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STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP SELECTION AND DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN: LESSONS FROM GLOBAL MODELS

Ibragimova Sevara Kabildjanovna

Head of the Department of Human Resources Management

Oriental University

isevara432@gmail.com

Abstract: Effective university governance depends on the selection and development of qualified leaders. This study compares leadership selection models from the U.S., Europe, Japan, and South Korea, assessing their applicability to Uzbekistan. The research identifies key challenges in Uzbekistan's current system, including the lack of transparency, absence of leadership training programs, and limited utilization of international best practices. Based on global experiences, recommendations are proposed to establish independent selection committees, competency-based assessment frameworks, and structured leadership training programs.

Keywords: higher education management, leadership selection, transparency, strategic governance, digital transformation in education.

1. Introduction

University leadership plays a critical role in shaping the academic, research, and administrative functions of higher education institutions (HEIs). In a rapidly evolving global landscape, universities must be led by individuals with strong strategic vision, management skills, and an ability to foster innovation. However, the selection and development of university leaders remain a challenge in many countries, including Uzbekistan.

This study explores global best practices in selecting and developing university leaders, with a focus on models from the United States, the European Union, Japan, and South Korea. These countries have established effective selection mechanisms that ensure leadership competence, institutional accountability, and long-term strategic development. The research aims to analyze how Uzbekistan can adopt and adapt these international models to improve its university governance system.

2. Methodology

A comparative analysis method was used to examine leadership selection and development frameworks in different countries. The study focused on:

- Selection mechanisms – How leaders are chosen and evaluated.
- Competency frameworks – The skills and qualifications required for university leadership.
 - Leadership training programs – The availability of structured development programs for administrators.
 - Regulatory and institutional support – Legal frameworks governing leadership selection in HEIs.



Date: 25th February-2025

Data was collected from government reports, policy documents, academic research, and case studies on university leadership in the selected countries.

3. International Models of University Leadership Selection and Development

3.1 United States: Independent Selection Committees and Leadership Training

The United States employs a highly structured and transparent selection process for university leaders, often overseen by independent search committees. These committees consist of:

- University faculty and staff.
- Alumni representatives.
- Industry professionals and external experts.
- Government or board representatives.

Selection is based on competency frameworks, which evaluate candidates on their:

- Academic credentials and research impact.
- Leadership experience and administrative capabilities.
- Strategic vision for university development.
- Ability to manage institutional finances and external partnerships.

Additionally, the U.S. has formal leadership development programs like the ACE Fellows Program and Harvard Institute for Higher Education, which prepare future university administrators through executive education, mentorship, and hands-on leadership experiences.

3.2 European Union: Transparent and Merit-Based Selection

Many European countries, including Germany, the UK, and France, implement structured, meritocratic selection mechanisms for university leaders. These typically involve:

- Open competition and transparent application processes.
- Independent evaluation committees with academic and industry experts.
- Public presentations and strategic development proposals from candidates.

University leadership selection in Europe emphasizes:

- Long-term institutional planning and research development.
- International collaboration and university networking.
- Student and faculty engagement in decision-making.

Leadership development in Europe is often supported by government-backed training programs, such as the European University Association's Leadership Development Program, which provides professional training for higher education administrators.

3.3 Japan and South Korea: Innovation and Digital Competency in Leadership

Japan and South Korea prioritize digital transformation and innovation leadership in their university governance models. Their selection processes:

- Emphasize candidates' ability to drive digital transformation in education.
- Require a strong background in research, technology integration, and international collaboration.
- Assess strategic thinking and adaptability to global education trends.



Date: 25th February-2025

Leadership development in these countries includes:

- Mandatory innovation leadership training for prospective university administrators.
- Government-funded executive education programs on higher education management.
- Institutional partnerships with technology firms to foster digital education strategies.

4. Challenges in Uzbekistan's University Leadership System

Despite ongoing higher education reforms, Uzbekistan faces significant challenges in selecting and developing university leaders:

- University administrators in Uzbekistan are still primarily appointed through centralized government decisions, which limits competition.
- Unlike in the U.S. and Europe, independent selection committees are not widely used, reducing transparency and fairness in appointments.
- There is limited public involvement in leadership selection, making it less accountable.

Absence of Leadership Training and Development Programs

- Uzbekistan lacks structured programs for training future university leaders.
- Newly appointed administrators often lack experience in strategic governance, financial planning, and digital education management.
- Unlike in Japan and the EU, there are no formal leadership development initiatives for HEI administrators.

Limited Use of International Best Practices

- Few universities collaborate with international institutions on leadership training.
- Global standards for competency-based selection and assessment are not widely implemented.
- Insufficient digital transformation efforts in leadership selection and training compared to global benchmarks.

Conclusion

University leadership selection and development are crucial for higher education governance, institutional growth, and global competitiveness. Uzbekistan's current system faces challenges such as centralized decision-making, lack of leadership training, and limited transparency. By adopting international best practices—including merit-based selection, competency evaluation, and structured leadership training—Uzbekistan can modernize its higher education governance system.

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Date: 25thFebruary-2025

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