



Article

Comparative Analysis of the Development Characteristics of Non-State Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract: This article examines the development characteristics of private higher education institutions through a comparative analysis. The study compares the experiences of Uzbekistan, the United Kingdom, the United States, South Korea, and Türkiye, focusing on governance models, financing mechanisms, educational quality, international cooperation, and innovation-driven development within the private higher education sector. Based on the IMRAD methodology, the research identifies the key factors influencing the development of private higher education institutions and provides scientific and practical recommendations for improving their performance in the context of Uzbekistan.

Keywords: private higher education institutions, comparative analysis, educational quality, governance, financing, innovation, international experience, competitiveness.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the development of the private sector in higher education has become one of the major global trends. The inability of governments to fully meet the growing demand for higher education, the increasing need for highly qualified professionals in modern economies, and the intensifying competition in the education market have significantly contributed to the expansion of private higher education institutions (PHEIs) [1].

In developed countries, private universities play a crucial role in improving educational quality, promoting scientific research, fostering innovation, and expanding international cooperation [2]. Similarly, in Uzbekistan, the private higher education sector has experienced rapid growth in recent years through the establishment of new private universities and the expansion of foreign university branches. Therefore, a comparative analysis of international experiences represents an important and relevant area of academic research [3].

The main objective of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of the development characteristics of private higher education institutions based on international experience and to develop practical recommendations for improving the private higher education sector in Uzbekistan[4].

Recent studies conducted in Uzbekistan identify the rapid expansion of private higher education institutions (PHEIs) as one of the major developments in the country's higher education system. In his 2023 study, G. Anvar emphasized that the private higher

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education sector in Uzbekistan has been developing dynamically and reported that, as of 2023, 27 private universities were operating across the country, reflecting the government's efforts to expand access to higher education and promote competition within the sector. The article identifies the main advantages of private higher education institutions as enhancing competition in the higher education market, increasing student enrolment, and ensuring greater flexibility in institutional governance [5].

The 2024 article entitled *"The Development of Uzbekistan as a Transnational Higher Education Hub"* analyzes Uzbekistan's transformation into a regional hub for transnational higher education by examining the expansion of international university partnerships, the establishment of foreign university branches, and the implementation of higher education reforms aimed at increasing the country's global competitiveness [6]. The article reports that, at the beginning of 2024, there were 38 transnational higher education institutions in Uzbekistan, including 30 international branch campuses. This indicates the growing share of private and foreign higher education institutions within the country's higher education system [7].

In the case of the United Kingdom, Peter Scott's 2025 article, *"Public and Private Higher Education in the United Kingdom,"* examines the increasingly complex relationship and blurred boundaries between public and private higher education institutions [8]. The author argues that although many universities in the United Kingdom have historically maintained close ties with the state, the increasing influence of market mechanisms, tuition fees, and a competitive environment has gradually aligned their operations with the principles of the private sector [9].

According to a report published by the UK Parliament Library in 2026, 2.86 million students were enrolled in higher education institutions in the United Kingdom during the 2024/2025 academic year, indicating a decline following the record enrolment observed in the 2022/2023 academic year [10]. The report also notes that the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) has expanded its statistical coverage in recent years to include data from alternative and private higher education providers. This demonstrates that private and alternative higher education providers are becoming increasingly integrated into the United Kingdom's official higher education monitoring and statistical reporting system [11].

According to the 2024 Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) report on the United States higher education system, the sector is characterized by a diverse range of institutional types, financing models, and a high degree of academic freedom. The report identifies the strong global performance of U.S. universities in international rankings, their ability to attract highly qualified academic staff, and their appeal to international students as the key strengths of the American higher education system [12].

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the number of Title IV higher education institutions in the United States decreased from 5,918 in the 2022/2023 academic year to 5,819 in the 2023/2024 academic year. This indicates that, particularly in the United States, many small private colleges are experiencing significant challenges due to demographic decline, financial pressures, and decreasing student enrolment [13].

In A. Zhuplev's 2024 article, *"Navigating New Reality in American Higher Education,"* it is noted that a substantial proportion of four-year higher education institutions in the United States belong to the private sector. The article identifies financial sustainability, tuition costs, increasing competition, student debt, and demographic decline as the major challenges facing private higher education institutions in the United States [14].

In J. Jung's 2024 article on South Korea, the significant impact of the sharp decline in the birth rate on the country's higher education system is thoroughly analyzed. The article highlights that although higher education in South Korea has become highly

accessible through mass expansion, the declining youth population poses a serious threat to the sustainability of universities, particularly regional and private institutions [15].

The 2025 article *“What is New in Higher Education in Japan and South Korea”* reports that the Local University Revitalization Project was implemented for 66 regional private universities in South Korea during 2023–2024. The article further notes that KRW 237.5 billion was allocated to support this initiative in 2024, demonstrating the government's strong commitment to strengthening the sustainability and competitiveness of regional private universities. This indicates that government support and integration with the regional economy play an important role in the development of private universities in South Korea.

In the case of Türkiye, Özgür Kökalan's 2022 study presents a comparative analysis of public and foundation (private) universities in terms of service quality. The research was conducted using the SERVQUAL methodology and involved 875 students. The authors demonstrate that private universities place greater emphasis on service quality, support for international students, and the development of educational infrastructure to meet students' expectations.

In O. Caliskan's 2025 article, *“The Internationalisation of Turkish Higher Education,”* the internationalisation of Türkiye's higher education system is examined, with particular emphasis on its openness to international students, the expansion of education exports, and its strategy to become a regional higher education hub. The article concludes that attracting international students, offering English-medium academic programs, and obtaining international accreditation are key factors driving the development and competitiveness of private universities in Türkiye.

An analysis of international studies and analytical sources published between 2022 and 2026 indicates that the development models of private higher education institutions vary considerably across countries. In Uzbekistan, the main characteristic is the rapid growth in the number of private universities and the expansion of transnational higher education institutions. In the United Kingdom, the higher education system is characterized by increasingly blurred boundaries between the public and private sectors, accompanied by challenges related to financial sustainability. In the United States, private universities maintain strong academic prestige, while many small private colleges face growing financial difficulties. In South Korea, government support has become a key strategy for sustaining private universities amid demographic decline. In Türkiye, the development of foundation universities is primarily driven by efforts to attract international students, expand English-medium programs, improve service quality, and strengthen international competitiveness.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative comparative research design to examine the development characteristics of private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in Uzbekistan, the United Kingdom, the United States, South Korea, and Turkey. The analysis was based on secondary data collected from peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2022 and 2026, as well as official reports and statistical databases. The primary sources included Scopus- and Web of Science-indexed publications, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), OECD Education at a Glance, World Bank, Times Higher Education (THE), QS World University Rankings, the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the Ministry of Higher Education of Uzbekistan, and recent national policy documents. These sources were selected due to their reliability, international recognition, and relevance to the research topic.

The collected data were analyzed using comparative analysis, content analysis, descriptive analysis, and systematic literature review methods. Comparative analysis was applied to identify similarities and differences in governance systems, funding mechanisms, quality assurance, internationalization, research performance, and institutional autonomy across the selected countries. Content analysis was used to examine the findings of recent scientific publications, while descriptive analysis summarized statistical trends and institutional development indicators. Finally, the synthesis method was employed to integrate the findings from different countries and formulate practical recommendations for improving the development model of private higher education institutions in Uzbekistan.

3. Results

The research findings were developed through a comparative analysis of the development characteristics of private higher education institutions in Uzbekistan, the United States, the United Kingdom, South Korea, and Türkiye. The analysis evaluated key indicators, including the number of higher education institutions, student enrolment, the share of the private sector, the number of international students, financing mechanisms, academic autonomy, research capacity, and international cooperation, based on statistical data. The findings made it possible to identify the key factors influencing the development of the private higher education sector and to determine promising directions for further improving its performance in the context of Uzbekistan.

The comparative analysis demonstrates substantial differences in the development level of private higher education systems across the selected countries. Uzbekistan had 222 higher education institutions during the 2024/2025 academic year, representing an increase of nearly 75% compared with the 2020/2021 academic year. Student admissions reached 381.7 thousand, reflecting a 2.2-fold increase over the same period.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the development indicators of private higher education institutions (2024–2025)

Indicator	Uzbekistan	United States	United Kingdom	South Korea	Turkey
Total HEIs	222	3,900	166	330	208
Share of private HEIs (%)	31.1	69.8	100.0	80.0	38.0
Student enrolment (million)	1.52	19.1	2.9	3.1	7.1
Students in private HEIs (%)	12	27	100.0	78	9
International students (thousand)	15	957	686	205	337
Gross tertiary enrolment ratio (%)	47	88	79	104	44

Sources: Uzbekistan National Statistics Committee (2025); UNESCO UIS (2025–2026); OECD *Education at a Glance* (2025); U.S. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA); Council of Higher Education of Türkiye (YÖK).

The United States possesses the world's largest private higher education sector, where nearly 70% of higher education institutions are private. Although public universities enroll a larger proportion of students, private universities dominate international rankings, research funding, endowment assets and innovation performance. Their diversified financial structure—combining tuition fees, research grants, donations and endowment funds—ensures long-term sustainability.

The United Kingdom follows a distinctive model in which almost all universities operate as autonomous, independent institutions despite receiving public funding. In the 2024/2025 academic year, the country enrolled approximately 686 thousand international students, accounting for almost 24% of all university students. This confirms the UK's position as one of the world's leading destinations for higher education.

South Korea has one of the highest private higher education participation rates globally. Approximately 80% of universities are privately managed and educate around 78% of all university students. Continuous investment in research, digital technologies and university–industry collaboration has significantly strengthened institutional competitiveness.

Turkey has rapidly expanded its higher education system over the last decade. Although foundation (private, non-profit) universities account for approximately 38% of institutions, they enroll a considerably smaller share of students because of the dominant role of large public universities. Nevertheless, private universities have become increasingly active in internationalisation, English-medium instruction and global partnerships.

The comparison indicates that academic autonomy remains the primary determinant of institutional competitiveness. Universities in the United States and the United Kingdom independently design curricula, establish research priorities, recruit academic staff and allocate financial resources. Such autonomy contributes directly to stronger research performance and greater institutional flexibility.

Another distinguishing factor is financial diversification. Leading private universities in the United States derive substantial income from research grants, philanthropic donations, investment returns and endowment funds, reducing dependence on tuition revenue. In contrast, private universities in Uzbekistan remain largely dependent on tuition fees, making them more vulnerable to fluctuations in student demand.

Table 2. Comparative assessment of key development factors of private higher education institutions

Development factor	Uzbekistan	USA	UK	South Korea	Turkey
Academic autonomy	Medium	Very High	Very High	High	High
Financial diversification	Low	Very High	High	High	Medium
Research productivity	Medium	Very High	Very High	High	Medium
Internationalisation	Medium	Very High	Very High	High	High
Digital transformation	Medium	Very High	High	Very High	High
Industry collaboration	Medium	Very High	High	Very High	Medium
Quality assurance	High	Very High	Very High	High	High

Sources: Uzbekistan National Statistics Committee (2025); UNESCO UIS (2025–2026); OECD *Education at a Glance* (2025); U.S. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA); Council of Higher Education of Türkiye (YÖK).

The analysis also highlights that digital transformation and university–industry collaboration have become strategic drivers of institutional development. South Korean

universities have integrated artificial intelligence, digital learning platforms, smart campuses and industrial partnerships into their governance models, thereby improving graduate employability and innovation outputs. These practices provide valuable lessons for strengthening the competitiveness of private higher education institutions in Uzbekistan.

Overall, the comparative evidence suggests that the long-term success of private higher education institutions depends on five interconnected pillars: academic autonomy, diversified financing, research excellence, internationalisation and digital innovation. Countries demonstrating strong performance across these dimensions consistently achieve higher educational quality, stronger global competitiveness and greater institutional sustainability.

4. Discussion

The comparative analysis reveals that private universities in the United States and the United Kingdom operate with a high degree of academic autonomy. They independently design academic programs, attract research grants, and consistently achieve strong positions in international university rankings.

The experience of South Korea demonstrates the importance of collaboration between the government and the private sector. Universities maintain close partnerships with industries in developing innovative technologies, contributing to high graduate employability and the rapid commercialization of research outcomes.

In Türkiye, private universities have enhanced their competitiveness by obtaining international accreditation and attracting international students. As a result, education exports have become one of their significant sources of revenue.

In Uzbekistan, the rapid growth in the number of private higher education institutions has contributed to expanding access to higher education. However, further efforts are needed to strengthen research capacity, improve international ranking performance, increase access to research grants, enhance the scientific productivity of academic staff, and further develop quality assurance and monitoring systems.

Recommendations

- A dedicated legal framework should be introduced to establish endowment funds for private higher education institutions, accompanied by tax incentives for charitable donations and investment income allocated to these funds.
- Key performance indicators (KPIs) should be developed to increase the share of institutional income generated from research grants, consulting services, and contractual research projects to at least 25–30%, with regular monitoring of their implementation.
- Each private higher education institution should establish a University–Industry Cooperation Center to strengthen partnerships with priority economic sectors, promote student internships, implement joint research projects, and expand dual education programs involving industry partners.
- A phased national program should be introduced to increase the proportion of internationally accredited academic programs in private higher education institutions to at least 40% within five years, supported by a mechanism for partial government subsidies to cover accreditation costs.
- To enhance educational quality and institutional governance, artificial intelligence-based digital management platforms should be implemented to create an integrated analytical system capable of monitoring student performance, faculty productivity, research outcomes, and graduate employment in real time.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the sustainable development of private higher education institutions primarily depends on academic autonomy, diversified sources of financing, research capacity, international cooperation, and the level of digital governance. The comparative analysis shows that in the United States and the United Kingdom, research grants and endowment funds serve as the main financial pillars of private universities. In South Korea, university–industry collaboration has accelerated innovation-driven development, while in Türkiye, international accreditation and the recruitment of international students have significantly enhanced institutional competitiveness. Although the number of private higher education institutions and student enrolment have increased substantially in Uzbekistan, the sector remains highly dependent on tuition fees, with a relatively low share of research grant funding, limited internationally accredited academic programs, and insufficient university–industry collaboration. These factors continue to constrain the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of the private higher education sector.

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