthcare, medical education and science was signed, in October 2018 - an agreement on the establishment and functioning of branches of Russian universities in Uzbekistan. In May 2019 Moscow and Tashkent have taken an important step in the development of educational cooperation by signing an Agreement on mutual recognition of education and qualifications, academic degrees. Mechanisms of interstate and interuniversity dialogue on education have been formed. A sub-commission on science and education was formed within the framework of the intergovernmental commission on Economic cooperation. In 2018, the first Russian-Uzbek educational Forum (Rectors' Forum) was held, in May 2020 – an online conference of rectors of universities in Russia and Uzbekistan.

Conclusion

Thus, four scenarios of internationalization of higher education in Uzbekistan are viewed for the medium-term perspective. The first one is the most likely due to the scale of the tasks set and the groundwork already formed – the continuation of the policy of total internationalization, which has a single barrier built into it that restricts the work in the Uzbek market of universities of Central Asian countries. In case of adjustment of Tashkent's foreign policy course, a transition to the second scenario is possible - selective internationalization, deployed in the direction of creating a regime of the greatest benefit for universities of certain groups of countries (for example, European and American universities or universities of states for which Central Asia is a relatively peripheral foreign policy direction and co- the cooperation with which, accordingly, carries a weak political "burden", such as the Republic of Korea, Japan, India). The third scenario – elite internationalization, in which only highly rated foreign universities are not allowed to work in Uzbekistan, can be formed if the Uzbek leadership considers that total internationalization does not solve the problems of improving the quality of higher education, and there are enough resources of national universities for the massization of higher education. The curtailment of internationalization, provoked by the socio-political destabilization in Uzbekistan and the tightening of the political regime, is unlikely. Focusing on the first scenario, Russian universities should also take into account the possibility of Tashkent's transition to the implementation of models of competitive or elite internationalization and step up efforts to take advantage of the "window of opportunity" opened by Uzbekistan, securing for Russia the role of the country's "guide" on the path of modernization and ensuring international competitiveness higher education systems.

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