

Transformation of Higher Education: The Need To Ratify The Unesco Global Convention on The Recognition of Qualifications In Higher Education

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Abstract: In this article, based on the SWOT analysis method, the UNESCO Global Convention "On the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications" is scientifically researched. Opinions are expressed on the need for Uzbekistan to ratify this international convention, its strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and possible threats. So far, the practice of countries that have ratified this Global Convention has been studied. In the transformation of higher education, scientifically and legally predicted the results to be achieved on the basis of accession to this Convention. The issues of reforming the national legislation and practice of Uzbekistan on the basis of the general direction, approach and mechanisms in the field of recognition of cross-border education are also considered. It is noted that the right of individuals to a fair and transparent recognition of their higher education qualifications without any discrimination should be unconditionally guaranteed in all countries of the world. Based on this, the issues of Uzbekistan's accession to this convention and the formation of the necessary organizational, legal and institutional mechanisms are scientifically analyzed. At the end of the study, it was concluded that Uzbekistan should ratify the Global Convention as soon as possible, despite the risks that may arise. The need to ratify this Convention is scientifically substantiated by the increased integration of domestic universities with the world's leading universities, increasing their place in international rankings, the entry of educational services to the foreign market and, most importantly, ensuring the right of citizens to higher education.

Keywords : global convention, cross-border education, higher education, recognition of qualifications, academic mobility, ratification, transformation, national qualifications, academic degrees, academic titles.

Enter

Globalization processes also have a strong impact on higher education. The expansion of opportunities for higher education at the international level, the growing interest in TOP-universities in developed countries and the desire to study in them, the need to ensure the right of individuals to receive higher education, the need to improve the organizational and legal mechanisms of recognition of qualifications at the international level is doing.

Today, more than 235 million students are studying in all countries of the world, and about 6 million of them are studying in foreign countries. This is a trend that is growing at a serious pace, and in 2000, this figure was only two million. And these numbers are predicted to increase in the coming years [1].

The adoption by UNESCO of the Global Convention "On the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications" in order to form international standards of this issue was a huge step in the transformation of higher education. This approach should be thoroughly analyzed by every country that is not indifferent to the future, and should be taken into account when defining strategies for higher education. In this regard, it is an urgent issue to review and analyze this Global Convention from the point of view of national-legal practice, to research its scientific-theoretical and practical aspects.

Through this scientific article, we will study the specific aspects of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications, the need for its ratification by Uzbekistan. It scientifically analyzes the advantages of joining this international document to the state and the higher education system, and what measures should be taken to recognize the higher education qualifications provided in our country. The main goal of the article is "What issues should be resolved in order for Uzbekistan to ratify the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications?" find an answer to the question.

Various aspects of this issue have been analyzed by world scientists and researchers. For example, a group of Italian scientists analyzed the various problems refugees encounter in recognizing their higher education qualifications when they go to European countries, and noted that the Global Convention plays an important role in solving these problems [2]. Or, the problems of refugees in higher education in the Arab world are analyzed in the case of students who fled Syria in Jordan [3].

Also, regional documents in force before the adoption of the Global Convention and their practical implementation, as well as the importance of adopting such a document at the international level, are also found in the research of some researchers. In particular, the implementation of the Tokyo Convention, which reflects the policy of fair and transparent recognition of educational qualifications in the Asia-Pacific region, was monitored [4].

In general, the formation of the system of recognition of qualifications of higher education, its globalization process has a history of almost fifty years. Some researchers have studied this process by dividing it into the following two stages:

The first stage, covering the years 1970–1989, was expressed in a number of regional conventions signed in order to increase the mobility of students and researchers [5].

The second stage took place in 1990-2000 and took into account issues such as quality assurance mechanisms in higher education, new forms of education, and the diversity of educational institutions. It reflected [6].

Scientists note that the development and implementation of the Global Convention is considered the result of the work of the second stage, the highest result.

In some studies, it is noted that efforts have been made for the adoption of this Convention for decades. Indeed, it is a very important legal basis for the transformation of world higher education.

Material and methods

We conduct scientific research based on the SWOT-analysis method of the Global Convention of UNESCO "On Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications". We discuss the need for ratification of this international convention by Uzbekistan, its strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and possible threats.

We also use comparative analysis and forecasting methods in this scientific article. We will study the practice of countries that have ratified this Global Convention to date. In the transformation of higher education, the scientific and legal results to be achieved on the basis of joining this Convention are projected.

Discussion

The Global Convention was adopted at the 40th session of the UNESCO General Assembly in Paris, France on November 25, 2019, and consists of a preamble, 6 sections and 25 articles.

The Convention defines the general direction, approach, mechanisms and principles in the field of recognition of cross-border education. The Convention guarantees the right of individuals to have their higher education qualifications recognized in a fair and transparent manner, without any discrimination.

In accordance with Article XVIII of the Global Convention, the right to recognize higher education qualifications is set to enter into force after ratification by 20 UNESCO member states.

The global convention was ratified by 20 UNESCO member states on December 5, 2022, and entered into force on March 5, 2023 [7].

As of December 1, 2023, 24 countries have ratified this Convention (Andorra, Australia, Armenia, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Cuba, Croatia, Estonia, France, Finland, Norway, Nicaragua, Romania, Tunisia, Japan, Lithuania, Iceland, Palestine, the Holy See, Sweden, Uruguay, Slovakia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Yemen) ratified.

Before this Convention was developed, 6 regional conventions on higher education were adopted by UNESCO, and 126 countries ratified some of them. Uzbekistan has not yet joined them.

Freeman Brigid, a scholar who has analyzed international conventions on higher education, believes that the first generation of conventions focused mainly on equivalence. In 1970-1980, six regional conventions belonging to the first period took place. These were supposed to create a common area of higher education in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and Arab countries.

These conventions emphasized the comparability of credit hours, curricula, subjects, certificates, and diplomas, and the dramatic differences in these parameters did not yield practical results. This is why second-generation conventions emerged, emphasizing the recognition of degrees and skills and competencies.

Conventions belonging to the second generation are: Europe (Lisbon Convention, 1997; in force); Africa (Addis Convention, 2014; in force since 2019); Asia-Pacific region (Tokyo Convention, 2011; effective since 2018); Latin America and the Caribbean (Buenos Aires Convention, 2019, not yet in force); Global Convention (2019). Qualification recognition conventions show a gradual transition from the principle of equivalence, that is, the mechanical comparison of the period and content of education, to the principle of "recognition", that is, from the principle of recognition of relevant qualifications in a simplified order according to skills [8].

According to UNESCO's statement, the organization "highly encourages countries to ratify regional conventions, but there is no requirement to join regional conventions before ratifying the Global Convention" [9].

According to UNESCO experts, it will not be easy to get many countries to join the Global Convention. There are many obstacles to this and they need to be overcome. We hope that in five years, 50 countries will ratify this convention, and in ten years, this number may increase to 80 to 100 [10].

In the course of our research, the UNESCO Global Convention "On the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications", its nature and importance, the conditions for its membership, the positive results achieved according to the experiences of the countries that have ratified it, potential risks were explored.

In the future, it is expected that the Global Convention will be ratified by more than 100 member states of UNESCO, and a single international legal space for the recognition of higher education qualifications and academic degrees will be created.

As a result, students, researchers and professors of the countries that are members of the convention will have the same rights as citizens of these countries in terms of study and employment in the territory of the participating countries. Another important point is that there will be no need to conclude bilateral agreements between member states on mutual recognition of higher education qualifications.

The Global Convention relies on the "substantial difference principle" to simplify the recognition of qualifications. According to this principle, qualifications should be recognized if there are no sharp differences between the composition of qualifications, skills, and duration of education. Although there are no general mechanisms for the implementation of the "principle of significant difference", researchers have developed sample templates that determine the procedure [11].

At the same time, the Global Convention guarantees the equality of approaches in the evaluation of foreign education. It also provides for the right to appeal against decisions on refusal of recognition.

This international legal document is open to all UNESCO member states and it is expected to become the first global treaty of the UN on higher education.

By ratifying the global convention, countries will strengthen international cooperation in the field of higher education and improve its quality. International academic mobility and recognition of qualifications will also expand.

Academic mobility trends indicate that in the future, countries on the Asian continent may surpass North America and Europe in terms of academic mobility. The largest proportion of international students will also be students of Asian origin in the future.

The Global Convention has the potential to serve as an important legal model for the recognition of qualifications. But the extent to which global and regional conventions are implemented from a practical point of view also depends on the extent to which governments support it.

In recent years, the popularity of distance education has made the creation and implementation of mechanisms for simplifying the recognition of qualifications one of the most important tasks.

After the Asia-Pacific Convention came into being, countries in the region began to take preliminary measures for the "National Press Centers of the Asia-Pacific Network" to start operating. The member countries of the

Community of Southeast Asian Nations have begun to promote several initiatives related to the transfer of credits and the recognition of foreign qualifications. Therefore, it can be said that regional conventions are beginning to bear fruit in practice.

A system of exchange of student information in digital format is being established between developed Asian and European countries [12].

It is also important for Uzbekistan to discuss the issue of ratification of this Convention. Because the departure of students abroad is not a foreign phenomenon to our country. Especially in recent years, this trend is increasing.

According to the statistics institute of UNESCO, as of January 1, 2021, the number of Uzbek students studying abroad was 85,900 [13].

According to the data of the State Statistics Committee, 138,900 citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan went abroad to study in 11 months of 2022 [14].

Although the number of students coming to Uzbekistan is increasing year by year, the current indicators are not positive. In particular, by the beginning of the 2022/23 academic year, the number of foreign students studying at higher education institutions in the Republic of Uzbekistan was 5 thousand [15, 2]. This is especially evident in comparative analyzes with other countries. For example, about 30,000 foreign students study in neighboring Kazakhstan, over 130,000 in Malaysia, 250,000 in Turkey, and 351,000 in Russia. Currently, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation is taking appropriate measures on this issue. In particular, a special electronic platform aimed at attracting foreign students to Uzbekistan is being created. Also, efforts are being made to strengthen the institutional mechanisms of this sector.

In general, in order to equally protect the rights and interests of students studying abroad and in Uzbekistan, it is necessary to seriously consider the issue of ratification of the Global Convention.

In addition, by strengthening the international legal mechanism of recognition of education and qualification received abroad in our country, it is possible to return educated and potential personnel from abroad to our country.

Research results

The experience of more than 20 countries that have ratified the Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications shows the following advantages:

First, recognition is one of the prerequisites for academic mobility, internationalization of scientific research and education.

The researcher and student movement helps to spread new ideas and initiatives between education systems. This, in turn, helps to improve the quality and relevance of education and research.

Secondly, the creation of a system of recognition of qualifications and previous education will help universities to improve the quality of scientific research and education. Also, structures for the recognition of qualifications help ensure the quality of the student admission process and expand access to higher education for migrants.

Thirdly, the recognition of qualifications is inextricably linked with the social responsibility to increase the socio-cultural importance of higher education organizations in accordance with the 4th paragraph of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

When analyzing the positive aspects of the global convention, it is worth noting the opinions of scientists who scientifically forecast the prospects of this international legal document.

In particular, Chinese scientists Ka Ho Mok and Xiao Han "The Global Convention is an effective means of combating the problem of "brain drain" in developing countries, while using foreign experience to modernize the higher education system (brain-bridging).) will help. In fact, this is an important factor for Uzbekistan [16].

Also, another group of foreign scientists expressed the opinion in their research that "the Global Convention serves to increase the number and quality of academic mobility and joint education programs" [17].

Some scholars have also analyzed the issues of fraud prevention in the recognition of qualifications. Section 3, Article 3, Clause 8 of the Convention stipulates that the participating countries shall cooperate with each other by using technologies against fraud. However, how such cooperation will be implemented remains one of the issues that are waiting to be resolved.

According to scientists such as Georg and Pauletto, the emergence of modern blockchain technology will technologically simplify the process of recognition of foreign qualifications and prevent fraud in the process of recognition of qualifications [18].

As a result of the transition to the use of QR-codes, although the technological aspects of the issue do not cause a big problem, there is still no general work order from the organizational and administrative side.

The most important thing is to consider how effective the global system of recognition of qualifications will be in practice. Even if the qualification is recognized abroad, factors such as cultural [19], labor market-specific occupation and language skills [20] undoubtedly play an important role in its effective use.

Logically, the skills required in the French labor market are naturally different from the skills required in the Turkish labor market.

In addition to the above, as a result of the ratification of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications by the Republic of Uzbekistan, there are risks of facing the following difficulties:

- differences in the quality of higher education: differences in the quality of education in all countries, lack of development of recognition systems, financial and personnel related to opening national information centers to implement the processes provided for in the Convention needs and in general a system will have to be created to cover the whole process;

- The fact that the international standards and instructions on higher education, which the member states of the Convention follow, differ from the existing laws and regulations in the Republic of Uzbekistan, and that the difference between them is high. For example, post-higher education in our country is carried out in two stages. In the international experience, it is observed that in most countries, including the countries that have ratified the convention, this process is organized in one stage.

In this case, it can be predicted that there is a high probability that scientific degrees and titles awarded by the Higher Attestation Commission under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan will not be recognized by the countries that have adopted the Convention.

Analysis of research results

Regardless of the above possible risks, the ratification of the Convention provides a number of advantages to the higher education system of Uzbekistan.

You can see them below:

First, the internationalization of higher education institutions and their integration with the world's leading universities will increase. Conditions will also be created for educational services to enter the foreign market.

Secondly, the international image of higher education institutions will increase, the competitive position of educational services in the national and international market will be strengthened, and the opportunity to occupy high places in international rankings will appear.

Thirdly, the international recognition of national qualifications, academic degrees and titles of higher education will expand opportunities for faculty and students to widely use the achievements of external academic mobility.

Fourth, transfer of higher education institutions through international accreditation processes will be accelerated. Qualifications provided by universities are internationally recognized and their compliance with international requirements is tested.

Fifth, conditions will be created for graduates of higher education institutions, professors and teachers to find their footing in the world labor market, to be recognized as competitive staff, and to reach the international level.

Sixth, by using quality assurance guidelines and criteria in cross-border higher education, the improvement of educational quality is achieved.

Seventh, the ratification of this Convention plays an important role in the further development of distance education, which is part of the modern higher education system, and in bringing the activities of national and foreign universities specializing in distance education to a new level.

Conclusions

Based on the above analysis, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan should propose the ratification of the UNESCO Global Convention "On the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications" within its competence. .

At the same time, it is necessary to start preparations for taking measures to create appropriate organizational-legal and institutional mechanisms to fulfill the obligations assumed by the state upon the ratification of the Global Convention. In particular, in order to implement the norms defined in the Convention, separate National Information Centers should be established in each member state. It is necessary for this Center to operate as a system covering information security, personnel needs, in short, the entire process.

In general, internationalization of education is the demand of today. Violent changes are taking place in the world. Science is progressing. Every country that aims to develop in harmony with progress needs to recognize world trends and pay attention to them at the right time. In this regard, it is necessary to speed up the ratification of the Convention and take appropriate measures.

Because through this, in accordance with the "Academic Impact" initiative promoted by UNESCO [21], on the basis of the good ideas reflected in it, strengthening ties between higher education institutions and seeking solutions to global problems through education opportunities increase.

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