

ІННОВАЦІЙНІ ПІДХОДИ ДО МЕТОДИКИ ВИКЛАДАННЯ У ВИЩІЙ ШКОЛІ

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ANALYSIS OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE AZERBAIJAN REPUBLIC IN THE SPHERE OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

The development of education is the priority direction of the state policy of Azerbaijan. In all countries, education is a very important part of society, but in Azerbaijan it is a decisive element in people's lives. For this reason, the reforms carried out in the field of education in our country after gaining independence have an international character and cover all its fields.

This article examines the international aspects of higher education in Azerbaijan and analyses external and internal factors influencing higher education.

The object of the study is the Azerbaijan higher education system. The subject of the study is the analysis of external and internal factors influencing the Azerbaijan higher education system in the context of expanding foreign economic relations.

This article has used the methods of observation, statistical analysis and statistical grouping of technical and economic indicators for the 1992/1993 – 2022/23 academic years in Azerbaijan in percentage.

The research tasks are as follows: 1) How many forms of higher education have been formed in Azerbaijan? 2) What external factors influence higher education in Azerbaijan? 3) How can political, economic, social and technological factors (PEST analysis) be revealed in the field of Azerbaijan's higher education? 4) What internal factors influence the higher education system in Azerbaijan? 5) Does the analysis of internal factors (SWOT analysis) sufficiently reveal the true situation in the higher education system in Azerbaijan?

It has been concluded that the development of the higher education system in Azerbaijan is closely linked to the introduction of innovations, modern technologies, and digital transformation. In the early years of independence, foreign citizens played a key role in transferring new techniques, knowledge, and cultural examples. Subsequently, Azerbaijani citizens studying or working abroad became the main contributors to this process. Political and economic stabilization, along with socio-economic development and improvements in education and infrastructure, significantly boosted the country's educational services and increased the inflow of foreign students. Thus, the ongoing reforms aim to integrate modern teaching methods and information technologies into the educational process.

Keywords: *higher education in Azerbaijan; external factors of influence on the higher education sphere; internal factors of influence on the higher education sphere; state regulation of Azerbaijan's higher education system; evolution of Azerbaijan's higher education system among foreign countries; state regulation of the higher education system in globalisation.*

Абасова Саміра Гусейн кизи, Алієва Есмер Гурбан кизи. Аналіз зовнішніх і внутрішніх факторів, що впливають на вищу освіту Азербайджанської Республіки у сфері міжнародних економічних відносин.

Розвиток освіти є пріоритетним напрямом державної політики Азербайджану. Для всіх країн освіта є важливою частиною суспільства, але для Азербайджану вона є вирішальним елементом життя людей. Тому реформи, які проводяться у сфері освіти в нашій державі після здобуття незалежності, мають міжнародний характер і охоплюють усі її сфери.

У статті розглянуто міжнародні аспекти вищої освіти в Азербайджані й аналізуються зовнішні й внутрішні чинники, що впливають на її розвиток.

Об'єктом дослідження є система вищої освіти Азербайджану. Предметом дослідження є аналіз зовнішніх і внутрішніх факторів, що впливають на систему вищої освіти Азербайджану в контексті розширення зовнішньоекономічних зв'язків.

У дослідженні використано методи спостереження, статистичного аналізу та статистичного групування техніко-економічних показників за 1992/1993 – 2022/23 навчальні роки в Азербайджані у відсотковому значенні.

Завданнями дослідження є: 1) Скільки форм вищої освіти сформувалося в Азербайджані? 2) Які зовнішні фактори впливають на вищу освіту в Азербайджані? 3) Як можна виявити політичні, економічні, соціальні та технологічні фактори (PEST-аналіз) у сфері вищої освіти Азербайджану? 4) Які внутрішні фактори впливають на систему вищої освіти в Азербайджані? 5) Чи достатньо мірою аналіз внутрішніх факторів (SWOT-аналіз) розкриває справжню ситуацію в системі вищої освіти Азербайджану.

Зроблено висновок про те, що розвиток системи вищої освіти в Азербайджані тісно пов'язаний із впровадженням інновацій, сучасних технологій і цифровою трансформацією. У перші роки незалежності іноземні громадяни відігравали ключову роль у передачі нових технологій, знань і культурних зразків. Згодом громадяни Азербайджану, які навчаються або працюють за кордоном, стали основним учасником цього процесу. Політична й економічна стабілізація разом із соціально-економічним розвитком і покращенням освіти й інфраструктури значно підвищили освітні послуги в країні та збільшили кількість іноземних студентів. Реформи, що тривають, спрямовані на інтеграцію сучасних методів навчання й інформаційних технологій у навчальний процес.

Ключові слова: вища освіта в Азербайджані; фактори зовнішнього впливу на сферу вищої освіти; внутрішні фактори впливу на сферу вищої освіти; державне регулювання системи вищої освіти Азербайджану; еволюція системи вищої освіти Азербайджану серед зарубіжних країн; державне регулювання системи вищої освіти в умовах глобалізації.

Problem Statement. One of the most important factors for the deepening of globalization is the market of educational services, which plays a special role in the process of transferring “scientific outlook” and “knowledge and skills”. In the process of exporting educational services, the foreign students who came to the country got to know Azerbaijan’s culture closely, and in the import of the educational services, the Azerbaijani students got to know the foreign culture, which gave a strong impetus to the creation of cultural relations between the countries.

Currently, the education of Azerbaijan’s citizens abroad is carried out in four forms:

1. Higher education abroad at their own expense.
2. Higher education at the expense of organizations conducting exchange programs and donor organizations.
3. Higher education on the basis of scholarships allocated to Azerbaijani citizens on the basis of bilateral agreements with foreign countries.
4. Higher education abroad based on the State Program for the education of Azerbaijani youth in other countries in 2007-2015 and 2016-2023.

The *first way* of studying abroad for Azerbaijani citizens is regulated both by the Azerbaijan Republic’s “Law on Education” and bilateral cooperation agreements between Azerbaijan and other states. Many citizens of Azerbaijan are studying in the USA, Canada, Europe and other CIS countries. Azerbaijan’s agreement recognizes diplomas issued by higher education institutions in Azerbaijan or abroad. Azerbaijan’s citizens are encouraged to study abroad at their own expense. However, the limitation of such education through the existing legislative acts has a negative impact on the number of those who study abroad at their own expense.

The main constraints are as follows:

1) the recognition of the diplomas of those studying in this way is realized for a longer period of time than others;

2) if the students studying in this way do not have the opportunity to continue their education for any reason (for example, illness, changes in the social and political situation in the country they are going to, or family situations, etc.), the opportunity for them to continue their education in any higher education institution of Azerbaijan is very limited;

3) another difficulty is related to those who are engaged in scientific and research work in other countries at their own expense. Thus, the recognition of the diplomas of scientists who have completed postgraduate studies at their own expense and defended their dissertation and received a PhD degree in other countries is accompanied by very difficult procedures in Azerbaijan.

It should be noted that the number of Azerbaijani students who study abroad at their own expense is much higher than the number of those who study abroad in other ways. For example, the number of Azerbaijani students studying at their own expense in Russia in the 2010/2011 academic year was more than 8313. However, that academic year, the number of people studying in RF under state lines was 507. In the last 10 years (from the 2001/2002 academic year to the 2012/2013 academic year), the number of Azerbaijani students studying in Ukraine in other three ways was the highest in the 2008/2009 academic year (115 people), while in the 2001/2002 academic year there were 10 people in total [Təhsil haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu, 2009].

It seems that this is why the opportunities to study at one's own expense are limited by various means. Studying abroad at one's own expense can be both direct education by going to foreign countries and studying in foreign educational institutions operating in the country. Procedures for the recognition of education documents in Azerbaijan are carried out quite seriously in both cases. For example, from 2008 to 2012, Azerbaijan's Ministry of Education received 10,237 applications for the recognition of diplomas. Of them, only 8,804 higher education diplomas were recognized. 1,433 diplomas were rejected because they did not meet the standards accepted by Azerbaijan.

The *second way* for Azerbaijan citizens to get higher education abroad is to study abroad at the expense of scholarships from organizations implementing various educational exchange programs and other donor organizations. The implementation of this form is also regulated by the Law "On Education" and the requirements of different educational exchange programs agreed with Azerbaijan.

It should be noted that the second form of getting higher education in other countries is obtained through competitions conducted by different organizations. There are a wide variety of educational exchange organizations and programs in Azerbaijan. These scholarship programs are offered through the embassies of the United States, Great Britain, Germany, as well as France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Egypt, Poland, and other countries. In terms of numbers, the USA and Germany have more scholarship programs.

Scholarship programs in the US are primarily funded by the State Department. In recent years, Azerbaijan youth have been sent to Turkey, Russia, China, Korea, Egypt, the Czech Republic and Slovakia for getting higher education at various levels. In terms of the number of students sent, Turkey and RF dominate. Most of the students studying in Azerbaijan universities are from Turkey and RF. Articles 1, 2 and 4 of the Protocol on cooperation in sphere of education and science between Azerbaijan's Ministry of Education and the Ministry of National Education of Turkey, signed in December 2000, state that Turkey provides a quota for citizens of Azerbaijan to receive higher education in its territory.

The *third form* of Azerbaijan's student education process is studying abroad which is implemented by the Ministry of Education on the basis of scholarships. According to the implementation of this form and the law "On Education" and Azerbaijan's agreements on bilateral cooperation in the field of education, 712 young Azerbaijani citizens studied abroad by means of the third form of getting higher education abroad.

The *fourth way* for Azerbaijan's youth to get higher education in other countries is to get higher education abroad based on the State Program.

The Decree of the President of the Azerbaijan Republic "On the approval of the State Program for reforms in the higher education system of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2009-2013"

dated May 22, 2009 (No. 295) [The education reforms in Azerbaijan, 2024] talks about education according to modern standards. The President of Azerbaijan approved "The National Plan for the years 2019-2023 on the international competitiveness of higher education of the Republic of Azerbaijan" in order to revitalize the country's higher education system, and its implementation acted as a strategic priority.

The **aim** of this article is to explore the forms of studying abroad available to Azerbaijani citizens, analyse the external and internal factors influencing the country's educational policy, and evaluate the impact of educational reforms on the international competitiveness of Azerbaijan's higher education system.

This article has used the **methods** of observation, statistical analysis and statistical grouping of technical and economic indicators for the 1992/1993 – 2022/23 academic years in Azerbaijan in percentage.

Presentation of the main research material.

1. Analysis of the external environment affecting the field of higher education of Azerbaijan

Even in the years of the Soviet Union, many students from foreign countries were studying in higher schools of Azerbaijan. At that time, the educational services market was not independent, since the Azerbaijani education system was part of the Soviet education system. Most of foreign students studying in Azerbaijan were from countries that received financial, political and military assistance from the Soviet Union. Therefore, at that time, relations between consumers and producers of educational services in Azerbaijan were mainly determined by the position of the Soviet Union in the world market of educational services. However, in all cases, the provision of such services had a positive effect on the acquisition of certain experiences in the educational system of Azerbaijan.

The preparatory faculty for foreign students, which was established in 1961 under Azerbaijan State Institute of Petroleum and Chemistry (AZINEFTEKHIM), ranked 3rd among the 55 preparatory faculties operating in the Soviet Union, after M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University and Leningrad Polytechnic Institute. Most of the graduates of this faculty, which accepts more than 500 foreign citizens per year, continued their studies in various faculties of higher education institutions of our country. During these years, thousands of foreign students from more than 70 countries of the world proudly obtained degrees from different universities of Azerbaijan and worked as high-level specialists in their countries [Manafova, 2013].

After proclamation of independence, cooperation in the field of education between Azerbaijan and other countries has been regulated by signing bilateral and multilateral agreements and monitoring them by relevant state bodies. Azerbaijan's international economic relations with the former Soviet republics have been formed and developed over a long period of time. Relations in the field of education are based mainly on the agreements concluded between Azerbaijan and the countries of the world. Since 1992, about 80 international agreements on education have been signed by the states.

The period after the restoration of state independence of Azerbaijan can be divided into two economic stages. The first period (1991-1996) is a period of recession. During this period, Azerbaijan was accompanied by a serious decline in all economic fields, including the educational services market (both in the import and export fields). In the second stage (since 1996), it has been the period of economic revival. During this period, the rapid growth of oil production was observed, and the improvement of living conditions was realized with the increase of GDP of Azerbaijan. In the second stage, serious changes took place in the field of educational services.

Since 1996, the number of foreign students coming to the country, and the number of import-export operations in the field of educational services has increased. During this period, the number of foreign students studying in Azerbaijan, as well as the number of students who went to study in foreign countries near and far from Azerbaijan, also increased sharply. Let's take a look at the dynamics of the number of Azerbaijanis receiving higher education in the CIS countries according to the information of the Ministry of Science and Education of Azerbaijan (Table 1.).

As we can see from Table 1, the number of Azerbaijan's students studying abroad gradually increased until the 2020/21 academic year, but the indicators related to the pandemic worsened. The high rate of Azerbaijanis studying abroad in CIS countries corresponded to the 2010/11 academic year. In the following years, this number decreased.

Table 1

**The number of Azerbaijan’s citizens studying in higher education institutions
of foreign countries under the state guidelines
(at the beginning of the academic year, the number of people)**

Countries	2000/2001	2005/2006	2010/2011	2015/2016	2020/2021	2022/2023
Total:	919	1182	2055	2998	975	1004
Former USSR countries:	146	328	673	338	238	204
Belarus	–	–	105	36	1	–
Estonia	–	–	–	3	–	–
Latvia	–	–	–	1	8	11
Lithuania	–	–	–	14	–	–
Kazakhstan	–	–	–	–	5	–
Kyrgyzstan	4	–	–	–	–	–
Russian Federation	142	245	507	247	223	193
Ukraine	–	83	61	37	1	–

The national education program adopted by the Azerbaijan government made it possible by “National Program for the Education of Azerbaijani Youth in Foreign Countries in 2007-2015”, which allows talented young people to study in the developed countries around the world (the USA, Great Britain, Germany, France, etc.) [The education reforms in Azerbaijan, 2024].

In 2008, the Ministry of Education sent 7 students to the Republic of Korea for the first time, and in 2009 – 1 student. Currently, Azerbaijani youth is studying in Korea. Currently, 719 Azerbaijani citizens have been sent to Korea to study at the bachelor’s, specialist’s, master’s, doctorate, medical specialty and post-graduate stages of the universities of those countries.

Four hundred and forty-five young Azerbaijanis are studying in Turkish universities through programs funded by state. Currently, 242 Azerbaijani students are studying at Russian universities. The education of students in higher education institutions of the People’s Republic of China takes place within the framework of the Agreement signed in June 2002 between the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In the 2012-2013 academic year, 23 bachelor’s degree diplomas and three master’s degree ones were awarded by the Ministry of Education to students studying in China.

On October 25-26, 2010, Azerbaijan adopted “European integration and Jean Monnet program” organized jointly by the European Commission and Ukraine in Kyiv.

In 2010, the appointment of national contact points (National Contact Points) was achieved for the first time in priority areas for Azerbaijan in connection with the Seventh Framework Program for Research and Technological Development (FP7) of the EU.

Within the framework of the “Agreement on cooperation in the field of higher education in 2012-2015” between the Republic of Azerbaijan and China, the selection was made among the students who could study in China in the 2015-2016 academic year. As a result of the selection, 8 citizens of Azerbaijan won the right to study. The “Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Education of China on cooperation in the field of education in 2016-2019” was signed on December 10, 2015. According to the interstate agreement, mutual meetings on education were held in Russia, and initially a decision concerning the distribution of places by specialization was made as well.

The document “On cooperation in the fields of culture, education and science between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Kingdom of Spain” signed on November 28, 2012 in Madrid. The State Act “On partnership in the field of higher education between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United Arab Emirates” and the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of higher education and scientific research between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State of Qatar were also approved (City of Baku, April 28, 2016 No. 885).

“Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on approval of the Agreement on partnership in education, science and culture between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Hungary” was signed in Budapest on October 9, 2012 (Baku, December 19, 2012 No. 781) [The education reforms in Azerbaijan, 2024]. According to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (No. 2090 dated April 16, 2007), the “State Program for the Education of Azerbaijan’s Youth in Foreign Countries in 2007-2015” was approved. Since the implementation of the state program, the relevant base has been improved for young people to study in well-known universities of foreign countries. Table 2. shows the analysis of external factors affecting the higher education system of Azerbaijan.

Table 2

Analysis of external factors affecting the higher education system of Azerbaijan

Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Political factors	
The knowledge of specialists who have received higher education in foreign countries has a positive effect on the management of the country’s economy with non-standard decisions	The majority of those who receive higher education abroad leave the country, the “brain drain” effect is observed
Economic factors	
Those who returned from studying abroad, especially in developed countries, work in production, consumption, banking, insurance, etc.	Every economic method must be adopted for the real time and environment
Social factors	
Social packages (educational grants, social assistance) received abroad for higher education students have been applied in Azerbaijan for the last 12 years	The labour environment and conditions applied abroad are both different from those of socialist countries and sometimes exploitative. For example, vacation is not 30, but 14 days. Working hours exceed 41 hours per week, etc.
Technological factors	
During the pandemic, teaching through ICT has accelerated and boosted the improvement of the ICT field	Unfortunately, distance higher education imposes many technical and technological demands on the ICT sector, which makes it difficult for students to receive higher education remotely in Azerbaijan’s regions, except for the cities, e.g. Baku, Sumgayit, and Ganja.

Azerbaijan cooperates with the European Union in the field of education mainly through TEMPUS and ERASMUS MUNDUS programs [Abasova, 2023]. In general, so far 46 TEMPUS projects on Azerbaijan have been financed by the European Union. Azerbaijan’s higher education institutions are involved in 18 ERASMUS MUNDUS projects. The ERASMUS+ program combined Leonardo, Comenius, Grundtwig, Erasmus, Jean Monnet, Youth in Action, TEMPUS and 5 other international projects into one project.

2. Analysis and assessment of internal factors affecting the Azerbaijan higher education system

As stated in the Decree No. 1138 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated December 6, 2016 [Azərbaycan Respublikasının Milli İqtisadiyyat Perspektivi üzrə Strateji Yol Xəritəsi, 2016] (“On the approval of strategic roadmaps for the national economy and the main sectors of the economy”), the majority of national wealth in developed countries is made up from human capital and intellectual labour. The main priority of Azerbaijan is the formation and efficient use of human capital in order to ensure the sustainable development of the country, and these initiatives are supported by the state. In recent years, the government has defined and implemented human capital development strategies, and these strategies are reflected in a number of state programs and concepts

currently being implemented. The laws of Azerbaijan are important documents that serve the development of human capital [Təhsil haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu, 2009].

According to the national program, in 2008-2012, informatization of the education system of the Republic of Azerbaijan was carried out in order to maximize the level of information technologies and communications in schools. The Azerbaijan Higher Education Reform Program for the years 2009-2013 is a program to adapt the content of higher education to the principles of the Bologna process, to enhance knowledge and skills based on the economy that meets the requirements of modern society.

All these state programs serve the socio-economic development of the country along with the development of education. Implementation of cooperation projects with international organizations helps to raise the level of education. In addition to state programs, the implementation of cooperation projects with international organizations facilitates this process. The World Bank-funded Education Sector Development Project (2003-2008) initiated financial reforms in the education system. The project aims to improve the quality of education, increase efficiency and management of all costs and improve learning outcomes.

On December 29, 2012, the development concept "Azerbaijan 2020: a vision of the future" was approved by Azerbaijan's government by the decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The main development programs envisaged in the concept are poverty reduction, employment, social protection of vulnerable groups, development of entrepreneurship, reduction of use of natural resources and other issues. The document detailing Azerbaijan's national development strategy until 2020 strengthens the scientific potential directly related to education, supports innovations, develops information and communication technologies, ensures the transition to the information society, develops human capital and forms a modern education system. In October 2013, by order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the State Strategy for development of Azerbaijan's education was adopted in accordance with the main line of "Azerbaijan 2020: Education vision concept".

After gaining independence, Azerbaijan's entry into the world educational services market has been closely related to the country's political, economic, geographical and social situation, as well as the events taking place in the region. Serious competition in the market of educational services requires the country to be economically and politically independent, its education and health systems to be highly developed, and security and tolerance to prevail in the country.

The high standard of living in the country and satisfactory education costs are also important factors. Taking all this into account, one could not expect the market of educational services in Azerbaijan to develop rapidly after independence because of the wars in the region, severe inflation, the collapse of the economic system, and serious deficiencies in the education and health care systems. The occupation of Azerbaijani lands by Armenia, the removal of a million refugees and displaced people from their homes and the settlement of most of them in Baku has created serious social and psychological tension in the society.

As a result, the main provider of education in our country is the state. Despite the fact that private educational institutions operate in this system, only 2.74 thousand or 0.2 percent of 1287.3 thousand students in the country belong to these institutions (Table 3). Out of 54 higher education institutions operating in the country, 41 belong to the state and 13 – to the private sector. In 2014, approximately 140,642 students were admitted to state higher education institutions, and 20,592 students were admitted to private educational institutions. That is, 84 percent of higher education in the country is provided by the state, and 16 percent – by the private sector.

In accordance with the Decree of the Tariff Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On some issues related to the activities of the State Examination Centre (SEC) in the Republic of Azerbaijan" dated February 10, 2017 [Application of payment for participation in test exams, 2017], the Tariff Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan has implemented student admissions to higher and secondary educational institutions. Civil Service Exam's fee for students of the undergraduate level and master's degree was adopted.

Table 3

State higher education institutions

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Number of state higher education institutions	40	40	40	40	40
number of students in them - total, people	169015	177084	187987	196923	201855
by forms of education:					
full-time	157066	163702	173474	180215	182121
part-time	11949	13382	14513	16708	19734
Number of students per 10,000 of the population	170	177	187	194	198
Number of students admitted to state higher education institutions:					
undergraduate - total, people	38421	39417	40124	43805	45190
by forms of education:					
full-time	36123	37028	37694	41039	41913
part-time	2298	2389	2430	2766	3277
magistracy - total, people	6552	8237	9812	10848	12617
by forms of education:					
full-time	6552	8237	9812	10773	12542
part-time	-	-	-	75	75

Source: [Education statistics, 2024]

Table 4

Non-state higher education institutions

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Number of non-state higher education institutions	12	11	11	11
number of students in them - total, people	21623	24186	25886	29582
by forms of education:				
full time	19865	21960	23152	25989
part-time	1758	2226	2734	3593
Number of students per 10,000 people	22	24	26	29
The number of students admitted to non-state higher education institutions:				
undergraduate - total, people	5586	5862	6717	7690
by forms of education:				
full time	5170	5482	6165	6986
part-time	416	380	552	704
magistracy - total, people	868	1065	944	1566
by forms of education:				
full time	868	1065	944	1566
part-time	-	-	-	-

Source: [Education statistics, 2024]

Table 5 shows the SWOT analysis of the higher education system in Azerbaijan. According to the SWOT analysis, one of the strengths of higher education in Azerbaijan is the state's positive attitude towards innovations. The creation and teaching of new subjects in the fields of economy –

banking, insurance, marketing and advertising – is supported by the Ministry of Science and Education of Azerbaijan. Methodologies for subjects supported by ICT were not developed for 4 years. The construction of communication and ICT facilities and other facilities continues in Azerbaijan’s regions, especially in the territories free from occupation.

Table 5

SWOT analysis of higher education system in Azerbaijan

Strengths	Weaknesses
Application of innovations in the sphere of higher education Creation of new subjects and programs in the field of economic and new technologies	Lack of teaching methods for distance education Lack of interest in innovations from the older generation of professors and teachers
Opportunities	Threats
Translation of software for teaching in the field of ICT into the Azerbaijani language Constant improvement of teaching staff Creation of educational programs adapted to foreign standards every year	The slow spread of ICT devices and tools in the regions of Azerbaijan weakening the possibilities of distance education

It is obvious that the relationship between the education system and the labour market is at a low level, and the integration of scientific, innovative and educational activities is at a low level [Yuzbashiyeva, Abasova, Yuzbashiyev, 2024]. That is why it is necessary to implement structural changes in the personnel training system, which can increase the level of the country’s competitiveness.

Conclusion. The conducted analysis identifies the primary factors influencing the organization of education abroad for Azerbaijani citizens and underscores the impact of educational reforms on the international competitiveness of the country’s higher education system, allowing for the formulation of the following concise generalizations:

1. In the first years of independence, new techniques and technologies, knowledge and skills, ideas and cultural examples were brought to the country by foreign citizens and personnel.
2. In the following years, such innovations were introduced to the country by Azerbaijani citizens who went abroad to study or work, as well as exchange practice.
3. Political-economic stabilization in Azerbaijan after gaining independence created a significant revival in the field of educational services.
4. Domestic stabilization and restoration of security, socio-economic development, improvement of education, tourism, and healthcare infrastructure had a positive effect on the number of foreign students coming to the country and strengthening of the material and technical base of higher education institutions.
5. The main focus should be on innovation, modern technologies and digital transformation.
6. The main goal of the reforms carried out in the higher education system of Azerbaijan is to apply new teaching methods and information technologies in the teaching process.

The findings highlight the transformative role of educational reforms and international collaboration in shaping Azerbaijan’s higher education landscape, emphasizing the potential for further development through continued innovation, integration of modern technologies, and the strengthening of global partnerships.

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ANALYSIS OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE AZERBAIJAN REPUBLIC IN THE SPHERE OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

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The development of education is the priority direction of the state policy of Azerbaijan. In all countries, education is a very important part of society, but in Azerbaijan it is a decisive element in people's lives. For this reason, the reforms carried out in the field of education in Azerbaijan after gaining independence have an international character and cover all its fields.

The article examines the international aspects of higher education in Azerbaijan and analyses external and internal factors influencing higher education.

The aim of this article is to explore the forms of studying abroad available to Azerbaijani citizens, analyse the external and internal factors influencing the country's educational policy, and evaluate the impact of educational reforms on the international competitiveness of Azerbaijan's higher education system.

The object of the study is Azerbaijan's higher education system. The subject of the study is the analysis of external and internal factors influencing Azerbaijan's higher education system in the context of expanding foreign economic relations.

This article has used the methods of observation, statistical analysis and statistical grouping of technical and economic indicators for the 1992/1993 – 2022/23 academic years in Azerbaijan in percentage.

The research tasks are as follows: 1) How many forms of higher education have been formed in Azerbaijan? 2) What external factors influence higher education in Azerbaijan? 3) How can political, economic, social and technological factors (PEST analysis) be revealed in the field of Azerbaijan's higher education? 4) What internal factors influence the higher education system in Azerbaijan? 5) Does the analysis of internal factors (SWOT analysis) sufficiently reveal the true situation in the higher education system in Azerbaijan?

The results of the analysis reveal several key findings about Azerbaijan's higher education system and its external and internal factors of influence.

It has been highlighted that, historically, Azerbaijan's higher education served as a factor of fostering international collaboration, as evidenced by the influx of foreign students during the Soviet period. After proclamation of independence, educational cooperation expanded through bilateral and multilateral agreements, leading to an increase in the number of Azerbaijani students studying abroad and foreign students entering Azerbaijan.

It has been found that economic stabilization after 1996 significantly boosted educational service imports and exports. Government programs, such as the "National Program for the Education of Azerbaijani Youth in Foreign Countries", facilitated access to global educational opportunities. Statistical data indicate a consistent rise in the number of students studying abroad, despite temporary declines during the pandemic. Cooperation agreements with the countries like Turkey, Russia, China, and the EU initiatives, such as ERASMUS, have strengthened international partnerships.

Internally, state-driven reforms have prioritized human capital development, adapting education to meet modern standards, including the Bologna Process principles. There is a number of challenges remained, such as limited private sector involvement and disparities in access to ICT-based education in rural regions. Conducted SWOT analysis highlighted the system's strengths, such as innovation adoption and program creation, while addressing weaknesses like the lack of distance learning methodologies and resistance to change among older teaching staff. It has been defined that opportunities for aligning education with labour

market needs and global standards are counterbalanced by threats, including unequal ICT infrastructure development.

It has been concluded that the development of the higher education system in Azerbaijan is closely linked to the introduction of innovations, modern technologies, and digital transformation. The ongoing reforms aim to integrate modern teaching methods and information technologies into the educational process.

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