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## INTERNATIONALIZATION AND ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES

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**Abstract.** *This scientific article explores the role of internationalization and academic partnerships in the context of modern higher education. Internationalization, as a strategic tool, has a significant impact on the development of universities, as well as the preparation of students and faculty for the challenges of a globalized world and the global labor market. The article examines key elements of internationalization, including international educational programs, cultural diversity, research, and academic initiatives. Special attention is given to academic partnerships, their roles, and advantages for universities. Based on successful practical cases, examples of academic partnerships are provided, along with recommendations for the development of internationalization strategies and the management of academic partnerships. This article represents an important contribution to understanding the importance of internationalization and its role in modern higher education.*

**Key words:** *internationalization, academic partnership, university, higher education*

### Introduction

Modern higher education faces the challenges of globalization and constant changes in the world educational arena. In this context, the role of internationalization in higher education becomes key. Internationalization is a strategic process that facilitates the adaptation of universities to modern realities of international relations in the field of higher education. It allows higher education institutions not only to remain relevant, but also to successfully compete on the world stage.

The need for internationalization in the field of education is due to a number of factors. Firstly, globalization is shaping the global labor market, which requires high mobility and adaptability of graduates. Secondly, it promotes the exchange of knowledge, cultural values and best practices, which enriches the educational

environment. Third, internationalization provides universities with access to global research networks and resources, enhancing their scientific status and reputation.

The role of university partnerships in the context of internationalization is essential because it allows universities to share experience, resources and expertise, creating greater opportunities for students and teachers. The partnership promotes joint research and projects, and also expands the geographical influence of universities.

### **Main text**

In the modern development of education at the global level, the key direction contributing to the creation of a unified educational space, taking into account economic, socio-political and cultural-educational factors, is the process of internationalization. And the internationalization of higher education is a relatively new, diverse phenomenon, it is no more than thirty years old [8]. The internationalization of higher education contributes to the formation and development of strategic directions at the national and institutional levels and can have different and quite broad interpretations. Internationalization is the process of commercialization of research and graduate education, as well as an international competition to recruit foreign students from wealthy and privileged countries in order to generate income, ensure national authority and create an international reputation [3]. Another author defines internationalization as a driver of change and improvement, a channel for international education and knowledge exchange, a stimulus for the development of international marketing capabilities, an invitation to international scientific collaboration, and a descriptor for cross-border student flows [6]. The content of the concept of “higher education” today should be understood as the concept of personal development, lifelong education, and “open” education [4].

The World Trade Organization defines internationalization as the process of integrating the international dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of higher education institutions [7]. This definition emphasizes that internationalization is not limited to simply attracting international students, but also includes international aspects of study, research and service.

The concept and process of integrating the international dimension into teaching, research and service functions [9]. This definition focuses on the core of internationalization, namely the integration of international aspects into the core functions of universities. It emphasizes that internationalization is a process that involves teaching, research and external relations in a global context.

As can be seen from the above definitions of internationalization, most authors are inclined to understand the phenomenon as a process of introducing an international dimension into the educational environment. Another point of view on this process is as a set of practical measures to create an educational reputation, which consists of maximizing income and gaining an international reputation through activities to create international higher education. Internationalization of higher education, as a process of improving higher education institutions, implies their active participation in the development of policies, strategies, plans, programs at various stages of decision-making in order to promote the idea of internationality in higher education.

According to the authors, it is necessary to develop a definition that would focus on academic partnerships as the most important aspect of this process. Internationalization of higher education, from the authors' point of view, is a strategic process of introducing an international dimension into the educational environment, primarily focused on developing and deepening academic partnerships with international universities and interested organizations in order to enrich the educational experience and research.

Partnerships are an integral and important part of internationalization in higher education. This cooperation between universities, both national and international, contributes not only to expanding the horizons of educational opportunities, but also to enriching the academic environment.

According to the authors, academic partnerships in this context represent a key tool for internationalization, enriching the educational experience of participants and facilitating the international exchange of knowledge and resources. The partnership also facilitates joint research projects and training programs. Universities can join forces to conduct research that promotes scientific development and has practical applications in solving world problems. In addition, academic partnerships can facilitate the exchange of best practices and innovations in education. Universities can train each other on how to achieve optimal results in teaching and learning management. Thus, partnerships between universities are an integral part of internationalization, contributing to the creation of more open, diverse and high-quality educational programs and research projects on the world stage.

In the context of internationalization in higher education, there are different forms of partnership that can be used depending on the chosen educational orientation, as presented in table 1.

**Table 1. Directions for internationalization of higher education**

| Direction of internationalization of higher education | Country type  | Peculiarities  | Negative sides  | Partnership form  |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| Export orientation                                    | The developed countries   | Transnational education services are a subject of trade                                      | Negative effect of commercialization of education                             | International student exchanges<br>Joint educational programs                 |
| Mixed orientation type (export and import)            | Developed and developing countries with their own traditional characteristics | Import of educational product to increase competition, export of unique educational products | The intersection of interests of foreign imports and national characteristics | International research projects<br>Faculty exchange                           |
| Import orientation                                    | Developing countries with a colonial past                                     | Need for competent professional personnel  | Loss of competitive advantage and national identity                           | Admission of international students<br>Partnerships with foreign universities |

*A source: [2, 5, 11]*

When internationalization is oriented towards export, the most suitable forms of partnership are such as international student exchanges and joint educational programs. Universities can form partnerships with foreign institutions for student exchange, which will help bring more international students to campus. Institutions can also develop joint degree programs with international universities, making education more attractive to students from abroad or those wishing to pursue a double degree.

With a mixed type of orientation in the internationalization of higher education (export and import), forms of partnership are relevant: international research projects and exchanges within entire faculties. Universities can collaborate with international partners on joint research projects, which enriches the academic environment and promotes knowledge exchange.

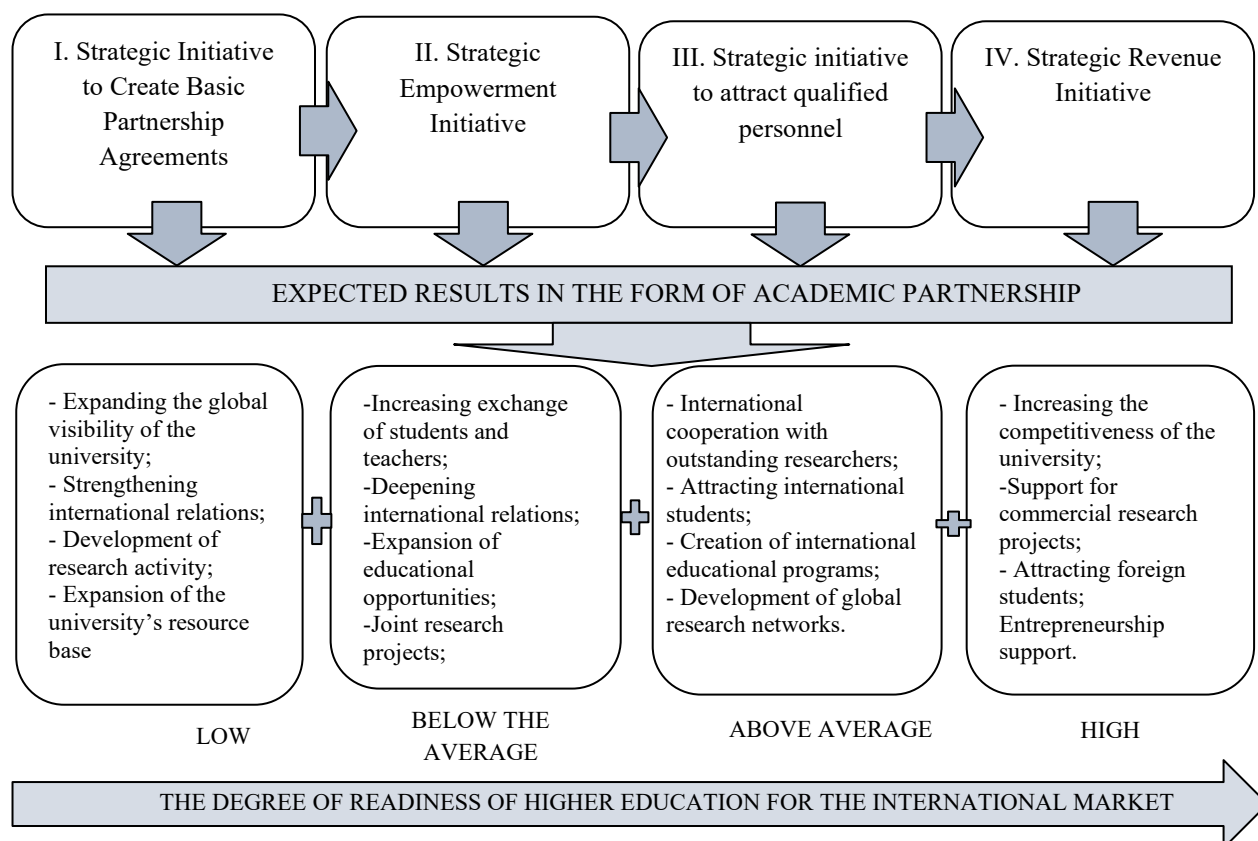
When focusing on imports, such forms of partnerships arise as the admission of international students and partnerships at the university level. Universities can actively attract students from abroad by providing programs in foreign languages and providing them with international educational services. It is also becoming relevant to create partnerships with universities abroad and use their experience and resources to enrich educational programs.

Each of these forms of partnership can be effective, depending on the strategic goals of the particular university and the context of internationalization in higher education. Combining different forms can also be useful in creating more comprehensive and flexible international strategies.

The authors proposed a system of initiatives within the framework of the strategy for the internationalization of higher education, which will be aimed at achieving the main goal - structural organization and qualitative improvement of the higher education system and its integration into the international educational space [13]. For a clear interpretation, the authors modeled the process of internationalization of higher education in a conventional country, considered as an example, passing through four successive stages in the form of strategic initiatives. The system of strategic initiatives for the internationalization of higher education is reflected in figure 1.

The strategic initiative “coordinated approach” is based on long-term political, cultural, academic principles of international activity, which is more consistent with the spirit of cooperation and improving the quality of education than competition in the global market. This approach is aimed at adjusting, optimizing and supplementing with targeted measures already existing vectors of development in the field of higher education in the country under consideration. The expected results in the context of academic partnership in this case will be the following:

- ✓ *Strengthening international relations.* The initiative helps to deepen international ties in the field of higher education, which leads to closer cooperation between educational institutions in different countries and the further formation of strong partnerships:
- ✓ *Expanding global visibility.* Institutions participating in academic partnerships can increase their reputation and visibility on the global stage, which helps attract talented students, researchers and faculty:
- ✓ *Development of research activity.* Collaborative research projects allow universities to deepen their scientific activities and expand their areas of expertise, which can contribute to scientific advances and innovation:
- ✓ *Expansion of the resource base.* Universities here gain access to additional resources, including funding and infrastructure, through partnerships, which contribute to the development and improvement of educational programs and research.



**Figure 1. A set of strategic initiatives within the framework of the strategy for internationalization of higher education.**

*A source: [10; 12]*

A strategic initiative of a coherent approach in higher education, based on the principles of cooperation, can bring significant benefits and improvements in the field of education and research by developing academic partnerships at the level of specific basic educational decisions emanating from the state.

The strategic opportunity expansion initiative implies the in-depth development of the accumulated potential in the field of higher education, formed at the previous stage and consists of the following: encouraging higher education abroad, stimulating the creation of programs aimed at supporting the mobility of teaching staff, researchers and students of the country. The goal is to expand opportunities through existing resources and accumulated successful experience in the internationalization of higher education, as well as by studying and obtaining information about modern educational technologies, successful experience in internationalization and management of this process in foreign countries:

✓ *Increased exchange of students and teachers.* Creating incentives for obtaining higher education abroad and supporting the mobility of participants in the educational process contributes to a more active exchange of students and teachers between

universities;

✓ *Deepening international relations.* Increased mobility and exchange of experience between faculty, researchers and students contribute to deepening international connections and cooperation between universities;

✓ *Expanding educational opportunities.* Students gain access to more diverse educational programs and cultural contexts, which enriches their learning experience;

✓ *Collaborative research projects.* Deepening mobility and academic connectivity between universities can facilitate joint research projects, leading to the creation of new knowledge and innovation;

✓ *Sharing best practices.* Higher education institutions can exchange experiences and transfer best practices in teaching and managing the internationalization process, which helps improve the quality of education and the level of professionalism.

This strategic initiative contributes not only to the expansion of educational opportunities and deepening international connections, but also to active cooperation between universities, which can create new bridges of improved cooperation at the university level.

The Strategic Talent Initiative aims to create tools, methods for attracting and providing favorable working conditions for qualified personnel, researchers, teachers and talented students in the host country. A strategic initiative aimed at attracting qualified personnel and talented students can lead to the following results in the context of academic partnerships:

✓ *International collaboration with outstanding researchers.* Attracting qualified researchers and teachers can facilitate the establishment of international collaborations and joint research projects with other universities;

✓ *Attracting international students.* Creating favorable conditions for qualified staff and researchers can make the university more attractive to international students, promoting international exchange and cultural diversity on campus;

✓ *Creation of international educational programs.* Attracting talented students and personnel can stimulate the university to create joint educational programs with foreign educational institutions;

✓ *Development of global research networks.* Attracting qualified personnel contributes to the expansion of global scientific networks and participation in global research projects.

It is no coincidence that a strategic initiative aimed at making a profit from the provision of educational services in the field of higher education is the final initiative,

since the full implementation of this strategic initiative is possible only by ensuring the fundamental foundations in the field of higher education, expanding educational opportunities in the higher education system, attracting qualified teachers, researchers and students to the country's universities. This strategic initiative implies that educational services are provided only on a paid basis, and income is used to improve the educational infrastructure, to attract foreign teachers, researchers and students, to develop and improve the image of higher educational institutions. This approach may otherwise be called capitalist [1]. Outcomes achieved through this initiative may include the following aspects of academic partnerships:

- ✓ *Increasing the competitiveness of the university;*
- ✓ *Support for commercial research projects.* Academic partners can become partners in commercial research, thereby generating profit and promoting practical innovation;
- ✓ *Attracting foreign students.* Universities that provide high-quality educational services attract international students, which can become a source of income;
- ✓ *Entrepreneurship support.* Universities can collaborate with businesses and start-ups to promote entrepreneurship and job creation.

Thus, a strategic initiative to capitalize on educational services in higher education can lead to multiple outcomes in the context of academic partnerships, including increased competitiveness, innovation, and increased international attractiveness of universities.

### **Summary and conclusions**

The study examined various interpretations of the concept of internationalization of higher education proposed by leading researchers in the field. The authors analyzed in detail the various directions of internationalization of higher education, taking into account their variability depending on the types of countries and the accompanying forms of partnership.

The important place of academic partnership in the context of the process of internationalization of higher education has been identified, which has made it possible to identify the integral connection between these two aspects. The high importance of academic partnerships for all participants in the educational process, covering both teachers and researchers and students, was demonstrated, and its role in enriching the educational experience, improving the quality of education and scientific research was emphasized.



Certain scientific results were obtained, which are expressed in the compilation of the author's definition of the internationalization of higher education, highlighting partnerships as the main aspect. Also, in the context of reflecting the importance of academic partnership, the authors developed a set of strategic initiatives, including the step-by-step development of the higher education system along the path of international partnership and development in general.

Thus, the author's research has deepened the scientific understanding of the internationalization of higher education, revealing the key role of academic partnerships in this process and emphasizing its importance for all participants in the educational community.

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