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Transnational Education and Its Place in the Uzbekistan Education System

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Abstract

Transnational education has become an important mechanism for expanding access to internationally oriented higher education and strengthening the quality and competitiveness of national education systems. This article aims to elucidate the essence, goals, and objectives of transnational education, examine the conditions required for implementing transnational education programs, and analyze issues related to quality assurance and development within the framework of transnational education. The article also substantiates the legal foundations for the development of transnational education in Uzbekistan, analyzes the achievements and shortcomings observed to date, and outlines the main directions for its further advancement. The discussion highlights that effective implementation of transnational education requires clear regulatory support, quality assurance mechanisms, alignment with educational standards, and cooperation between provider universities and local institutions. The article concludes that strengthening the legal, institutional, and accreditation frameworks for transnational education is essential for improving program quality, ensuring accountability, and supporting the sustainable development of

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higher education in Uzbekistan. This study contributes to the literature on internationalization and higher education policy by clarifying the conceptual, legal, and quality assurance dimensions of transnational education in the Uzbek context.

Keywords: Transnational Education; Quality Assurance; Higher Education Policy; Accreditation; Uzbekistan

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the term "Transnational Education" is widely used in the global education system. Transnational education refers to the process of studying at universities in one country while residing in another [1]. The term "transnational education" is often referred to in international documents as "transnational education" (TNE). This term is widely used in scientific articles and reports by international organizations (UNESCO, the European Union).

As noted above, the Global Alliance for Transnational Education (GATE) was established for the purpose of international quality control in transnational education. This organization has developed principles of transnational education and a procedure for certifying higher education institutions (HEIs) operating based on these principles [2].

The goals and objectives of a transnational education program must be clear and understandable to the learner and must correspond to the competencies of the university-provider. For students studying under a transnational program, the university-provider must guarantee that the educational program conforms to the standard and fully meets quality criteria, regardless of the university's location or the technology of instruction used [1,2].

METHODS

The study used analytical, predictive, comparative and statistical analysis methods, as well as empirical methods: questionnaires, observation, test questions, interviews, open-ended ideas, and analysis of experimental test results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Transnational education must comply with the legislation of the country where the university is located and be supported (recognized) by the student's country of residence.

For a university-provider to implement and deliver a transnational education program, it is necessary that [1]:

- It is sufficiently staffed with highly qualified academic faculty and support personnel;
- The activities of the university-provider are subject to continuous monitoring and evaluation;
- An adequate environment and technical means that guarantee transnational education are fully provided and remain stable throughout the student's entire period of study;
- The transnational education program and teaching methods are pedagogically appropriate and meet the students' needs;
- A guarantee is provided that students will achieve maximum possible learning outcomes from the transnational education program;
- Educational programs undergo regular monitoring and evaluation with the aim of further improving the quality of education in the future.

Issues of ensuring the quality of transnational education (TNE) are becoming increasingly relevant in the current era of globalization. Cooperation between the education systems of different countries and increased student mobility have made guaranteeing the quality of TNE a complex and multifaceted process. The following provides an analysis of the main issues, international approaches, and promising directions for ensuring the quality of transnational education.

The rapid development of transnational education brings forth a number of complex issues. These include the following:

1. Gaps and inconsistencies in regulatory frameworks: Often, transnational education activities fall outside the regulatory purview of either the sending or receiving country, or the requirements of these countries may conflict with one another. For example, in the United Kingdom, the regulatory body for England (OfS) applies an evidence-based approach; however, the completeness and reliability of this evidence are not always guaranteed [3,4].

2. Lack of global consensus on the concept of quality and methods of measurement: There is no single global understanding of what constitutes "quality" or how it should be measured. The diverse methodologies employed by different countries and various evaluation bodies create problems in the process of recognizing qualifications [5].

3. Complexity and high cost of quality assurance processes: Many European higher education institutions emphasize that quality assurance processes for transnational programs remain overly lengthy, expensive, and ill-suited to transnational joint programs. The mere implementation of a data collection system can demand significant financial and labor resources from institutions [5].

4. Risk of quality decline with the expansion of TNE activities: Many universities strive to achieve large-scale TNE partnerships. However, as operations expand, maintaining a consistent level of quality becomes increasingly difficult. Quality may decline due to increased staff workloads and a shortage of resources.

5. Financial interests and ethical conflicts: Particularly in projects involving private partners, there is a risk that financial interests may take precedence over quality. A partner organization, driven by profit, may exert pressure to recruit more students, potentially leading to a lowering of admission standards.

6. The problem of cross-border accreditation and "accreditation mills": Out of an estimated 800 accreditation bodies, only approximately 178 operate based on internationally recognized standards. Unrecognized and low-quality "accreditation mills" undermine the legitimacy of qualifications and breed distrust.

Several international organizations and states are actively working to address the aforementioned issues, including:

- The POQA-TNE Project: Coordinated by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), this project (2025-2028) aims to make TNE quality assurance more robust and transparent. The project's scope includes studying current approaches, disseminating examples of good practice, and developing guidelines for quality assurance.
- UNESCO's Global Convention and Global Guidelines on Quality Assurance: Under the framework of UNESCO's Global Convention, plans are in place to develop globally

agreed-upon guidelines on quality assurance, encompassing transnational education, by 2027. These guidelines will serve to recognize qualifications and strengthen mutual trust.

• The European Quality Assurance and Recognition System: Being developed by the European Commission, this system is designed to support transnational cooperation between higher education institutions, facilitate student mobility, and foster the development of joint programs.

• The Evolution of Accreditation Standards: New standards for accrediting foreign programs, announced in 2026 by Taiwan's Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council (HEEACT), place special emphasis on aspects such as aligning with sustainable development goals, ensuring operational resilience and preparedness for emergencies, and strengthening academic standards and integrity.

Ensuring the quality of transnational education requires multilateral cooperation, the development of unified standards, and continuous improvement.

1. Strengthening Cooperation: collaboration between sending and receiving countries, quality assurance agencies, and higher education institutions must be reinforced. The role of international organizations in this regard is unparalleled.

2. Striving for Unified Standards: common frameworks, such as the global guidelines being developed under the auspices of UNESCO and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), can serve as crucial criteria for ensuring the quality of transnational education [6].

3. Transparency and Data Openness: information regarding transnational education activities, including statistics on student numbers, their outcomes, and experiences, must be transparent and reliable.

4. Adherence to Ethical Principles: quality assurance processes should be grounded in the ethical values outlined above (such as local relevance, empathy, and fairness).

5. Protecting Student Interests: students must remain at the center of all efforts, ensuring their rights and guarantees to receive a quality education are protected.

Systematic work in these directions will increase trust in transnational education, guarantee its quality, and strengthen its position within the global educational space.

The development of transnational education in Uzbekistan has become one of the key directions of the rapid reforms implemented in recent years. The country is undertaking extensive work aimed at integrating into the global educational space, training

competitive personnel aligned with international standards, and improving the quality of education. The following provides an analysis of the main indicators and directions of transnational education development in Uzbekistan [9].

Uzbekistan holds a leading position in the field of transnational education. Between 2018 and 2022, 23 branches of foreign higher education institutions were established in the country. By this indicator, Uzbekistan ranks third after China and the United Arab Emirates. These branches are creating opportunities for the country's youth to study at the world's leading universities [10].

Furthermore, through the "El-yurt umidi" Foundation, 2,225 scholarship recipients have been sent to 45 countries, with 1.5 trillion UZS allocated from the state budget. Currently, 748 scholarship holders are studying at prestigious universities ranked among the world's top 300 [9].

Uzbekistan is actively working to create a robust legal foundation for the development of transnational education. Practical steps are currently being taken to join the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education. This document serves to harmonize international education systems, facilitate the mutual recognition of diplomas and qualifications, and expand academic and scientific mobility [10].

Uzbekistan has a long history of effective cooperation with UNESCO. The country became a member of UNESCO in 1993, and the UNESCO office in Tashkent was opened in 1996. Currently, nine UNESCO Chairs operate in higher education institutions of Uzbekistan. For instance, the UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Development at Urgench State University has organized over 20 events involving teachers, researchers, students, and international experts [11].

The $220.25 million SmartEd project, launched in April 2025, represents the largest international development investment in Uzbekistan's education sector. This project, implemented in partnership with the Islamic Development Bank, UNICEF, and the government, aims to transition to competency-based education, improve the national curriculum, and enhance the assessment system [12,13].

Additionally, the construction of 58 modern schools in the regions is planned, financed by a $200 million allocation from the Islamic Development Bank.

The development of transnational education in Uzbekistan is considered one of the primary tasks within the system of training highly qualified, competitive personnel. To this end, the following promising directions for the development of transnational education in Uzbekistan have been identified:

1. Integration into International Rankings: "New Uzbekistan" University employs 40 foreign teachers and 30 highly qualified compatriots invited from abroad. Leveraging this potential, efforts to train specialists in modern fields such as engineering, digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and medicine will be intensified.

2. International Assessment Systems: International methods are being introduced to assess the quality of education. This year, the knowledge of 9,000 15-year-old students from 233 schools will be tested within the framework of the international PISA program.

3. Bilateral Cooperation: Cooperation in education with countries such as France and Saudi Arabia is expanding. Specifically, plans are in place to develop the French language, enhance teacher qualifications, and establish student exchange programs.

CONCLUSION

In a relatively short period, Uzbekistan has achieved significant progress in the field of transnational education. An extensive network of branches of foreign universities, large-scale projects with international financial institutions, and effective collaboration with global organizations such as Erasmus+ and UNESCO are consolidating the country's position within the global educational space. Looking ahead, a key priority remains the continuation of reforms aimed at further developing transnational education, training personnel in accordance with international standards, and enhancing the overall quality of education.

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