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ENHANCING ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH INNOVATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMS

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Annotation: The article analyzes effective mechanisms for increasing economic activity in higher education institutions through innovative entrepreneurship programs. The processes of developing entrepreneurial skills among students and faculty, implementing startup projects, and supporting innovative business projects within the higher education system are studied. Based on practical experiences in higher education institutions of Namangan region, the effectiveness of programs enhancing economic activity is evaluated, existing problems are identified, and proposals for their elimination are developed. The research results provide scientific and practical recommendations for forming innovative entrepreneurship development strategies, integrating higher education institutions with the business environment, and increasing students' economic activity.

Keywords: innovative entrepreneurship, project economy, knowledge assessment, higher education institutions, innovative power, business planning, innovation mechanism

Introduction

The development of innovative entrepreneurship programs in higher education institutions is one of the most pressing areas of modern economic processes. The intensification of global economic competition, technological updates, and the rapid changes in the business environment necessitate providing students and young professionals with specific economic skills. Innovative entrepreneurship programs not only allow for the effective utilization of internal resources of higher education institutions but also enable the increase of economic activity, creation of new jobs, and implementation of startup projects.[1]

Analyses conducted using the example of Namangan region show that if programs involving students and faculty in innovative entrepreneurial activities exist, they not only increase economic efficiency but also significantly contribute to the economic development of the region. At the same time, the startup ecosystem created in higher education institutions through innovative entrepreneurship programs encourages young people to implement their ideas and projects, expanding opportunities for attracting financial resources and investors. Their relevance lies in the fact that they not only improve economic indicators but also enhance the international ranking and competitiveness of the higher education system. In the process of introducing innovative entrepreneurship programs, the integration of higher education institutions with business and research sectors, the effective functioning of a mentorship system for students, and the development of startup financing mechanisms are crucial. Therefore, the formation and improvement of innovative entrepreneurship programs appear as a pressing task

not only in scientific and pedagogical terms but also in ensuring regional and national economic stability.

Literature review

The works of Chinese researcher Li Xiaoming focus on mechanisms for increasing economic activity in universities through innovative startup ecosystems, proposing effective models for engaging students and faculty in entrepreneurial activities in higher education institutions. Additionally, South Korean scholar Park Ji-Hoon conducted empirical studies on evaluating the economic effectiveness of innovative educational programs, demonstrating that the development of university startup financing and mentorship systems significantly increases economic outcomes. Japanese researcher Tanaka Hiroshi developed methodological approaches for forming entrepreneurial skills in higher education and enhancing students' economic activity through innovative laboratories and incubators.[2]

Also,The work of Indian scientist Ramesh Kumar studied the processes of implementing startup projects, attracting investments, and ensuring regional economic stability by integrating universities and the business environment. Singaporean scientist Lim Wei Ming, on the other hand, analyzed the role of innovative pedagogical technologies and digital platforms in developing student entrepreneurship and demonstrated their economic effectiveness. According to the general conclusions of these scientists, the introduction of innovative entrepreneurship programs not only increases economic activity in higher education institutions but also serves to strengthen the competitiveness of the national and regional economy. Asian experience shows that forming an innovative startup ecosystem, attracting financial resources, developing a mentorship system, and integrating research activities with entrepreneurship are key factors in significantly increasing economic efficiency in universities.[3]

Research methodology

This article integrates theoretical and practical approaches as its research methodology. In the theoretical part, literature analysis, the works of Asian scientists, and advanced experiences were studied. In the practical part, the effectiveness of innovative entrepreneurship programs in higher education institutions of Namangan region was evaluated through surveys, interviews, and observation methods. Additionally, statistical analysis and comparative methods were used to study the activities of students and faculty, and the economic results of startup projects. The methodology ensures the reliability and practical applicability of the research results.

Analysis and results.

In the 2025 global economic landscape, innovative entrepreneurship programs emerged as a key driving force of the higher education system, significantly boosting economic activity. Globally, according to the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2025 report, countries such as the US, Switzerland, and Singapore, which ranked among the leaders in innovative performance among 139 countries, excelled in creating new jobs and developing startup ecosystems through entrepreneurship programs in higher education institutions. For example, in 2025, 665 million entrepreneurs were active globally, representing a 21% increase from the previous year, with 62% of this growth driven by young people with bachelor's degrees. Innovative programs in higher education institutions, including incubators, accelerators, and mentorship platforms, have grown the entrepreneurship services market to $5.1 billion, ensuring its development with an 8.8% annual growth rate between 2026-2033. Deloitte Insights' 2025 report on higher education

trends highlights that universities are engaging students in real economic projects by breaking down 120-credit-hour programs into short-term modules, resulting in 80% of new businesses in global startup ecosystems being led by young people, according to the 13th annual Global Startup Ecosystem Report (GSER). These programs not only stimulate economic growth but also contribute to the creation of new businesses in over 80 economies by integrating AI and digital technologies. The World Bank and OECD's Trends Shaping Education 2025 report indicates that innovative entrepreneurship increased economic activity in higher education by 15-20%, as students contribute 2-3% to the country's GDP by commercializing their projects. For example, according to AACSB's 2025 trends, universities created over 1 million new jobs annually through programs tailored to workforce demands, which was a key factor in global economic recovery. Additionally, J.P.The Morgan's H1 2025 Innovation Economy Update report notes that AI investments reached a record high in the first half of 2025, while the number of startups fell to its lowest point in the past decade, but with higher quality. This process demonstrates the economic impact of innovative programs in higher education, as they not only provide students with theoretical knowledge but also enable them to be tested in real market conditions, resulting in a 21% global startup growth in 2025.[4]

Uzbekistan, particularly the Namangan region, achieved significant success in boosting economic activity in higher education through innovative entrepreneurship programs in 2025, which laid the foundation for the country to rank 79th in the Global Innovation Index. Uzbekistan's startup ecosystem grew by 111.92% in 2025 compared to the previous year, attracting millions of dollars in investments in the first four months, with a large portion of this growth attributed to programs in higher education institutions. According to the UNDP's Digital Economy of Uzbekistan report, 16 higher education institutions in the country introduced programs in AI and digital entrepreneurship, playing a crucial role in integrating young people into the digital economy.[5]

In institutions like Namangan State University and Namangan State Technical University, the number of full-time students reached 707.3 thousand in the 2025 academic year, representing a 2.7-fold increase over the past 10 years, with 30% of this growth attributed to innovative entrepreneurship courses. Within the framework of the Namangan Startup Day 2025 event, 30 startup projects participated in the competition, which increased the number of new businesses in the region by 25%, as students had the opportunity to work with European mentors through Erasmus+ and international cooperation programs. According to Trend.az, due to increased entrepreneurial activity in the Namangan region, 62 thousand migrants returned in the last two years, indicating an increase in average wages and the impact of economic programs in higher education. Within the framework of UNESCO's Skills Development for Employability in Rural Areas of Uzbekistan project, entrepreneurship skills programs for women and men were introduced in rural areas of Namangan, resulting in over 15 thousand people gaining new jobs in 2025, contributing 10% to the regional economy. [6]

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Higher Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the 2024/2025 academic year, the number of admissions increased, and grants for innovative projects in Namangan institutions grew by 44.2%, which strengthened the involvement of students in real economic activities. The Global Research Network's report "Enhancing Uzbekistan's Higher Education System for Sustainable Development" highlights that as a result of reforms in the country's higher education system, faculties were preserved, scientific output and academic culture improved, with this growth reaching 20% in the case of Namangan. According to the "Youth Entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan" report, youth

entrepreneurship indicators increased by 18% in 2025, achieved through the integration of financing mechanisms and programs in higher education.

In a comparison between global and Namangan scales, Uzbekistan's dynamic growth in boosting economic activity in higher education through innovative entrepreneurship programs aligns with global trends but stands out with its regional characteristics. Globally, according to Hostinger's 2025 entrepreneurship statistics, 80% of new businesses in the economy are managed by young adults, and 62% of this growth is attributed to higher education graduates, but in Namangan, this figure reached 75% as local universities focus on digital and agricultural innovations.In the GSER 2025 report, Uzbekistan ranked 14th as Central Asia's fastest-growing startup ecosystem, with Namangan supporting 30 startups as an innovation hub in the Fergana Valley, exceeding the global average growth of 21%. [7]

MIT Sloan's "Ecosystem for Innovation-Driven Entrepreneurship in Central Asia" report assessed Uzbekistan's higher education infrastructure as the largest among Central Asian countries, with entrepreneurship education at Namangan State University expanding by 40% in 2025, increasing economic impact by engaging students in international projects. While the World Bank's "Uzbekistan: Modernizing Tertiary Education" highlighted the challenge of higher education failing to provide skills for growth and innovation, Namangan saw a 15% improvement in this area in 2025, as new institutions like New Uzbekistan University implemented entrepreneurship and sustainability projects with European partners. [8]

According to Stat.uz, enrollment in Uzbekistan's higher education reached 707.3 thousand students in 2024/2025, with Namangan accounting for 5%, and interest in innovative programs among these students increased by 25%. ADB's "Skills Development in Uzbekistan" report emphasized the integration of vocational schools and higher education, which in Namangan covered 10,000 people through short-term entrepreneurship courses in 18 institutions in rural areas. While AI investments reached record levels in global trends, digital entrepreneurship in Namangan showed a 111% growth in the fintech sector, contributing 12% to the region's GDP. Eurasianet's 2025 report evaluated Uzbekistan as a "dynamic transformer," with Namangan becoming a regional model through returning migrants and entrepreneurial activity. EPRA Journals' "Modeling the Development of the Innovative Environment" report highlighted the potential of networks in Uzbekistan's higher education, which in Namangan led to 20 international cooperation projects in 2025. [9]

Conclusion

In 2025, innovative entrepreneurship programs transformed higher education into a mechanism that generates direct economic benefits: universities are no longer just imparting knowledge but are creating and commercializing profitable businesses while students are still studying; this model completely eliminates the "job search" period for graduates, turning them into taxpayers, job creators, and exporting entrepreneurs from day one. In Namangan, this process is evident with clear economic results: local universities have engaged students in agritech, digital services, fintech, and export-oriented small manufacturing projects, significantly increasing the region's real sector income; returning migrants are combining their experience and foreign capital with local students to open immediately profitable enterprises; as a result, Namangan is no longer just a region producing cotton and fruits, but has become a true economic cluster that manufactures new products, sells them abroad, and accelerates internal money circulation. Global and Namangan experiences converge on the same conclusion: if higher education properly adapts students to market demands and fully prepares them to start their own

businesses, the country's or region's economy will rapidly acquire new sources of income, and as this process continues, by 2030, regions like Namangan will become one of the main growth points of Uzbekistan's economy.

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