THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES: PRELIMINARY STUDY FOCUSING ON UZBEKISTAN

Firdavs Ibrokhimov
(0009-0007-6039-6798), PhD student at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, chief specialist at the Center for the Research on the Development of Higher Education, Tashkent.

Iroda Bakhromova,
master's degree student at Avloni Pedagogical Research Institute

Annotation. In this article ten public and private higher education institutions operating in Uzbekistan are compared with statistical methods, namely t-test. Article explores quality models and incorporates the best practices in quality models and university ranks in global ranking systems to conduct comparative analysis of public and private higher education institutions in Uzbekistan. According to this study, while private higher education institutions have poorer infrastructure, a few of private universities are introducing new pedagogical innovations into higher education sector of Uzbekstan.

КАЧЕСТВО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ И ЧАСТНЫХ ВУЗАХ: ПРЕДВАРИТЕЛЬНОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ВУЗОВ УЗБЕКИСТАНА

Иброхимов Фирдавс
(0009-0007-6039-6798), аспирант университета иностранных языков Ханкук, главный специалист Центра исследований развития высшего образования, Ташкент.

Бахромова Ирода,
магистрант Научно-педагогического института Авлони

Аннотация. В данной статье десять государственных и частных высших учебных заведений, действующих в Узбекистане, сравниваются статистическими методами, как t-test. В статье исследуются модели качества и используются лучшие практики в области моделей качества и рейтингов университетов в глобальных рейтинговых системах для проведения сравнительного анализа государственных и частных высших учебных заведений в Узбекистане. Согласно этому исследованию, хотя частные высшие учебные заведения имеют более слабую инфраструктуру, некоторые частные университеты внедряют новые педагогические инновации в сектор высшего образования Узбекистана.

DAVLAT VA XUSUSIY NODAVLAT OLIY TA'LIM MUASSASALARIDA TA'LIM SIFATINING QIYOSIY-STATISTIK TAHLILI

Ibrohimov Firdavs
(0009-0007-6039-6798), Koreya xorijiy tadqiqotlar universiteti doktoranti, Oliy ta'limni rivojlantirish markazi bosh mutaxassisi

Bahromova Iroda,
Avloniy nomidagi respublika pedagog kadrlarning malakasini oshirish ilmiy-tadqiqot instituti magistranti

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada O'zbekiston Respublikasida faoliyat yuritayotgan o'nta davlat hamda xususiy nodavlat oliy ta'lim muassasalari faoliyati statistik tahlil metodlari orqali taqqoslangan. Maqolada turli sifatni kafolatlash modellari hamda jahon reytinglari ko'rsatkichlarini mujassamlashtirgan holda oliy ta'lim muassasalarining qiyosiy tahlili o'tkazildi. Tadqiqot natijalariga ko'ra nodavlat xususiy oliy ta'lim muassasalari moddiy texnik ba'za nuqtayi nazaridan davlat oliy ta'lim muassasalaridan orqada. Biroq, muayyan xususiy oliy ta'lim muassasalari oliy ta'lim tizimiga innovatsion ta'lim shakllarini olib kirmoqdalar.

Introduction. The private university refers to a higher institution body that is "operated and run by the private sector"(13). For the higher education sector, private educational institutions are nothing new. In fact, a significant proportion of higher education institutions that have centuries-long educational traditions and rich pedagogical expertise are privately owned in the developed world. When discussed in everyday life, private universities imply Harvard, Stanford, or whatever names, which are instilled with popular perceptions of educational success, innovation, and progress. There is no doubt that there are private universities that have demonstrated remarkable achievements both as a business entity and as a seat of learning. The best example of this can be the fact that two out of three top universities are private in the Republic of Korea according to the Report of Times Higher Education (3). However, it should not be dismissed that most of such prestigious private seats of learning are largely confined to developed countries with advanced infrastructure and higher levels of income. In the developing world, particularly in the post-soviet space, though, private universities represent rather a recent phenomenon. In a twist of how fates change, as post-soviet countries are transitioning into market-oriented economies, the private universities are booming in the higher education sector. Merek (2020) in his study on the expansion of private universities noted that the fastest growth of private universities has occurred in Central and Eastern Europe since the 1990s. By this blueprint, we may expect that as other post-soviet countries transform into market-oriented economies, the trajectory of the private university industry is likely to follow the same path as Eastern Europe did. There are indications that the essence of education is blurred due to the primary motive of profit in developing countries (Dorothy. 2005). We must not forget that private universities must make a profit to survive as an entity, which may certainly lead to changes in the quality of education. Some researchers defined such universities simply as "entrepreneurial universities" (Clark. 1998). By definition, it implies that universities are henceforth not only the primary instrument of knowledge transfer but also, "entrepreneurs" or as can be stated as entities that make profit. There are at least 42 private universities in Uzbekistan as of 2022 . As of 2020, there were at least 31 foreign higher educational institutions operating as semi-private premises. Combined, they represent slightly below 50 percent of total higher education institutions in the country. Thus, the impact of private universities on the social and economic development of the country is expected to grow in the coming years. Therefore, the quality of education in private universities must be studied and necessary recommendations be made to ensure the interests of all stakeholders in the higher education industry. This study is one of the attempts to shed light on the quality of education in private universities in Uzbekistan and what benefits they are bringing to the higher education system in the country.

Literature review

It must be noted that the concept of "quality" is a multifaceted matter with an interpretative nature (Harvey & Green. 1993). Depending on the benefactors, the quality of teaching can be interpreted differently in different contexts. For students, quality education can be a modern classroom, good teaching staff, or libraries full of books. For teaching staff, quality can be convenient rooms, workstation computers, and better salaries that enable them to focus on pedagogical skills. For the government, "quality" may refer to the skills and competencies graduates possess after leaving university. Thus, "quality" can be looked at from different angles by different approaches. Harvey and Green (1993) propose to measure "quality" by five broad categories:

Value in monetary terms
Perfection
Fitness for purpose
Transformation
Uniqueness
Each category represents varying levels of quality with "uniqueness (exception)"

corresponding to the distinguished quality that stands above the alternative options, while "fitness for purpose" implying consumer satisfaction. "The value in monetary terms" refers to the quality of service or goods that justify the investments and provide a good return on the investments made. (Harvey & Green. 1993). However, when applying these categories in research, we can see that they are not specific. For instance, how can we define "customer" in the category of "customer satisfaction"? There are different benefactors in higher education, such as students, parents, and visiting scholars frequently with contradictory perceptions of quality. A student may value his university in terms of how many social events it organizes, but, at the same time, his parents may find the quality inferior due to their distaste for such social events. Thus, "fitness for purpose" may not be accurate enough to determine the objective level of quality. More importantly, it may be difficult for underfunded private universities to achieve customer satisfaction without sacrificing profits – in this context – "value in monetary terms". Yet, we must not forget that these categories are put forward as a broad framework for quality assessment standards, rather than as specific criteria on their own. Maureen Tam (2001) in her study notes three models of quality assessment, which focus on facts reflecting student experience in higher education:

Production model that focuses on the relationship between inputs and outputs

Value-added approach which measures what students accomplish before and after their studies.

Total learning experience model that aims to cover the whole study experience.

Abbasi et al. (2011) propose ten different determinants of quality, which heavily focus on material-technical aspects such as healthcare, laboratory and classroom facilities, transport, teaching, student support services, library, sports, and religious facilities. Naidu and Derani (2015) used SERVQUAL - a general method of marketing research in their studies to find out the quality of private higher education in Malaysia.

Global ranking systems as indicators of quality

Along with individual research on quality assessment models, global university ranking systems came into existence. The three most prominent ranking systems are Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) by Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Times Higher Education (THE), and Quacquarelli Symonds(12). Different rankings have different methodologies of assessment with varying levels of focus on different aspects of higher education, such as learning environment, industry income, research(17), academic and employment reputation(15) by different methods of data collection and analysis, such as surveys and the measurements of different percentages and ratios. Studies on the ability of global ranking systems to reflect the quality of education revealed mixed results. Simon & Marijke (2007) in their studies found that ARWU and Times rankings fail to accurately measure the quality of education due to their bias towards research. ARWU has also been criticized for not paying attention to the quality of education in its assessment criteria (Marszal. 2012). On the other hand, Altbach et al. (2018) measured the ability of global ranking systems to reflect the quality of education in higher education and concluded that global ranking systems, such as QS, Times Higher Education, and ARWU are accurate indicators of quality in higher education. Thus, while global ranking systems may have certain methodological biases, among them, QS and THE are still potent indicators of quality in higher education.

Research questions

This research will aim to find answers to the following questions:

What are quality of education relative to public universities?

How can the quality of education in private universities be improved?

Research Methodology

In this study, the quality model, based on three categories of quality proposed by Harvey et al. (1993) is used to compare the quality of education in private and public higher education institutions in Uzbekistan. This model was originally formulated as a template for standards in higher education, we decided to use it as a framework for our study model. We use the sample of the top ten private and public universities in the country according to local ranking

systems. We could not create a sample based on the global ranking systems, such as QS, THE, and ARWU because Uzbek universities are notoriously underrepresented in the global ranking systems. Still, we incorporated the earning of "TOP 1000" in any ranking report of QS, THE, and ARWU as indicators of "uniqueness" in our model. For the selection of universities for our sample, we chose the top ten private and public universities, that have been ranked by the State Inspection for the Control of the Quality of Education and Oliygoh.uz respectively, which will be compared according to the three categories of quality proposed by Harvey et al. (1993):

Fitness for purpose

a) The availability of career centers

b) The availability of housing services

5 points for each of the above variables will be given to the university that have them.

Transformation

In the context of Uzbekistan, using English as a medium of instruction and offering courses based on Western standards represent modernization and internationalization (Karimov. 2023). English has already become the number one lingua franca in the integrated global village. There are certain advantages given to those who know English well in Master's degree and PhD admissions as well as in Uzbek labor market, thus, making English one of tools in the social ladder.

a) Number of programs taught in English – one point for each.

All universities are moving into European credit-module system in Uzbekistan. But, this process is still incomplete and doesn't formulate modules in a way universities in Europe formulate. However, a few of foreign universities offer entirely British and American educational programs, signifying a form of educational innovation in the country.

Availability of programs modeled after Western curriculum (Foundation plus three-year modular education, MA. MSc, MBA, TESOL, TESL, CELTA et cetera)

1-5 programs – 3 points

5-10 programs – 5 points

10 plus – 7 points

Uniqueness measures universities that are

Among the top 1000 universities ranked by subject in the global ranking systems (QS and THE)

According to any ranking by QS or THE:

The top 500 – 15 points

The top 1000 – 10 points

The top 1001+ – 8

In this study, "uniqueness" is interpreted as standing above other options in all properties as proposed by Harvey et al. (1993). Individuals who graduated from the TOP 1000 universities according to QS and THE have better employment opportunities and better quality of higher education.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, secondary sources of data, such as information on the official websites, social network pages, and telegram channels operated by sampled universities will be used. The information then will be converted into the points for each university to make the comparison accurate. We will compare the public and private universities with statistical methods, namely t-test. T-test is a statistical method that is frequently used to make accurate comparisons of numerical data (Zheng et al. 2017). The null hypothesis implies the difference between samples is 0. The null hypothesis can be rejected on the condition that the t-value is less than 0.10 because our sample is small. The alternative hypothesis – there is a difference between samples. It is sought if t-value is less than 0.10 (t-value<0.10 (alpha level)).

Results

All of the public universities have career services and housing services in our sample. Two public universities have education programs modeled after the Western curriculum. Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers offers an MBA and the

University of World Economy and Diplomacy offers an MBA and MPA, the latter two of which are taught in English as a medium of instruction. The half of ten public universities achieved among the top 1-1001+ ranks in global ranking systems (Table 1). In our sample, seven out of ten private universities have career centers, which is lower than public universities. Only four of private universities have housing services, which is significantly lower than public universities.

№	Public University	Career centers	Housing services	Programs in English	Western curriculum	TOP	Overall
1	TIIAME	+	+	0	1 (MBA)	THE 801	23
2	NUU	+	+	0	0	QS 351-400	25
3	SSU	+	+	0	0	QS 601-650	20
4	TIF	+	+	0	0	QS 551-600	20
5	TSUULL	+	+	0	0	-	10
6	TIIA	+	+	0	0	-	10
7	TSIOS	+	+	0	0	-	10
8	NSUMT	+	+	0	0	-	10
9	UWED	+	+	2 (MBA and MPA)	2	-	15
10	TUIT	+	+	0	0	THE 1001+	18
							Mean: 16.1

Table 1. Public Universities

Three of ten private universities offer programs taught in English as a medium of instruction and using an entirely Western curriculum, whose number is significantly higher compared to public universities. Notably, Education in English as a medium of instruction and Western-oriented curricula are confined to three English-only private universities (Table 2), one of which (Central Asian University) has a high reputation as an elite private university according to anecdotic reports. It turns out this elite private university is the only private higher education institution that achieved the top 1001+ ranking in the Times Higher Education ranking system in our sample (Table 2). It means the number of private universities is five times lower than the number of public universities that secured a place in the top rankings.

Table 2. Private universities

№	Name	Career centers	Housing services	Programs taught in English	Western curriculum	TOP 1000	Overall
1	TIUE	-	+	4	4	-	12
2	CAU	+	-	15	14	THE 1001+	35
3	Alfraganus University	-	+	0	0	-	5
4	Angren University	-	+	0	0	-	5
5	UASS	+	-	0	0	-	5
6	UITM	+	-	0	0	-	5
7	Bukhara University of Innovations	+	-	0	0	-	5
8	BIPFL	+	-	0	0	-	5
9	Millat Umidi University	+	-	11	11	-	23
10	UISE	+	+	0	0	-	10
						-	Mean: 10

The mean value of assessment for public universities is 16.1 (Table 1), which is higher than the mean value for private universities (Table 2), which is 10. The standard deviation for public and private universities (Table 3) is 5.57 and 9.68, respectively, indicating the greater variability of the quality in the private sector. The t-value – of the two samples is 0.09, which is slightly lower than the alpha level of 0.10. This indicates that there is a difference between samples and it is sufficient to reject the null hypothesis. Thus, the null hypothesis can be rejected, which means there is a difference in the quality of education in public and private universities.

Table 3. Statistic comparison between public and private universities

Public	Private
25	35
23	23
20	12
20	10
18	5
15	5
10	5
10	5
10	5
10	5
Mean: 16.1	Mean: 10
St. Deviation: 5.575840744	St. Deviation: 9.689732
T-Test: 0.09390907	

Discussion. According to our study, the mean value for public universities was 16.1, while the mean value for private universities was 10. Thus, it suggests that the quality of education in private higher education is poorer than in public higher education institutions. However, the t-value of 0.09 is slightly lower than the alpha level of 0.10, which is barely sufficient to reject the null hypothesis. This can be partially attributed to the fact that the three universities – Central Asian University, Millat Umidi University, and TIUE constitute well above half of all points in the private sector. CAU, by itself, has more points than any other university in our sample, be it private or public. It can be assumed that in the private sector high quality of higher education may be restricted to a few clusters of universities, such as the three mentioned above. This may explain why the overall difference between the private and public sectors is statistically marginal between the samples. Still, the mean values of 16.1 and 10 between the two groups are significant if we take the small size of our sample into account. It can be attributed to the poor material-economic foundation of most private universities since nine out of ten private universities don't have housing services or career support services according to our study. Albeit some of them may have failed to display their accommodation or career services on their websites or social network pages, the discrepancy between public and private universities on this matter is still big.

In our study, five of the top ten public universities achieved the top 1001+ rank either in QS or Times rankings by region or subject. Only one of the top private universities – Central Asian University was found to be among 1001+ according to Times Higher Education Impact Rankings. Thus, there is a significant difference between the public and private universities in terms of achieving the top 1001 in QS or Times rankings. This is in line with the trend of private higher education in other post-socialist countries. None of the top ten higher education institutions are privately owned in Poland according to the latest ranking published by QS. None of the top fifteen universities are private in Romania according to QS World University Rankings as of 2024(16). The same trend can be observed in other developing countries such as India(16). Further studies are needed to establish the reasons why in developing countries, private universities are faring poor by the global ranking systems.

According to our study, private universities have more classes taught in English as a medium of instruction and curricula fully modeled after Western standards. Only two public universities - Irrigation University and the University of World Economy and Diplomacy have English-only classes and MBA and MPA curricula, that correspond to MBA and MPA taught in Britain and the US. Three private universities were found to exclusively offer classes in English in a wide spectrum of subjects from Education to Medicine. Perhaps, it is worth highlighting that private universities are not only seen as conventional places of knowledge transfer but also, the agents of pedagogical innovations and new learning experiences in post-socialist countries. This is especially true for foreign universities which offer education modeled after Western higher education in Uzbekistan. Notable examples are Westminster International University, and Webster University in Tashkent, whose degree programs and curricula are closely in line with British and American higher education formats. According to our study, three top private

universities – Central Asian University, Millat Umidi University, and Tashkent International University of Education are found to be following the same path. The story of other private universities in post-soviet countries offers the same pattern. For instance, Central European University is one of the few private universities with better teaching staff and English-only programs in Hungary. It has become one of the top universities in Hungary by the global rankings. Perhaps, the same trend is underway in Uzbekistan with innovations confined to a few private establishments.

Conclusion. Our studies suggest that the quality of education is higher in public universities than in private universities in Uzbekistan. This can be explained by poorer infrastructure, the limited capacity of private universities to comply with the criteria of global ranking systems, and the relatively recent debut of private universities in the country. The only advantage private universities hold over public ones is educational innovations, such as English-only programs and Western curricula that a few of them are offering. Thus, based on the findings and the discussion, we recommend the following:

Regulations on student accommodation, and employment requirements must be formulated and closely checked by state inspections to ensure the quality of education and student welfare in higher education institutions.

Private and public universities should be encouraged to achieve better results in global ranking systems.

Private and public universities should be encouraged to create new modules and curricula which use English or other global languages as a medium of instruction.

Limitations of this study

Our study has several limitations.

We used secondary data, such as web-site and social media pages for data collection. Some of the universities may not have displayed relevant information we needed, such as information on career or housing services.

This is a sample study. A population study may be needed to accurately reflect the quality of education in the private and public sectors.

We lack the specific details of how local ranking, which we used in our study, was implemented. Further studies may be needed to clarify such intricate matters to ensure better accuracy of the results.

References

1. Abbasi et al. (2011). A Study on Student Satisfaction in Pakistani Universities: case of Bahauddin Zakariya University, Pakistan. Asian Social Science. Vol. 7, No. 7, pp. 209-220.

2. Altbach, Philip & Hazelkorn, Ellen. (2018). Measuring Education Quality in Global Rankings: What's the Likelihood?. International Higher Education. 12. 0.6017/ihe.2018.95.10721.

3. Best Universities in South Korea. Retrieved from: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/best-universities/best-universities-south-korea

4. Clark, B. (1998) 'Creating Entrepreneurial Universities: Organizational Pathways of Transformation', Issues in Higher Education. 12/3: 373–4.

5. Finnegan, Dorothy. (2005). The Decline of the Guru: The Academic Profession in Developing and Middle-Income Countries (review). The Review of Higher Education. 28, pp. 429-430. 10.1353/rhe.2005.0008.

6. Fralick, Drew & Zheng, Julia & Wang, Bokai & Tu, Xin. (2017). The Differences and Similarities Between Two-Sample T-Test and Paired T-Test. Shanghai Archives of Psychiatry. 29. 184-188. 10.11919/j.issn.1002-0829.217070.

7. Harvey, L. & Green, D. (1993),`Defining quality', Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education. 18(1), pp. 9-34.

8. Karimov Komiljon (2023). Transforming HE sector. Rerieved from: https://www.wiut.uz/news/transforming-he-sector-the-case-of-uzbekistan

9. Kwiek, Marek. (2020). Private Higher Education in Developed Countries.