

Universities as Subjects of International Relations: The Potential of Kyrgyzstan

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Abstract. Against the backdrop of intensifying international competition between global players and international conflicts, small and poor countries are forced to look for mechanisms to ensure sovereignty and stability, including through the development of scientific and educational sovereignty. Therefore, the question becomes relevant: under what conditions can universities become effective subjects of international relations and help their states increase competitiveness? The status of universities as subjects of international relations is determined by the degree of their international subjectivity. International subjectivity is defined as the ability of universities to independently, regardless of the requirements of external foreign actors, determine the vectors and policies of international cooperation based on the norms, principles, goals and values of national educational systems. The authors of the article describe the conditions and indicators of such subjectivity. The mechanisms for integrating universities into international relations are considered: internationalization of the academic environment, participation in international associations; international rating. The positive aspects, opportunities, risks and contradictions of introducing these mechanisms into national educational systems are identified. Using the experience of Russian universities as an example, it is shown how, under critical conditions, these mechanisms become instruments of political pressure. Based on statistics, analysis of government decisions and the practice of universities in Kyrgyzstan, their potential as subjects of international relations are analyzed. It has been proven that now and in the near future, Kyrgyz universities will be located on the periphery of the global educational space, but have great potential for regional leadership. Kyrgyzstan needs to focus on developing this potential in the near future.

Keywords: Kyrgyzstan, international cooperation, subject of international relations, university, education, academic mobility, internationalization

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Introduction

Modern international realities create conditions for increasing the international subjectivity of universities. The successful integration of universities into the international educational space, entering foreign markets for educational services, including the opening of university branches abroad, ensures the attraction of investments in the form of material and technical resources, attracting foreign students, etc. The intermediary role of universities in international communications becomes a key factor. Universities become expert, dialogue, and analytical centers, develop recommendations for political decisions, and have a significant influence on the development of international cooperation in the scientific and educational spheres.

The status of universities as participants in international relations is manifested in the degree of their international subjectivity. By international subjectivity we understand the ability of universities to independently build vectors and policies for international cooperation based on the recognition of norms, principles, goals and values for the development of national educational systems. The international subjectivity of universities is confirmed by the fact that they can independently enter into agreements with foreign partners, enter various international associations, and independently organize projects and programs of international scientific, educational, and cultural cooperation. Universities have the opportunity to participate in legal relations regulated by international legal norms.

All Central Asian states, including Kyrgyzstan, are focused on increasing the international subjectivity of their universities. This is expressed in national development strategies of countries and state concepts for the development of education¹, aimed at increasing the international competitiveness of national educational systems. Universities play a decisive role in these processes, so they are the subject of special attention from both national governments and foreign countries. National governments want to strengthen the international subjectivity of their universities, to fit into the global educational space, preserving their values and identity, and foreign countries, claiming to be global leaders, want to influence this subjectivity. There are a number of mechanisms for increasing the international subjectivity of universities at the international level. However, these mechanisms have contradictory consequences, which in some cases lead not to an increase, but to a decrease in subjectivity.

This article contains an analysis of some of these mechanisms and an assessment of the potential of Kyrgyz universities as subjects of international relations.

¹ The concept of education development in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2021–2023. Available from: <https://edu.gov.kg/media/files/118d4b79-d6ea-4648-9c1c-56280444e7fd.pdf>

National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018–20240. Available from: <https://nisi.kg/uploads/strateg/%D0%9D%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BE%D1%8C%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%8F%20%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%B3%D0%B8%D1%8F%20%D0%9A%D0%A02018-2040.pdf>

Materials and methods

Universities as subjects of international relations are seen as instruments for realizing the goals and objectives of public diplomacy (it is believed that this concept was first introduced in 1965 by Edmund Gallion, the dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University) and “soft power” (it is believed that this concept was first formulated J.Hiring). Based on the concept of public diplomacy, some Russian researchers believe that

universities are outside of rigid ideological orientations. If, for example, inter-party international structures, international scientific and production associations are limited to a certain ideological vector, then universities do not have such an ideological limiter [25].

This position, in our opinion, is not accurate, since universities are built into the state ideology; they form not only a type of professional, but also a certain type of personality, determined by the goals and values of the socio-political system. States are interested in creating a type of personality capable of reproducing cultural, social and political order, and external influences often disrupt this process. Therefore, the study of universities only within the framework of public diplomacy and “soft power” limits the understanding of the role and significance of universities as subjects of international relations. Events developing around Russia clearly show the need to study the international role of universities also from the perspective of the theory of political realism and the theory of interests.

During the research, the authors analyzed the positions of Kyrgyz and Russian scientists regarding the inclusion of Kyrgyz universities in the international educational space and their international subjectivity [2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29].

The empirical basis of the study consisted of: statistical and analytical materials, in particular from the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic; state documents of Kyrgyzstan regarding strategies and programs for the development of the national education system, reviews of the higher education system prepared by the National Erasmus+ Office in Kyrgyzstan², materials of monitoring of communication regimes of countries conducted by the National Research Institute for the Development of Communications [13].

² An overview of the higher education system. Bishkek. 2023:64. Available from: https://erasmusplus.kg/wp-content/uploads/%D0%9E%D0%B1%D0%B7%D0%BE%D1%80_%D0%92%D0%9F%D0%9E_2023_%D1%80%D1%83%D1%81%D1%81.pdf

Results

Mechanisms for integrating universities into international relations

The most common mechanisms for integrating universities into international relations are: internationalization in the academic environment, in the scientific and educational process; involvement in international associations; international rating.

The concept of internationalization of higher education is proposed by Western countries - leaders of the global education market; its practical implementation allows us to avoid losses in the event of unfavorable situations - demographic problems, a decrease in human and intellectual potential, the inability of national educational and scientific systems to independently produce innovations, a peripheral position in the world scientific and educational space, etc. Researchers of international education such as W. Brandenburg and N. de Wit note that this is the main direction of development of higher education in the world, which has changed “the vector from a peripheral phenomenon to the key interest of higher educational institutions” [1]. Instruments of internationalization are scholarship programs for foreign students, international cooperation projects, branding universities as international, international educational programs, internal internationalization of universities, international rankings, distance learning formats, information diplomacy of universities and student communities, cultural homogenization, franchises, double degree programs, etc. According to UNESCO's position, internationalization is one of the forms of interaction between the challenges of globalization and modern higher education.

However, internationalization, which has the ultimate goal of creating global education, creates not only chances, but also risks for national higher education systems. Previously, we have already noted the contradictions of internationalization and the risks of its implementation for national educational systems [9, 10, 11, 12]. These contradictions manifest themselves especially clearly when the interests of global leaders and contenders for this leadership, who want to determine strategies and rules for the development of the world space, collide. In such conditions, universities demonstrate behavioral models similar to other subjects of international relations (states, security institutions, international organizations, etc.).

By adopting an internationalization strategy, most national educational systems receive certain benefits in the first stages. They are associated with the opportunity to improve the qualifications of teaching staff, teaching standards, new methods and educational technologies, the quality of research improves, and they are integrated into the international scientific and educational space. However, along with methodological and technological innovations come new goals and values of education, and there is a unification of approaches to suit the interests of the authors of internationalization - global players in education, among which American and British universities are leaders.

Countries that have little experience in developing their national educational systems view internationalization as an opportunity to increase their competitiveness. They integrate their identity, national policy for the formation of the citizen's personality, their cultural policy and their values into international unified standards. In essence, they outsource the education and upbringing of their youth.

Another mechanism for bringing universities to the international level is their international ranking. To do this, universities must meet certain standards. The initiators set standards and organizers of the rankings, which allows them to penetrate, regulate, and sometimes control the higher education systems of other countries. In an effort to enter the rankings of the world's leading universities, national educational systems are being unified to meet the requirements of the ranking initiators. For lagging education systems at the first stage, this can become an incentive to develop quality improvement. Then, the desire to meet all rating requirements can slow down the development of the unique properties of national education and make it dependent on external factors. In addition, the events of recent years have shown the politicization of a number of international university rankings.

The third mechanism is international associations. Joining these associations also has two sides. On the one hand, national universities gain access to the best educational practices and have the opportunity to develop international communications. On the other hand, joining international associations contributes to the global unification of educational systems, increasing their dependence on the requirements of associations and is accompanied by financial costs associated with the costs of membership fees and various types of international accreditation of universities. Some of these associations are essentially commercial structures. Recent years have shown that the effectiveness of regional-scale associations is higher than global ones.

The experience of Russian participation in international university associations and international rankings has shown that some rankings and some associations are politically biased. Although the Russian participants met the requirements and standards, were accepted into international associations and were their active participants, in 2022 they were excluded from them, since after the SVO they did not support the political position and political interests of Western countries. Together with standards and academic requirements, through international associations, universities are integrated into the political ideology set by the leaders of these associations.

M.A.Eskindarov and V.V.Perskaya write about the risks of internationalization, associations and ratings. Let us allow ourselves an extensive, meaningful quote: "The spread of the practice of evaluating universities using international rankings compiled on the basis of unified and Western-oriented scientometric databases contributed to the emergence of such definitions as "world-class universities." ...This began to determine the level of financial support for higher education organizations and the accelerated spread of the system of paid educational services in their activities. At the same time, the process contributed to the gradual loss by national educational institutions of their national-historical, social and sociocultural specificities, which were an integral part of the knowledge of the identity of societies, which was especially acute in non-English-speaking countries. With the

passage of time and the development of all-consuming globalization, unified approaches to intercultural learning, socialization processes, and the introduction of European values and the basic foundations of Anglo-Saxon culture into the ethnic groups of different countries of the world began to dominate in the educational sector" [29]. In other words, the internationalization of education leads to the spread of American and British education as a global standard. European systems, competing with American universities, create their own mechanisms of influence, which can be analyzed by studying the information on the website of the European Universities Association (EUA). Among the most well-known, we note the Erasmus+, Horizon, etc. programs.

Russia's experience shows that under certain circumstances, mechanisms of international scientific and educational cooperation become instruments of pressure. For example, the Bologna Group decided to terminate the representation of Russia and the Republic of Belarus in all structures of the Bologna process³. The company Clarivate Analytics (which owns the database of scientific publications) has closed access to the database for Russian users, cooperation between international research organizations and Russian scientists has been stopped, and funding for joint projects has been stopped. Russia's participation in "megascience" projects has been stopped. The European Organization for Nuclear Research, CERN, banned cooperation with Russia and deprived the country of observer status. About a thousand Russian specialists were involved in CERN projects, Russian scientists participated in a dozen experiments⁴. Great contributions were made by scientists from the National Research Center "Kurchatov Institute", institutes of the Russian Academy of Sciences, leading universities (MSU represented by the Skobeltsyn Research Institute of Nuclear Physics, National Research Nuclear University "Moscow Engineering Physics Institute", Novosibirsk State University, St. Petersburg State University). Despite the contribution of Russian scientists, foreign colleagues are forced to exclude them from co-authorship, fearing that the results of scientific research will not be published.

The European University Association decided to suspend membership in the Association of a number of Russian universities, including the largest Russian universities that are capable of international competition with European, British, and American universities both in terms of the quality of education and the rate of growth in attractiveness for foreign students. The British rating company Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) suspended work in Russia and Belarus and decided to edit the ratings that included Russian and Belarusian universities⁵. Let us recall that in the top 100 of the QS ranking, Moscow State University took 78th place. M.V.Lomonosov.

These and other examples clearly show the artificial involvement of non-political subjects in political and geopolitical processes. The experience of Russia, which has

³ The Ministry of Education and Science announced the exclusion of Russian universities from the Bologna system. Available from: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/06/06/2022/629dec299a7947a0e3d5426f?ysclid=lf9bhgv9b859350767>

⁴ The European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN). Available from: <https://ria.ru/20190929/1559197190.html?ysclid=lf9br39hp3241307175>

⁵ The QS rating company stops cooperation with universities of the Russian Federation and Belarus. Available from: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5249752?ysclid=lf9eu31rge640550262>

gone from delight to skepticism in scientific and educational cooperation with the West, will be useful for comprehension in other countries that are at the stage of reforming their national educational systems, including Kyrgyzstan, which is choosing vectors and “standards” for its universities. By joining European and American consortia, universities in other countries can turn from subjects into objects of the policies of the founders of these consortia. And if in relation to Russian universities, which have enormous scientific and educational potential, their own base, history of management and the formation of training strategies, these measures of foreign political forces are ineffective, then in countries with less potential they can lead to complete dependence of the education system and youth upbringing from external actors. In the new conditions, Russia is reconsidering its approaches to international cooperation and making adjustments to the strategies and vectors of development of the national higher education system

The potential of Kyrgyz universities as subjects of international relations

Among the significant conditions for increasing the international subjectivity of universities, we note the following:

- material and technical base of universities that meets modern requirements (digitalization, interactivity, innovation, etc.)
- educational products replicated and in demand abroad, educational technologies;
- quality of personnel;
- a university environment capable of accepting and adapting foreign students and colleagues, as well as capable of producing international initiatives;
- quality of graduates, competitive in the international labor market;
- quality and relevance (implementation) of international-level research;
- international projects initiated by national universities and having predominantly national funding.

These are the most significant conditions under which universities become influential subjects of international relations, promote national education systems and educational products at the international level, train personnel for foreign countries, introduce the foreign public to the culture and characteristics of their country, influence social, political, economic, cultural processes.

But the degree of their subjectivity depends on who creates the above conditions and who finances universities, who train university personnel.

At a minimum, the following can serve as quantitative indicators of universities as subjects of international relations:

- institutional basis for the development of universities;
- structure of universities and funding levels;
- quality of staffing;
- language of instruction;
- the number of foreign students studying in the country.

These data are quite objective, as they are presented by the statistical services of the countries. Let us consider Kyrgyzstan from these positions.

Institutional basis for the development of universities in Kyrgyzstan

The institutional framework consists of the country's strategies, concepts and legal documents. The Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Education” is the legal and organizational basis in the field of education. On May 4, 2021, by resolution of the Government of Kyrgyzstan, the Education Development Program in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2021-2040, the Action Plan for 2021-2023 for implementation were approved, and tasks and measures for implementing the strategy in the field of higher education were formed. As part of the program, a regulatory legal act has been developed for the implementation of PhD programs. One of the main goals of the Program is to enter the top 200 universities in the world by 2040. However, detailed tools and methods for achieving the set goals are not proposed in the Program.

To improve the quality of education and verify compliance with the state standard, state and private accreditations are carried out. By Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic “On approval of state educational standards of higher professional education” of the Kyrgyz Republic № 1578/1, September 21, 2021, state educational standards of higher professional education were approved, confirmed by awarding the graduate the qualifications “Bachelor”, “Master”, “Specialist”.

As part of the country's digital transformation strategy, the Concept for the development of the educational system of Kyrgyzstan with elements of media and information literacy was adopted. It is important for Kyrgyzstan to increase the media, information and digital literacy of the population and, above all, youth, and this requires improving educational standards. In order to implement the Concept of digital transformation “Digital Kyrgyzstan 2019–2023”, approved by the decision of the Security Council of the Kyrgyz Republic dated December 14, 2018 № 2, the Order of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic dated February 15, 2019 № 20-r approved the “Road Map” for the implementation of the Digital Concept transformation “Digital Kyrgyzstan 2019-2023”. In paragraph 79 of this document, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic is given the task – “Improving educational standards in the system of school and higher education of the Kyrgyz Republic”⁶. During the analysis of documents and their implementation, it was revealed that programs developed for universities are not enough to comprehensively improve higher education. They are much better designed for school and preschool education.

Now Kyrgyzstan lags behind in the strategic, program and project development of higher education. For example, effective programs have not been developed to achieve the

⁶ Methodological guidance on the implementation of digital education in the educational system of the Kyrgyz Republic / Under the general editorship of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Kyrgyz Academy of Education, the Media Support Center. Bishkek. 2020.

goals and objectives set. If Russia has such state programs as “Priority 2030”⁷ to support universities, “Export of Education to the Russian Federation”, such programs have not yet been developed in Kyrgyzstan. There are a number of institutional reasons for the underdevelopment of the country’s education system: corruption in the educational system; managerial instability (frequent changes of education ministers); ineffective educational standards; economic reasons (insufficient funding for the development of education); lack of finances; outdated teaching methods and frequent plagiarism of both scientific research and educational products; slow adoption of new technologies and lagging behind trends. However, a number of measures have been taken to improve the quality of education. In 2022, the international scholarship of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic “El Umutu” was established, which will allow citizens of Kyrgyzstan to study at foreign universities in the top 100 world rankings. The first scholarship recipients entered master’s programs at Columbia and Stanford universities, Johns Hopkins University, as well as universities in London, Copenhagen, Pennsylvania, and Texas. Universities in Kyrgyzstan continue to develop academic mobility programs with the European Union (Erasmus+ Program and bilateral interuniversity programs), Japan (Japan International Cooperation Agency – JICA), Germany (German Society for International Cooperation – GIZ and German Academic Exchange Service -DAAD), China (program of the Confucius Institute). Joint educational programs are being implemented within the framework of intergovernmental and interdepartmental agreements with universities in Russia, Kazakhstan, etc. International cooperation is implemented in network formats with universities in the CIS and SCO countries. Taking into account the growing influence of the BRICS countries, it is advisable to consider deepening the educational scientific cooperation of Kyrgyzstan in this association. The prospects of their educational systems of the BRICS countries have been repeatedly noted by both Russian and Western researchers [6, 15]

Amounts of funding and structure of universities

Since 2001, there has been an annual increase in funding for higher education⁸. In 2022, government funding amounted to 9,635.3 million soms. For comparison: in 2019 – 5,695.8 million soms, in 2020 – 5,745.1 million soms, in 2021 – 7,354.7 million soms.

At the same time, the number of universities is growing. A comparison of the number of universities, the number of students and the amount of funding helps to understand that there is no improvement in the material and economic support of state universities.

If in 1991 there were 6 universities, in 2001 – 48 universities, then in 2022 there are 61 universities in Kyrgyzstan (227,582 students)⁹ of these, 33 universities are private. They

⁷ Priority 2030. Available from: <https://priority2030.ru/>

⁸ National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. Available from: <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.stat.kg%2Fru%2Fstatistics%2Fdownload%2Fdynamic%2F1279%2F8wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

⁹ The number of educational organizations by type. Available from: <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.stat.kg%2Fru%2Fstatistics%2Fdownload%2Fdynamic%2F703%2F8wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

educate 14% of the total number of students in Kyrgyzstan. An analysis of the distribution of students on a budgetary basis shows that education in Kyrgyzstan is practically paid - 89% (201,858 people) of the total number of students study on a paid basis. We especially emphasize these data, since the information field often conveys information about the number of students studying in state universities, and not about the system of payment for this education. As an example, let us cite information from the website of a government agency that “the majority of students from neighboring countries study in state universities, and students from far abroad study in non-state universities”¹⁰.

The distribution of private universities is uneven: 10 of them are located in Bishkek, 5 in the Chui region, 3 in the Jalal-Abad region. 34 public universities out of 43 are located in Bishkek, 4 in Osh, and one university in all other regions of Kyrgyzstan. There are no state universities in the Chui region. This imbalance is explained by the concentration of the most qualified teaching staff in Bishkek¹¹.

In order to improve the quality of education, in 2022, the Decree of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Measures to Increase the Potential and Competitiveness of Educational Organizations of Higher Professional Education of the Kyrgyz Republic”¹² and the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers “On Some Issues of Reorganization of Higher Educational Institutions of the Kyrgyz Republic” were adopted¹³. According to the resolutions, the Kyrgyz State University of Construction, Transport and Architecture named after N.Isanov (KGUSTA) and the Kyrgyz State University of Geology, Mining and Natural Resources Development named after U.Asanaliev (KSGU) were reorganized by joining the Kyrgyz State Technical University named after. I.Razzakova (KSTU). Also, according to the decree of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Kyrgyz Economic University named after. M.Ryskulbekov received the status of a research university. It was joined through reorganization by the Academy of Business and Social Development and the Bishkek Financial and Economic College named after. A.Toktonaliev. By Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic dated November 21, 2022 №654 “On Amendments to Certain Decisions of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to Give Special Status to State Higher Educational Institutions,” a number of universities in Kyrgyzstan were granted a special status - organizational, financial and academic autonomy. This status has the Kyrgyz National University named after. Zh.Balasagyn, Kyrgyz State Technical University named after. Razzakova, Kyrgyz National Agrarian University named after. K. I. Scriabin, Kyrgyz State Medical Academy named after. I.K.Akhunbaeva, Osh State University. It is planned that these universities will create a university ecosystem of a new format with research and creative projects, will develop according to the university 4.0 model and will have to enter the top 500 QS Asia.

¹⁰ In Kyrgyzstan, 84% of students study at public universities. Available from: <https://edu.gov.kg/organizations/5/posts/411/>

¹¹ Education and Science in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2018-2022: Stat. collecting. Bishkek: 2023:126.

¹² Decree of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 243 dated July 18, 2022 “On measures to increase the potential and competitiveness of educational institutions of higher professional education of the Kyrgyz Republic”. Available from: https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=35978545

¹³ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 414 dated July 29, 2022 “On some issues of reorganization of higher educational institutions of the Kyrgyz Republic”. Available from: https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=30306285

Thus, the institutional base of the higher education system in Kyrgyzstan is developing towards the internationalization of the education system of Kyrgyzstan, participation in international rankings and consortia.

Staffing of Kyrgyz universities

In state educational organizations of higher professional education, there are 19 students per teacher, and in private ones – 17 students. In 2022, out of the total number of teaching staff (12,039 people), only 28% of teachers had the academic degree of Candidate of Sciences, Doctor of Sciences – 7%, the academic title of Associate Professor – 18% and Professor – 5%¹⁴.

In the near future, a significant increase in the scientific potential of universities in Kyrgyzstan is not expected. The number of graduate students over five years decreased by 10% and in 2022 amounted to 2.2 thousand people. Of the 614 graduate students graduating in 2022, only 16 (2.6%) defended their dissertations.

Over the past five years, the number of doctoral students has increased 1.6 times and in 2022 amounted to 236 people. Of the 12 doctoral students graduated in 2022, 3 defended their dissertations. In general, the involvement of universities in scientific research is low. Of the 69 organizations carrying out research and development, 23 are in the higher education sector (21 in the business sector, 25 in the public sector). The number of scientific and pedagogical workers who carried out scientific research and development along with teaching activities is 1924 people. In the total volume of scientific research and development carried out in 2022, the largest share (about 69%) came not from the university, but from the public sector of activity. State budget expenditures on scientific research and development in 2022 amounted to 790.8 soms – this is 0.1% of GDP and 0.3% of total state budget expenditures¹⁵.

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¹⁴ Education and Science in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2018-2022: Stat. collecting. Bishkek: 2023:123.
¹⁵ Ibid:142.

Language in which teaching is conducted

High potential remains for the formation of a common educational space with Russia. This is facilitated by the training of Russian-language school graduates and the number of joint educational projects between Russia and Kyrgyzstan (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of full-time general education organizations by language of instruction (number in units)

Indicators	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Education organizations with one language of instruction	1 718	1 714	1 698	1 692	1 685	1 689	1 663	1 672	1 653	1 677	1 666
including:											
Kyrgyz	1 437	1 443	1 434	1 439	1 423	1 427	1 395	1 389	1 376	1 399	1 369
Russian	202	203	203	198	216	226	234	251	248	247	264
Uzbek.	76	65	58	52	43	33	31	29	26	28	25
Tajik	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
English											5
Educational organizations with two or more languages of instruction	483	493	507	526	551	573	602	611	643	656	684
including:											
Kyrgyz-Russian	348	346	360	369	397	409	445	453	484	499	520
Kyrgyz-Uzbek	56	60	54	54	49	52	49	45	48	49	43
Kyrgyz-Tajik	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2
Russian-English											4
Uzbek-Russian	45	46	49	52	48	54	52	50	56	49	51
Uzbek-Tajik	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-
Russian-Tajik	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Kyrgyz-Uzbek-Russian	29	35	38	43	50	51	50	56	50	53	59
Russian-Uzbek-Tajik	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2
Kyrgyz-Russian-English											2
Kyrgyz-Russian-Uzbek-Tajik	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Source: National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic ¹⁶

An analysis of the number of students in educational institutions of higher professional education by language of instruction (at the beginning of the 2022/2023 academic year) shows that the number of students studying in Russian is quite large (118,864 students are studying in Russian, 79,385 students are studying in Kyrgyz, 26,430 are studying in English, 2846 in Turkish). However, data given as a percentage of the total number of students shows a decrease in the proportion of students studying in Russian (Table 2).

¹⁶ The National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. Available from: <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.stat.kg%2Fru%2Fstatistics%2Fdownload%2Fdynamic%2F1221%2F8wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

Table 2. Percentage of students studying in different languages (in % of the total number of students)

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Kyrgyz	24,7	27,6	31,8	31,7	34,9
Russian	65,7	60,8	57,1	56,1	52,2
English	7,8	9,4	9,6	10,9	11,6
Turkish	1,4	1,6	1,4	1,3	1,3

Source: National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic ¹⁷

An analysis of the practice of implementing educational programs shows that the majority of foreign students (not from CIS countries) study in English at international universities that work according to foreign standards.

Number of foreign students studying in the country

Analysis of statistical data allows us to conclude that the number of foreign students in Kyrgyzstan is growing (Tables 3, 4).

Table 3. Number of students from non-CIS countries (at the beginning of the academic year, people)

Indicators	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	3 286	3 467	4 257	5 627	6 520	8 881	10 862	15 547	19 529	23 598	25 321
including:											
Afghanistan	54	66	107	123	148	169	161	141	49	274	347
China	385	255	267	187	269	273	220	204	99	216	399
India	1 137	1 709	2 377	3 917	4 745	6 828	8 662	10 749	12 272	14 377	15 306
Iran	25	2	7	7	2	1	3	9	7	3	10
Mongolia	2	1	8	8	6	9	13	19	26	26	20
Nepal	21	45	23	17	15	24	11	7	3	1	4
Syria	43	7	15	16	14	16	20	24	21	10	23
Pakistan	778	628	559	413	390	579	830	3 533	6 003	7 498	8 407
Turkey	772	679	696	695	655	624	510	532	509	499	467
Georgia	3	1	2	1	-	-	1	2	1	1	-
Other countries	66	74	196	243	276	358	431	327	539	693	338

Source: National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic ¹⁸¹⁷ Education and Science in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2018-2022: Stat. collecting. Bishkek: 2023:119.¹⁸ The National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. Available from: <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.stat.kg%2Fru%2Fstatistics%2Fdownload%2Fdynamic%2F1226%2F8wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

The largest number of foreign students come to Kyrgyzstan from India and Pakistan. But most of the students study from the CIS countries (Table 4).

Table 4. Number of students from CIS countries (at the beginning of the academic year, people)

Indicators	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	7 977	8 195	8 466	8 908	8 194	7 653	8 764	21 049	43 889	57 103	46 353
including:											
Azerbaijan	41	132	57	56	153	33	132	21	11	21	15
Armenia	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-
Belarus	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42	1	4
Kazakhstan	4 357	4 338	4 828	5 184	4 655	3 294	2 479	2 083	2 178	1 985	3 179
Moldova	152	3	23	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Russia	927	1 225	1 377	1 186	910	1 535	1 622	1 844	2 005	1 672	1 916
Tajikistan	885	1 130	1 423	1 840	1 864	1 856	2 365	2 439	1 932	1 595	876
Turkmenistan	369	240	129	111	60	51	100	121	146	219	64
Ukraine	18	33	9	9	12	2	1	3	4	4	17
Uzbekistan	1 219	1 094	620	519	540	882	2 063	14 538	37 571	51 605	40 282

Source: National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic ¹⁹

The dynamics of the number of foreign students over 10 years shows a stable number or an increase in the number of students from Asian countries (mainly not rich countries) and a decrease in the share of students from other regions. Statistics show that from 2029 the share of students from Pakistan is increasing and the share of students from India is decreasing²⁰.

The dynamics of the number and geography of foreign students in Kyrgyzstan suggests a trend towards regionalization of the higher education system of Kyrgyzstan, strengthening the integration of the country's universities into the system of regional connections.

Conclusion

Strengthening the status of universities as subjects of international relations implies strengthening their role in international relations, that is, in the implementation of foreign policy, foreign economic and humanitarian strategies of countries. An analysis of the experience of introducing mechanisms to increase the international subjectivity of universities shows the inconsistency and ambivalent influence of these mechanisms

¹⁹ Ibid.²⁰ Education and Science in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2018-2022: Stat. collecting. Bishkek: 2023:120.

on national educational systems. It should be remembered that universities are built into state ideological constructs; they form not only a certain type of professional, but also a certain type of personality, determined by the goals and values of the socio-political system. Therefore, it is critically important who and how influences national education systems, in what ideological, sociocultural systems the professional training and socialization of youth takes place.

The undoubted benefits of international cooperation include the exchange of knowledge and technologies, the development of comparative models and approaches, the development of mutual understanding as a consequence of intercultural communication, improved knowledge of foreign languages and the ability to obtain information from foreign language databases and communication channels, familiarity with the culture and characteristics of other countries, the opportunity disseminate your ideas in other countries and other benefits that come from increased international cooperation.

At the same time, one should be extremely attentive to the requirements that foreign partners put forward to national education systems when offering cooperation formats. Along with the benefits gained from internationalization, national educational systems are forced to unify their approaches, goals and educational values. The consequences of distributing university funding depending on the success of internationalization and compliance with international standards should not be ignored. It is logical that some universities cannot achieve these indicators and, subject to a decrease in funding, will only strengthen their peripheral position. As a result, this will reduce the quality of education and, as a result, the availability of quality education for people with low incomes who do not have the opportunity to live and study in other cities where rating universities are located.

The specificity of modern Kyrgyz universities is that, by transferring education and communication into the national language, universities narrow the circle of foreign partners and interests. Therefore, strengthening the international subjectivity of Kyrgyz universities is closely related to the development of programs not only in Kyrgyz, but in the languages of international communication (Russian, English, etc.).

Taking into account the language of instruction, the composition of foreign students in national public universities (not international, private universities, but national public universities), Kyrgyz universities are able to maintain international subjectivity and become full-fledged subjects of international relations while maintaining educational cooperation in the CIS, while maintaining the Russian language as language of educational and scientific activities. Students from the CIS countries (the majority of them) prefer studying in Russian, and the CIS member states continue to develop cooperation in the field of education. Kyrgyzstan in this coordinate system has significant advantages and prospects in contrast to its peripheral position in the global educational space. In particular, Kyrgyzstan currently cooperates with dozens of universities from Central Asian countries and more than one hundred universities in Russia. Rejection of this direction will lead to a loss of international subjectivity and dependence of the higher education system of Kyrgyzstan on external interests.).

In the near future, universities in Kyrgyzstan will not be able to become independent global players due to the insufficient supply of highly professional personnel, the lack of demand for educational products and scientific developments of Kyrgyz universities, and the tiny proportion of students from other regions of the world (Europe, America, Latin America, Africa, etc.). Since foreign students from India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, etc. study mainly in international, private universities in English, we note the advisability of introducing training programs in English in public universities. Otherwise, foreign investments will go into the private sector and will contribute little to the development of the national, state system of higher education.

Against the backdrop of international events in recent years, starting with the pandemic, there has been a tendency towards regionalization of educational cooperation, and a tendency towards strengthening cross-border formats of interaction based on economic and cultural ties. To improve the status of Kyrgyz universities as subjects of international relations, it is advisable to focus on regional leadership. Develop national educational products in areas with the largest share of postgraduate and doctoral students, expand educational programs in Russian for students from Russian-speaking countries, and begin the formation of educational programs in English for English-speaking countries in the region. It is advisable to take the initiative and develop educational programs for advanced training and training of personnel to work in CIS, SCO, and BRICS projects.

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