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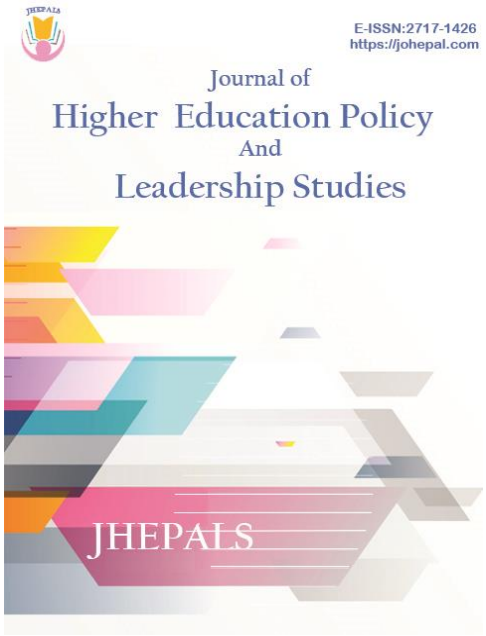
Cliché ELT and the Requirements of "Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026": Expanding ELT Paradigms



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"Colloquium"

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Highlights

- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Uzbekistan have extensively worked on their Strategic Plans in alignment with their missions and visions as well as higher education trends worldwide.
- Universities as communities of higher education leaders, scholars, staff, and students develops all teaching/ research/ leadership policies and practices in a way to expedite the move towards obtaining their ideals in "Strategic Plans". In the same vein, the universities are obliged to prepare their strategies in alignment with national policies.
- Different groups of higher education stakeholders (leadership team, researchers, academic staff, representatives of staff, representatives of students, communities outside the campus, policy-making authorities of the ministries, etc.) are engaged if a university intends to develop its "Strategic Plan".
- We provide an overview of the requirements of changes in ELT practices worldwide with a special focus on Uzbekistan. It would be based on the "Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026" with practical suggestions for HE policy-makers and university management teams in Uzbekistan.

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Introduction

As teachers, we acknowledge the fact that students differ in their abilities. Some have a higher level of talent, while others possess average competencies to grasp fundamental knowledge. There are also students who struggle and may fail certain courses and assessments. However, it is important to recognize that even those with limited learning capabilities have other untapped potentials that should be identified and nurtured for success both within and beyond college/university. So, our role as teachers goes beyond simply following the curriculum and grading students. We should create an effective learning environment by managing the classroom dynamics. This entails discovering and fostering the inner potentials and abilities of our students. While we should adhere to the university's teaching and assessment policies, that should not be our mere responsibility and the entirety of our profession. Gifted students often find the traditional teaching methods unchallenged and monotonous, as they are quick learners who can grasp the course contents and materials within a shorter period of time. Hence, it becomes essential to create teaching-learning environment based on dialogue and collaboration with the premise that students are supposed to leave the university for living in larger communities as future members of the society with different roles and responsibilities.

National Development strategy and Vision for Success and Prosperity

We are witnessing numerous changes and challenges worldwide in politics, education, health, economy, culture, etc. Each country has its own priorities with the aim to provide the ideal living conditions for its people for a successful and prosperous life. Considering some example, we find the Sultanate of Oman with its comprehensive blueprint known as Oman Vision 2040, Qatar with the strategic framework of Qatar National Vision 2030, the United Arab Emirates with its aspiring program titled "We the UAE 2031," and Kuwait with its long-term plan called Vision 2035 and the National Development Plan known as "New Kuwait."

- The Sultanate of Oman: Oman Vision 2040 [*]
- Qatar: Qatar National Vision 2030 [†]
- United Arab Emirates: We the UAE 2031 [‡]
- Kuwait: Vision 2035 and National Development Plan "New Kuwait" [§]

Uzbekistan also possesses its own comprehensive and well developed national strategy and vision (Figure 1) branded as Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026 [*] . Here is an excerpt of the development plan:

> The Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan aims to achieve 100 goals within the seven priority areas of development of Uzbekistan for the next five years. Efforts to achieve these goals are also evident. They, in turn, make it much

[*] https://www.oman2040.om/?lang=en
[†] https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/qnv1/Documents/QNV2030_English_v2.pdf
[‡] https://wetheuae.ae/en
[§] https://www.newkuwait.gov.kw/home.aspx
[*] https://strategy.uz/ ; https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oZyECn1OShqXgWz8RP5s_xndiKYJiZ0w/view

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easier to control efficiency and effectiveness. In other words, the government introduced a system of evaluating the effectiveness of planned reforms following the level of achievement of development goals. (p. 2)

Figure 1. Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026 (Source: Development Strategy Center)

It should be taken into consideration that universities and HEIs play a pivotal and undeniable role in successful implementation of the national strategic plan. In this regard, academic staff and researchers need to adopt new role as strategic advisor to the policy-making authorities of the countries. In doing so, academic staff and researchers' teaching practice and their priorities for research will be in alignment with the needs, policies and priorities of the national strategy and the strategic plan of their universities.

Universities & HEIs: New Urgencies, Unexpected Challenges, New Policies, Novel Solutions

Universities are obliged to work based on their strategic plans to succeed in today's global competition in higher education and to work as pioneers within national, regional, and global levels. The strategic plan which is prepared based on the higher order policies of the countries as well as ministries of higher education well illuminates the future progress plan. In this regard, all teaching/ research/ leadership policies of universities should be in alignment with the guidelines of their national strategic plan.

There should be "no trial and error" attitude towards teaching practice if the goal is to help the university move further towards its success. Academic staff should be aware of the HE policies/ trends worldwide and can analyze the needs and priorities of their universities; so, they can develop materials, workshops, courses, or even modify the already available

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sources and materials. We should be in constant contact with all the members of the university (students, academic staff, leadership team, and employees) and other stakeholders of higher education outside the campus (public/ private organizations, the public, policy-makers, etc.).

In the past, universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) were primarily expected to focus on academic teaching to ensure that students became well-educated members of society. However, recently, there has been a growing expectation for universities and HEIs to also prioritize research and come up with innovative solutions based on the needs and demands of their stakeholders such as society and industry. As a result, entrepreneurship universities have started to emerge worldwide and higher education policy makers require universities and HEIs to train entrepreneurs for successful careers after graduation. Simply relying on traditional academic teaching and research principles is no longer sufficient. Rather, it is essential to train individuals who are adaptable to the constantly changing societies (Tohidian et al., 2023). In a recent report by Oster and Piacentini (2023), it is mentioned that:

> Policy makers around the world recognise the importance of developing young people's 21st century skills like problem solving, creative thinking, self-regulation and collaboration. Many countries also include these skills as part of the intended learning outcomes of their education systems. To shift intention into practice, educational assessments need to better measure what matters. Innovative assessments are needed that combine conceptual, technological and methodological advances in educational measurement. (OECD, 2023)

The important point is that almost all "Strategic Plans" by universities and HEIs and the "National Strategies" worldwide have some common key concepts as: Transformation of education, Innovation, Entrepreneurship, People engagement, Sustainable Development Goals, Organizational change, Promotion of Networked Organization Structure, Green Universities, Green Management of Nations, Peace, Reduction of Poverty, (SDGs), Artificial Intelligence (AI), ChatGPT, Post-COVID Life, etc.

So, the traditional teaching-learning practice with its clichéd nature as we were used to experience in our K-12 and HE practices has lost its efficiency in dealing with these new changes and challenges.

Students' Self and Social Identity

One of the main responsibilities of universities is to nurture students' sense of self and social identity as they are not supposed to remain in the university/college; rather, their role extends beyond the confined spaces of classrooms and soon they will join a dynamic and diverse community, encompassing individuals with varying beliefs and perspectives. Torres et al. (2009) highlight that:

> Social construction of identity occurs in different contexts on campus such as in how student organizations are created and which students are drawn to them, or in the social identities among those in leadership positions and those not, as well as in issues of institutional fit within access and retention. One of the components of identity development that arises quickly on most campuses is

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> the process of students learning how to balance their needs with those of others. (p. 577)

In the same vein, Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma (2006, p. 109) emphasize that "… the students adapt to their school context and that, at the same time, they develop their own school experience, which also contributes to the construction of their identity". Kaplan and Flum (2012) well illuminate the present educational needs of societies worldwide by noting that:

> The increasingly rapid change in the content, volume, and accessibility of knowledge makes a sole emphasis on knowledge in education an almost futile endeavor. More important, perhaps, is the realization by educators, parents, employers, and students themselves, that they desire and need more from education than just knowledge—they want education to promote development of students' identities: self-knowledge, values, goals, and orientation and skills for personal and social transformation that would help in coping with the rapid changes that characterize life in this century. (p. 171)

So, it is important to get a real understanding of the best practices in teaching and learning worldwide with a special focus on national priorities and policies. In this sense, the students must be trained to have a clear understanding of their majors in terms of global research trends/ agendas; priorities of each country; practical studies which are the results of longitudinal research; and key theories/ terms of their fields of interest/ study.

This awareness helps students become familiar with the needs, policies and priorities of their own countries. It also trains them to be critical thinkers during their studies at under graduate and graduate levels. Moreover, it enables them to be creative and successful citizen, entrepreneur, or leaders, rather than just university graduates holding a certificate.

Research Methodology

Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) was adopted as the research methodology for data collection and analysis (Moher et al., 2009). Data collection was conducted through 3 stages of Identification, Screening, and Included.

As the nature of present research implies, we aim to suggest policies for improving ELT practice in alignment with national policies and changes and challenges we are witnessing worldwide. In this regard, we reviewed 354 works published as Working papers, Policy papers, National reports, Commission reports, Association reports, and works published by UNESCO.

Before moving to the next step, an immediate review of works was administered to confirm that all collected works are in alignment with the nature of research. So, 22 works were removed from our collection prior to the screening phase. We set some criteria (see figure 3) and 12 works were removed before analysis of works in terms of eligibility. A total number of 320 works were analyzed in terms of eligibility and we excluded 34 reports. We assessed 286 works in terms of quality and 17 reports were removed and finally a total number of 269 works comprised our source of review (Figure 3).

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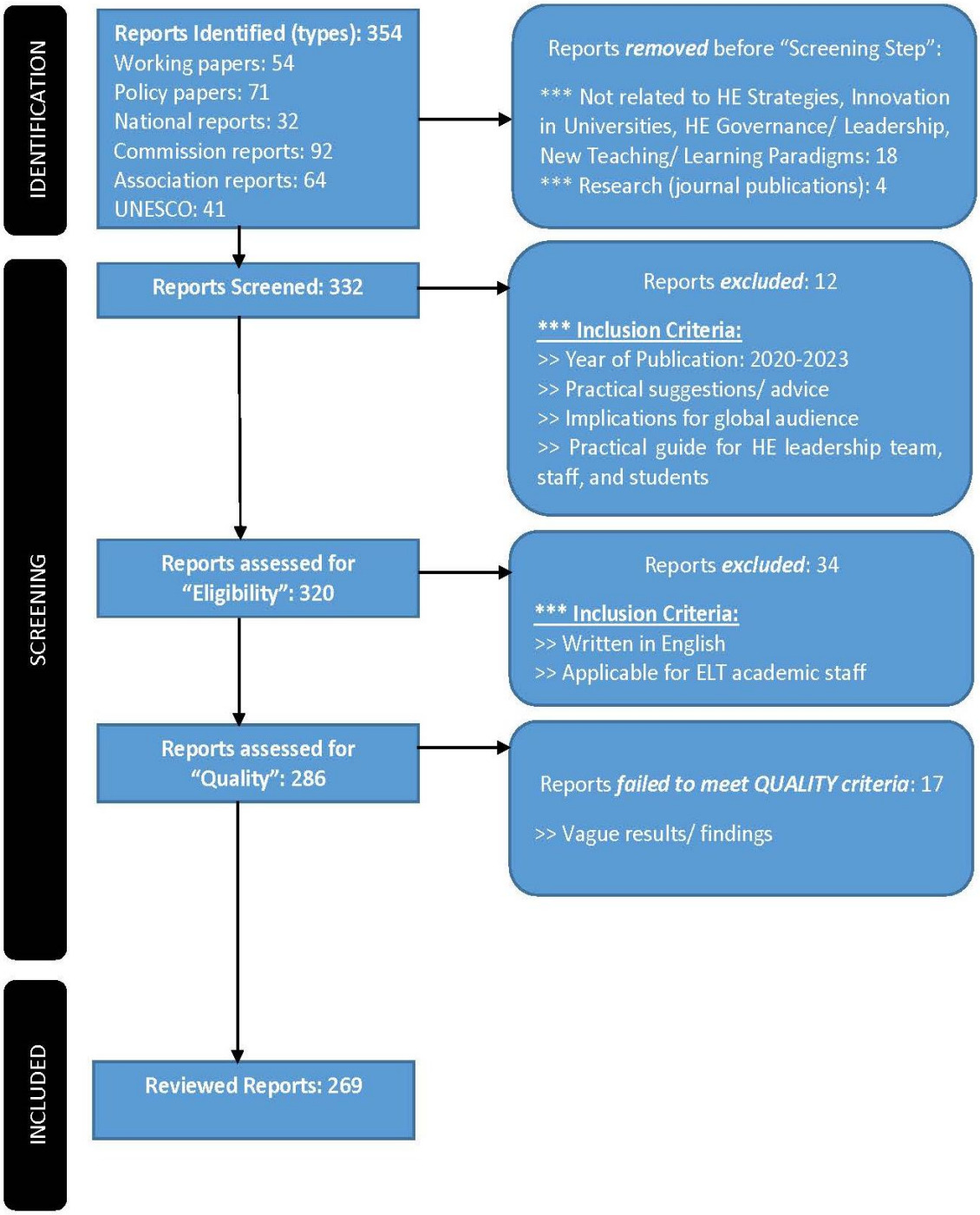

Figure 3. Data Collection & Analysis based on PRISMA

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Results: Contributions for ELT Instructors

In accordance with the students' field of study and the specific objectives of each department, ELT instructors can introduce cutting-edge research materials to empower students with the innovative research studies. In this regard, we need teachers who are competent enough to meet the priorities of the universities in terms of teaching and research. it is crucial for them to possess knowledge and understanding of the prevailing global trends and priorities in higher education and this goes beyond simply instructing students in the four language skills.

One way to succeed is to recruit the most competent teachers. It is also highlighted in the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996, as cited in Cochran-Smith, 2003, p. 5) that "the single most important strategy for achieving America's educational goals [is] a blueprint for recruiting, preparing, and supporting excellent teachers in all of America's schools".

Universities and HEIs should exercise strong emphasis on their "Strategic Plan" in their job advertisements and also in interview procedures of shortlisted candidates. At the same time, the applicants should have a crystal clear understanding of the "Strategic Plans" of the target university; so, he/she will be able to develop practical and step-wise proposals for collaboration with the university.

The other road to success is administering training workshops for ELT practitioners. Faculty members and English language instructors should be supported with ongoing training and professional development opportunities to help them keep up with the latest pedagogical approaches, technology tools, and research in language teaching. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) report (December 2018) -State Policies to Improve Teacher Preparation- highlights that:

> We need more teachers who are well-prepared when they enter the classroom. Too many come into the profession ill-prepared, disadvantaging the students they serve. … Inadequate preparation also contributes to teacher turnover. Many teachers who leave the profession after a few years say they felt underprepared for the job. (p. 2)

Through systematic and consistent professional development teachers become better equipped with the knowledge and awareness of evolving challenges in education and can adapt their instructional methods accordingly. Sims and Fletcher-Wood (2021, p. 47) believe that "…teacher professional development (PD) is more effective when it is sustained, collaborative, subject specific, draws on external expertise, has buy-in from teachers, and is practice based".

It is recommended that universities and HEIs assign the potential and competent ELT instructors to divergent strategic roles. By taking on new roles and responsibilities such as acting as university representatives in international collaboration meetings, serving as policy-making advisors, and acting as academic partnership representatives between industry and university, ELT teachers can play a crucial role in bringing about positive changes. These additional roles can provide teachers with opportunities to contribute to the development of international educational initiatives and facilitate meaningful connections between academia and industry. By adopting these new roles, ELT teachers can have a

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significant impact on fostering collaboration and promoting innovation in the education sector.

In conclusion, in order to achieve their educational goals and empower students with innovative research studies, universities should highlight their strategic plans during the recruitment process and invite competent teachers who possess knowledge of global trends and priorities in higher education. Furthermore, ongoing training and professional development opportunities should be provided to ELT practitioners to ensure they stay updated with the latest pedagogical approaches and research. Moreover, by assigning ELT instructors to strategic roles, universities can leverage their potential and expertise to foster collaboration, promote innovation, and contribute to international educational initiatives.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Human Participants

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Originality Note

The authors confirm that the manuscript is their original work, and if others' works are used, they are properly cited/quoted.

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