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**PROBLEMS AND THREATS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF JOINT  
 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS  
 OF UZBEKISTAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The article analyzes the problems of developing joint educational programs in educational institutions of Bukhara region, organized in cooperation with foreign universities. The analysis is based on the results of a survey of program participants, which examines the problems of participation in joint programs in higher education institutions of Uzbekistan and the risks that may arise on their basis. Suggestions and recommendations on the solution of the identified problems were given as a result of the research. Even if bilateral diploma programs are announced as part of the HEI strategy, inconsistencies in the actions of administrative structures will in practice lead to the responsibility of the initiative group for such programs.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Higher Education, Joint Education Programs, Double Degree, Problems And Risks, Questionnaires.*

**1. INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, the Republic of Uzbekistan pays great attention to the development of cooperation between higher education institutions and foreign educational institutions, also to the implementation of measures to internationalize education. In particular, in recent years, a number of decrees and resolutions of the President and the government have been adopted in order to further develop the activities of higher education institutions and improve the quality of education. For instance, according to the concept of development of the higher education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030 there is planned actions related with “expansion of training activities on the basis of joint educational programs with foreign higher education

institutions, increase the number of joint scientific conferences and seminars, implementation of international scientific and educational projects; establishment of branches of local higher education institutions in foreign countries, implementation of joint educational programs”[1], in which starting from the 2018/2019 academic year, 16 higher education institutions of the country have launched training activities on the basis of joint educational programs in cooperation with foreign higher education institutions.

Based on the above, it is safe to say that in the coming years the creation of such programs in Uzbekistan will accelerate due to a number of changes (transition to credit-module system, formation of third generation universities, ranking of universities, etc.) in the higher education system of Uzbekistan [5]. In this regard, it is important to conduct an in-depth analysis of the problems of organization and implementation of joint educational programs in the higher education system of Uzbekistan and to develop recommendations for the organization of systematic work to identify and eliminate potential risks.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

In order to determine the factors that ensure the effectiveness of existing joint educational programs, questionnaires were conducted among program participants (managers, representatives of international departments, teachers) in higher education institutions of Bukhara region. Through questionnaires designed for experts, feedback on program participation issues, program outcomes, program implementation lessons, and shortcomings was explored.

152 experts took part in the survey. In addition, interviews were conducted directly with the management of higher education and joint education programs on some issues.

## 3. Results and discussions

Higher educational institutes (HEI) of Uzbekistan and their foreign partners face a number of challenges in creating and implementing joint educational programs (Table 1). Summarizing the responses of universities with dual degree programs shows that the challenges in creating and implementing these programs are:

- Lack of experience in establishing such cooperation;
- Insufficient knowledge of foreign languages by Uzbek teachers and students;
- Regulatory issues;
- Insufficient funding of the university;
- Communication problems.

**TABLE 1 PROBLEMS IN THE PROCESS OF CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM**

Insufficient knowledge of foreign languages by Uzbek students	60%
Insufficient knowledge of foreign language by Uzbek teachers	55%
Lack of necessary experience in establishing such cooperation	50%
Problems with regulatory support in the development and implementation of the program	45%
Lack of funding for higher education	43%

Communication difficulties: it is not easy to agree on the content of collaborative activities and to reach a common understanding	28%
Not supported by the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education	17%
Difficulties of ensuring the quality of teaching in accordance with the requirements of the partner	14%
Lack of support from employers	12%
Lack of qualification of Uzbek teachers	7%
Insufficient qualification of foreign teachers	3%
Not supported by local authorities	2%

### **Insufficient knowledge of foreign languages by students and teachers of Uzbekistan**

One of the biggest problems in the implementation of bilateral diploma programs in the world practice is that students and teachers involved in this process do not know a foreign language. The same trend is observed in Uzbekistan. Our survey showed that 55% of respondents said that one of the main problems in working in dual degree programs was that Uzbek teachers did not know a foreign language, and 60% of respondents said that Uzbek students did not know a foreign language well.

All studied universities in Uzbekistan face the problem of professional knowledge of a foreign language. One interview highlighted the need to “restructure infrastructure, make curriculum changes, and seriously retrain teachers in foreign languages” in order to implement a comprehensive English language program in technical universities.

Almost all universities in Uzbekistan need to reorganize foreign language learning, as participants' knowledge of a foreign language is not enough for professional communication between partners. That's the way to start. "

### **Lack of necessary experience in establishing such cooperation**

Speaking about their experience in developing and implementing bilateral diploma programs, the respondents noted that each program is a unique author's work and cannot be put on a conveyor belt. There are several reasons for this. The intensity of the workload per head of the training program is very high.

The content of the program is a multi-level educational product and its management is a process of continuous intercultural interaction. Issues related to the operation of the program, the organization of mobility of students and teachers of their educational institution and partner universities require coordination with various administrative structures of the university, which often do not have experience in solving problems and are forced to make individual decisions. This is due to the involvement of the financial structures of the university, the personnel department, the international department and so on. Even if bilateral diploma programs are announced as part of the HEI strategy, inconsistencies in the actions of administrative structures will in practice lead to the responsibility of the initiative group for such programs. This poses a risk of losing the program when the organizing team or program leader is replaced. As one expert put it: “Bilateral diploma programs are usually very tightly tied to specific people. The departure of people will also lead to the termination of programs.”

The study found that teachers and staff involved in joint education program work more intensively than their counterparts in HEIs, taking into account time, labor, and nerve expenditure. It is common for dual degree program staff to work in the evenings and on weekends. This is because they will have to follow two standards at once, not one. In other words, it is necessary to carry out the usual routine work related to the educational process, as well as all the requirements of both Uzbek education and a foreign partner: it cannot be done as in a normal public institution. "

Meetings and interviews with program directors and administrators have shown that the desire of Uzbek universities to create dual degree programs is often not supported by an understanding of the complexity and long-term nature of the process, willingness to invest heavily, and training teachers and managers. Successful partnership is a long and difficult process: for some participants, the success of the initial phase will soon become a cold reality; others remain dissatisfied with the partnership because the parties place more emphasis on short-term income sharing issues rather than strengthening the partnership's foundations and sustainability.

The main thing that comes from the experience of creating dual degree programs is to understand that this is an institutional direction, not an individual responsibility. All program managers and coordinators face many institutional issues during the creation phase, including:

- Work with the creation of integrated curricula, the acceptance and recognition of credits received at the universities of the two countries. At the same time, the Uzbek side must ensure that the curriculum meets the requirements of foreign state standards;
- Development of cooperation agreements, rules and conditions of admission to the bilateral diploma program, including tuition fees;
- work with foundations and potential donors for the implementation of academic exchange programs, meetings with representatives of embassies and consulates of foreign countries, representatives of business and government organizations;
- Creation of material and technical base and program for retraining of Uzbek teachers;
- Creation of adequate working conditions for invited foreign teachers (study rooms, library, opportunity to participate in research work, etc.);
- Creating conditions for attracting extra-budgetary funds of universities.

The list of these tasks is not final, but the conclusion is clear: successful dual degree programs can be implemented only in universities with a chain of interaction between specialists of different departments, with the help of which "life infrastructure of programs" is created.

### **The financial capacity of universities is insufficient.**

Respondents point out that the financial costs of building partnerships are enormous. In the preparatory phase, these are primarily the costs associated with the large number of necessary business trips, the organization of negotiations, and the resolution of the language problem. Significant financial investment is also required to create the necessary infrastructure for a joint project: "If you want to do it as required, it is a very costly and very expensive measure. There should be a good library, good technical teaching aids, extensive administrative and technical

support structure. It is not possible to be limited to a single dean or administrative manager of the program. That is, any educational institution that does this must understand what it is doing. "

Respondents also point out the need for large expenditures for advertising and marketing research. Observations show that Uzbek universities are not always ready to pursue a well-thought-out policy to promote bilateral diploma programs, so the answer to the question "Why do I need a foreign economic program when we have our own?" is not always convincing to Uzbek entrants.

In general, respondents believe that the transition to self-financing will take years. The mobility of students and teachers is a separate topic. According to the respondents, there are opportunities to use additional financial resources for this - the El-Yurt Umidi Foundation, many foreign funds and embassies of foreign countries that provide grants for academic mobility, as well as funds from manufacturing companies. But the large contingent of students applying for the grant creates a very high level of competition. Not all students can take advantage of these opportunities. It is advisable to adopt a full-scale state-level program for the implementation of mobility within the framework of joint programs.

As a result, even the most gifted Uzbek students are forced to exercise mobility on their own at the dual degree program, while teachers rely largely on their own initiative. This situation can lead to the withdrawal of both students and teachers from joint education programs in a highly competitive environment.

Representatives of higher education institutions point out that the low purchasing power of the population, the inability to analyze the regional labor market and the cost of dual degree programs jeopardize their existence: "Are the financial costs of implementing these programs commensurate with the reputation of its implementation? Here, the choice of university leadership plays a key role: to raise the profile, but to continue the very expensive programs."

### **Problems with regulatory support in the development and implementation of the program**

45% of Uzbek universities noted that problems with the regulatory framework significantly hinder the development of joint programs. The legislation of Uzbekistan still does not contain special legislation related to the development of international curricula. The concepts of "joint education program", "bilateral diploma program", "franchising in education" itself are not defined at the legislative level. Therefore, shortcomings in the regulatory framework lead to complexity and problems, lack of transparency in activities. On the one hand, this is not an obstacle in the development of bilateral diploma programs. On the other hand, participants are required to comply with national legal regulations governing the issuance of diplomas and qualifications and, at the same time, comply with the requirements of both countries. It is needed relevant documents to coordinate it.

It should be noted that bilateral diploma programs are not created due to a well-thought-out policy of the whole of Uzbekistan, but often due to bottom-up initiatives, ie with the activity of universities. The lack of a regulatory framework for bilateral diploma programs seems to be liberalizing the efforts of Uzbek universities, but in reality it is difficult to ensure their development without addressing important issues such as recognition of their study periods, equality of diplomas / degrees, and so on. The program implemented by the universities of Uzbekistan must meet the current standards and be included in the list of educational programs

reflected in the certificate (license) for the implementation of their educational activities. The current legislation does not provide for obtaining a license to implement a joint program, which is part of a foreign university program. In addition, the partner foreign university does not have a single procedure for recognizing periods and learning outcomes, which does not complicate or make this activity more transparent.

Respondents also spoke about the problems of legislation, the problems of student mobility, the invitation of foreign teachers to work in Uzbekistan, the procedure for obtaining visas for foreign countries.

### **Significant differences between education systems**

Despite some progress in education reform in Uzbekistan, both Uzbek universities and foreign universities face serious challenges with differences in the education system.

Despite significant changes in Uzbekistan's higher education, modernization of its content and teaching methods, new approaches to ensuring the quality of the educational process are being implemented in Uzbek HEI in a very uneven manner.

According to the respondents, the most common differences are:

- In the education system of Uzbekistan, the main focus is on the theoretical foundations of the studied disciplines, while the foreign system is pragmatic, primarily focused on the practical application of the acquired special knowledge;
- The structure of levels is based on the 4 + 2 model (bachelor's and master's degrees) close to the structure of levels abroad. However, three-year undergraduate programs, which are very common abroad, are not recognized in Uzbekistan, which makes it almost impossible to nostrify a foreign university graduate's diploma and therefore makes it difficult to obtain a master's degree in Uzbekistan. At the same time, for example, general secondary education in Europe is 12-13 years, and in Uzbekistan it is 11 years;
- Guardianship (care) for overly Uzbek students, high audience workload, underdeveloped independent work;
- “student-oriented” approach in foreign countries (the tradition of a foreign university and the obligation to take into account the professional interests of each student of the program) and “teacher-oriented” approach in Uzbekistan (confidence that the list of topics in the program fully covers the content);
- Relations between students and teachers in foreign universities are more democratic than in Uzbekistan;
- various systems of knowledge assessment: written essays and exams, group projects, presentations such as test forms, etc., mainly against tests in Uzbekistan;
- Lack or insufficient development of competency-based knowledge and skills assessment criteria systems in Uzbek universities;
- Different systems of quality assurance in education.

Almost all respondents noted a significant difference between approaches to educational quality standards, the role of the teacher, the proportion of classroom and independent work, and the

system for evaluating learning outcomes. The transformation processes taking place in the higher system of Uzbekistan will undoubtedly significantly expand the autonomy of universities in these areas. It is possible to bridge the gap, but it will definitely take time and a lot of effort.

### **Communication problems in bilateral diploma programs**

Nearly 28 percent of respondents said they face serious communication problems in joint programs.

It is clear that successful cooperation requires serious efforts to bridge intercultural differences. These efforts require large expenditures. The cost of working with a foreign partner, according to respondents, is very high. The fact that people speak and think differently in different languages poses a certain challenge to communication: "It still happens that we understand the problem differently at first, and what is clear to me seems different to the partner. Second, we don't notice some subtleties of language. Sometimes when you say something, you suddenly realize that they are upset. As it turns out, there are phrases in English that we don't know about."

The Uzbek participants faced two types of intercultural problems. First, the characteristics of the two countries' business culture related to day-to-day work, day-to-day tasks and problem-solving are not always the same for participants. The partner's slow reaction to the other party's requests, the ability to present different arguments, the use of command tone in oral or written communication or, conversely, the avoidance of direct command, the ability to hear and listen to each other - these and more can cause partners a lot of trouble and headaches. It should be noted that the respondents were critical of both themselves and their foreign partners.

Second, partnership participants face different notions about the international project, its working mechanism, the distribution of participants' roles, and the development of norms of conduct for stakeholders. According to the Uzbek participants, these problems can be overcome and it takes time and desire to develop a specific concept and algorithm of action agreed upon for both parties: "If people are not ready to accept the mentality and approaches of partners, then maybe not "Because in this case, everything our partners transfer to us is taken in the form of 'let them do it for themselves.' If you approach it as something new that develops the quality of the learning process, the curriculum itself, it gives a positive result."

Respondents noted that it takes a long time to establish personal human relationships. People are different categories with their problems and ideas, so it is natural that fatigue and anger often arise: "Many situations arise and anger also arises. Perhaps this cultural difference is due to the difference in educational characteristics. We try to side with each other like a close-knit family. In fact, this alliance will not happen without mutual compromises and a gradual recognition of each other from a human point of view."

### **Support from employers.**

12 percent of the universities surveyed cited "lack of support from employers" as a factor hindering the development of joint education programs. In the comments to the answers, first of all, the financial problems were mentioned.

However, one of the problems in the development of dual degree programs during the survey was the low level of interest expressed by employers towards students enrolled in these programs. Respondents noted that so far the "employer-educational institution" relationship has

largely been limited to personal contacts between enterprises and universities and has not become a system:

- Employers, with the exception of a few sectors, have not formulated their own requirements for education, as expressed in the qualification requirements;
- Employers rarely participate in the assessment of the quality of educational services provided;
- Occupational certification is not systematized and social accreditation has not yet been introduced, but is provided on a case-by-case basis.

Respondents say that without close ties with business, there are no bases for internships and opportunities to implement research results: "The situation is different in European countries. For example, German partner universities have a strict requirement for masters to teach only in practice-oriented programs. To develop a dual degree program, it is necessary to have a "third party" or an enterprise that is interested in hiring professionals and is willing to hire them for internships. It's very difficult to find him. "

### **Problems of professional development of Uzbek teachers.**

Only 7% of surveyed participants said that the qualifications of Uzbek teachers were low, which meant that the problem was not a priority. However, almost all respondents in one way or another discussed the readiness of Uzbek teachers to work in dual degree programs. We have to admit that the numbers are not enough. "

A separate issue is the cooperation of teachers from partner countries, both in terms of communication and organization. The problem of communication also arises at the level of professional activity. How can different requirements of education systems be aligned with the evaluation process criteria? How can you explain to an Uzbek teacher that his grade is not final, that there will be another grade from his colleagues in the department, and then there will be an external evaluation? It should be noted that the planning of the educational process is very different from what is accepted in the universities of Uzbekistan.

The structure of the workload of Uzbek teachers has historically developed in such a way that it focuses teachers mainly on classroom work and does not involve serious work on the organization of independent work of students. This is the most responsible and challenging part of the job - different students will need an individual approach, serious methodological developments are required, and independent written work review takes a lot of time. Finally, the next step is to determine the conditions and criteria for conducting research, scientific work and the quality of published materials.

The administrative and organizational aspects of attracting foreign teachers to educational institutions of Uzbekistan deserve special study. It is a long and complicated process, planning the arrival schedules of foreign teachers in Uzbekistan, providing them with quality housing, their adaptation to life and work in other conditions and in a different language environment. Where there is a lack of these issues, disputes between the host university and the foreign expert can be expected, and resolving them can take a lot of effort and time.



### **Discussion of research results**

It is obvious that such problems in higher education institutions of Uzbekistan cannot be solved without serious and well-coordinated work of administrative staff of joint educational programs, which is part of the task of modernization and reorganization of the management structure of higher education institutions.

In general, organizing the work of teachers from different countries without serious methodological training is far from the truth, it takes time and a desire for change. Today, the standards of organization of teachers' work in the HEIs of Uzbekistan are changing - it is planned to move to the procedure of concluding contracts with teachers, which will determine the quality of research work and its quality indicators, to create conditions for mandatory participation in scientific conferences.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

In summary, our study summarizes the following shortcomings in the development and implementation of joint educational programs (JEP):

- Lack of regulatory support for the creation and implementation of JEP;
- Lack of systematization of JEP in Uzbekistan in the priority areas of regional economy;
- There are no benefits for gifted students to study at JEP;
- The lack of a unified program of academic mobility with a clear definition of financial resources and the lack of support from national and foreign funds;
- Low awareness of the development of joint educational programs in Uzbekistan;
- Poor perception of Uzbek higher education abroad;
- Problems of infrastructure of higher education institutions of Uzbekistan;
- Problems of working on integrated curricula in the conditions of strict state educational standards;
- Organization of the educational process (classroom hours in Uzbekistan - learning outcomes and the role of independent work abroad);
- Various assessment systems (tests in Uzbekistan - written work and group projects abroad, presentations);
- Understand the essence of the credit system;
- Imperfect education quality system;
- The mismatch between the four-year bachelor's degree in the higher education system of Uzbekistan and the three-year bachelor's degree abroad;
- Careful treatment of JEP students by employers;
- Difficulties in organizing internships for JEP students;
- At the doctoral level, JEP is not organized as a bilateral document.

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