

**ENHANCING UZBEKISTAN'S GLOBAL HUMAN CAPITAL: IN-
DEPTH ANALYSIS OF PRESIDENTIAL DECREE PD-77 ON
SUPPORTING TALENTED PROFESSIONALS IN INTERNATIONAL
EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

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***Abstract:** on December 27, 2024, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan signed Presidential Decree No. PD-77, titled “On Additional Measures to Support Talented Specialists in Receiving Education Abroad, Developing Their Professional Skills and Incentivizing Them.” The decree outlines a comprehensive approach to cultivating a globally competent workforce through targeted scholarships, structured reintegration programs, and digital talent management infrastructure. This policy responds to urgent national needs for qualified specialists in priority development sectors, such as technology, medicine, education, and administration. Through comparisons with global models, extensive statistical data, and an analysis of implementation challenges and opportunities, this article offers a complete review of PD-77 and its place within Uzbekistan’s 2030 national development framework.*

***Keywords:** human capital, talent development, Uzbekistan, international education, innovation, brain drain, education policy, workforce development, reintegration.*

Introduction

In recent years, the Republic of Uzbekistan has embarked on a far-reaching journey of political, economic, and social reform. A major pillar of this transformation has been the prioritization of education, science, and innovation as strategic assets for national development. Recognizing the direct link between

global competitiveness and human capital, the government has initiated a series of legal and policy reforms to modernize its education system, integrate into international academic networks, and cultivate a new generation of leaders and professionals. One of the most ambitious and consequential reforms in this context is Presidential Decree No. PD-77, signed by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on December 27, 2024.

The decree titled “On Additional Measures to Support Talented Specialists in Receiving Education Abroad, Developing Their Professional Skills and Incentivizing Them” introduces a new national strategy to enable thousands of talented young citizens and mid-career professionals to pursue education, internships, and professional training in leading foreign institutions. At the same time, the policy introduces innovative mechanisms to ensure that the knowledge, skills, and global experience gained abroad are productively reinvested into Uzbekistan’s economy and public institutions. It also formalizes incentives for returnees, including employment guarantees, reintegration bonuses, academic positions, and access to professional networks. The decree builds on existing structures like the El-Yurt Umidi Foundation but significantly expands access, introduces digital governance systems, and aligns human capital development with long-term national development strategies.

Main Body

The significance of Presidential Decree PD-77 lies not only in its scale and ambition but also in its holistic approach to talent development. By facilitating international academic mobility while ensuring reintegration into the national labor market, the policy reflects a dual commitment: openness to global education

standards and loyalty to domestic progress. The decree creates a sustainable cycle of educational investment, professional application, and national innovation.

At the heart of the reform is a robust financial support system for academic degrees and professional training. Under PD-77, eligible Uzbek citizens can apply for full scholarships to pursue bachelor's, master's, and doctoral studies at top-ranked international universities. The program also covers vocational and technical training, research fellowships, and internships in leading international firms and research centers. This wide coverage reflects a recognition that global competence is not confined to academia but must extend to practical and technical skills. All scholarship recipients are selected through a transparent, merit-based system overseen by the newly formed "Talent Council," which includes representatives from the Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Finance, and the private sector.

The scope of disciplines prioritized under the decree is directly tied to Uzbekistan's strategic economic and social priorities. These include information technology, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, education, green energy, healthcare, civil service reform, and engineering. By creating a talent pipeline in these sectors, the government aims to address systemic workforce gaps that have hindered modernization efforts. For instance, current labor market analyses reveal that Uzbekistan faces an annual shortfall of over 6,000 qualified engineers, 10,000 health specialists, and 15,000 professionals in the IT and digital services sector. These shortages not only limit productivity but also slow down the adoption of innovation in state and private institutions.

In order to ensure that foreign-educated professionals return and contribute domestically, PD-77 introduces strong reintegration incentives. Graduates will be guaranteed employment in the public sector or innovation-oriented enterprises and

will receive up to a 50% salary bonus for five years. In addition, those willing to teach or mentor at Uzbek universities and colleges will receive additional stipends and academic grants. These provisions aim to reverse the “brain drain” phenomenon and transform it into a “brain gain” strategy by creating an ecosystem where global experience is not only welcomed but actively utilized for local advancement.

A central innovation in PD-77 is the creation of the E-Talented.uz platform, a national digital ecosystem that manages applications, monitors academic progress, and facilitates reintegration upon return. This platform serves multiple purposes: it ensures transparency in selection, creates a centralized talent database, links returnees with job opportunities, and enables policymakers to track the overall impact of the program. It also allows for real-time feedback from participants and institutions, thereby creating a dynamic system of policy learning and adjustment.

From an international perspective, PD-77 positions Uzbekistan alongside countries that have effectively used international education as a development tool. For example, Kazakhstan’s Bolashak program has produced over 14,000 graduates since its launch in 1993, with a return rate exceeding 85%. South Korea and China similarly fund large-scale overseas scholarships under strict reintegration mandates. Unlike these models, however, Uzbekistan’s approach avoids legally binding return clauses and instead relies on a system of voluntary return incentivization. This reflects a more rights-based and motivational philosophy of governance that prioritizes opportunity over obligation.

The decree also opens opportunities for expanding academic diplomacy. The Ministry of Higher Education has been tasked with signing at least 30 new

bilateral agreements with foreign universities by 2026, facilitating joint degree programs, student exchanges, and faculty collaboration. This will enhance the international visibility of Uzbek academic institutions while creating pathways for knowledge transfer and institutional benchmarking.

However, the implementation of PD-77 is not without risks. Challenges include ensuring the recognition of foreign qualifications, minimizing corruption in selection processes, preventing “elite capture” of scholarship opportunities, and developing enough high-quality jobs domestically to absorb returnees. Another concern is regional inequality—students from rural or marginalized communities may face barriers to application due to lack of awareness, language preparation, or financial resources for required tests and documents. To address these challenges, the government has pledged to provide preparatory training, digital literacy support, and rural outreach initiatives.

The impact of PD-77 is expected to be significant and multifaceted. In the short term, the program will increase outbound student mobility, enrich academic environments upon return, and inject global best practices into national institutions. Over the long term, it will strengthen Uzbekistan’s innovation capacity, improve the quality of public services, raise the global ranking of Uzbek universities, and reduce dependency on foreign technical assistance. Experts estimate that by 2030, at least 10,000 foreign-educated professionals will have been reintegrated into the workforce, contributing to an increase in research output, a reduction in skills mismatch, and the elevation of Uzbekistan’s Human Capital Index by at least 20 percentile points.

In essence, PD-77 is a landmark in Uzbekistan’s reform landscape. It represents a clear policy shift from reactive education policies toward proactive,

globally engaged, and innovation-centered human capital development. By equipping its youth with global competencies and creating platforms for their reintegration and growth, Uzbekistan is not only responding to present challenges but also building the foundation for a prosperous and knowledge-driven future.

Conclusion

Presidential Decree PD-77 of December 27, 2024, stands as a transformative policy in Uzbekistan's pursuit of educational excellence and socioeconomic modernization. It recognizes the global nature of talent development and the urgent need for a highly skilled, innovative, and globally connected workforce. Through a sophisticated mix of international education support, domestic reintegration mechanisms, digital governance, and institutional collaboration, the decree creates a scalable and sustainable model of human capital enhancement. If successfully implemented, PD-77 will not only solve current workforce shortages but also establish Uzbekistan as a regional leader in educational reform, knowledge diplomacy, and inclusive national development. The long-term legacy of this decree may well be measured in the innovations it enables, the leaders it produces, and the future it shapes.

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