

**UNDERSTANDING THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS
OF INTERNATIONAL BRANCH CAMPUSES
(IBC) IN UZBEKISTAN: INSIGHTS FROM
GRADUATES**

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OF INTERNATIONAL BRANCH CAMPUSES
(IBC) IN UZBEKISTAN: INSIGHTS FROM
GRADUATES**

by

MURATOV BOBIR TULKINOVICH

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IBC	International Branch Campuses
IUT	Inha University in Tashkent
MDIST	Management Development Institute of Singapore in Tashkent
TNE	Transnational Education
TPUT	Turin Polytechnic University in Tashkent
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
WIUT	Westminster International University in Tashkent

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**MEMAHAMI IMPAK EKONOMI KAMPUS CAWANGAN
ANTARABANGSA (IBC) DI UZBEKISTAN: PERSPEKTIF DARIPADA
GRADUAN**

ABSTRAK

Bilangan kampus cawangan antarabangsa (IBC) di Uzbekistan telah berkembang pesat dalam beberapa dekad kebelakangan ini. Kerajaan telah menyokong secara aktif penubuhan institusi-institusi ini dengan matlamat untuk meningkatkan akses, kualiti, dan kapasiti dalam sistem pendidikan tinggi, serta menyediakan sumber daya manusia yang berkelayakan untuk ekonomi negara. Walaupun industri ini telah matang dan beberapa IBC telah melahirkan beberapa kumpulan graduan, manfaat dan impak sebenar institusi-institusi ini terhadap ekonomi dan masyarakat masih belum jelas. Oleh itu, kajian ini meneroka perspektif graduan IBC terhadap kesan ekonomi kampus cawangan antarabangsa di Uzbekistan, dengan fokus khusus kepada pembangunan modal insan. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kajian kes kualitatif. Seramai 20 orang graduan daripada empat IBC yang mempunyai sekurang-kurangnya dua tahun pengalaman kerja selepas tamat pengajian telah ditemu bual. Kajian ini dipandu oleh Teori Pertumbuhan Endogen, Teori Modal Insan, dan Teori Bentuk Modal. Penemuan utama menunjukkan bahawa IBC menyumbang kepada pembangunan modal insan dengan membekalkan graduan dengan kemahiran insaniah dan teknikal yang penting, serta ciri-ciri peribadi yang bernilai. Keadaan institusi tertentu seperti persekitaran dan budaya akademik turut menyokong pembangunan modal insan. Sebaliknya, graduan universiti awam tempatan dilihat kurang memiliki banyak daripada kecekapan ini. Selain itu, dengan membekalkan pelajar dengan kemahiran dan ciri-ciri tersebut, IBC memberi impak kepada ekonomi negara dalam

pelbagai sektor ekonomi, menyumbang kepada inovasi, bakat dan pelaburan, mewujudkan peluang bagi pelajar untuk menjana pendapatan semasa pengajian, serta meningkatkan kebolehpasaran dan kejayaan kerjaya golongan belia. Namun begitu, para peserta turut mengenal pasti beberapa cabaran dan mencadangkan beberapa saranan untuk menambah baik dasar dan pengurusan IBC. Cadangan ini merangkumi aspek industri, akademik, penyelidikan dan pembangunan, pensyarah, persekitaran, pengurusan, sokongan pelajar, dan kebebasan akademik. Akhir sekali, selain penambahbaikan di peringkat institusi, kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa kerajaan harus menggalakkan kerjasama yang lebih erat antara IBC dan universiti tempatan untuk memudahkan pemindahan pengetahuan dan pembangunan kapasiti. Kerjasama sedemikian berpotensi untuk memperkukuh pembangunan modal insan negara, meningkatkan hasil graduan, dan membawa kesan ekonomi yang lebih meluas.

**UNDERSTANDING THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF
INTERNATIONAL BRANCH CAMPUSES (IBC) IN UZBEKISTAN:
INSIGHTS FROM GRADUATES**

ABSTRACT

The number of international branch campuses (IBC) in Uzbekistan has grown rapidly in recent decades. The government has actively supported the establishment of these institutions with the aim of increasing access, quality, and capacity within the higher education system, as well as preparing qualified human resources for the national economy. Although the industry has matured and some IBCs have already produced several batches of graduates, the actual benefits and impacts of these institutions on the economy and society remains unclear. Therefore, this study explores the perspectives of IBC graduates on the economic impacts of international branch campuses in Uzbekistan, with a focus on human capital development. The study employed a qualitative case study approach. 20 graduates of four IBCs who had at least two years of post-study work experience were interviewed. Endogenous growth theory, human capital theory, and forms of capital theory guided the research. The major findings indicate that IBCs contribute to human capital development by equipping graduates with essential soft and hard skills, as well as valuable personal attributes. Specific institutional conditions such as environment and academic culture support the development of human capital. In contrast, graduates of local public universities were perceived to lack many of these competencies. Furthermore, by equipping the students with these skills and traits, IBCs impact the country's economy in various economic sectors, contribute to innovation, talent and investment, create opportunities for students to earn income during the studies, and enhance

employability and career success of youth. However, participants also identified several challenges and proposed recommendations to improve both policy and management of IBCs. These suggestions pertain to industry, academic, research and development, professors, environment, management, student support, and academic freedom. Finally, beyond institutional-level improvements, the study also indicates that the government should encourage greater collaboration between IBCs and local universities to facilitate knowledge transfer and capacity building. Such cooperation could enhance national human capital development, improve graduate outcomes, and yield broader economic impacts.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Education is considered as a main catalyst of human capital development, equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge essential for advancing national economic growth and social progress. In the context of developing countries, higher education, particularly international branch campuses (IBC) has emerged as a strategic tool for building skilled human capital to meet the demands of a modern economy.

Currently, there are more than 300 institutions that offer their programs abroad (Cross-Border Education Research Team [C-BERT], 2023). Both governments and universities have played a pivotal role in the spreading of IBCs. The English-speaking countries such as the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) have been dominant in sending their campuses, while the Asian countries such as China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are the top hosting destinations.

These examples are described as transnational education (TNE), which in turn is a part of greater phenomena such as internationalization and globalization (Muratov & Ghasemy, 2025). The rise of a global business and development of technologies has brought the countries closer than ever before and led to the free flow of information, capital, and people. Among all sectors of the economy, the higher education has also been affected by the global trends. One of the recent examples is COVID-19 pandemic. Due to movement controls, the mobility almost stopped, and the classes moved to online mode that also brought the issues of online learning and teaching, the lack of information technologies infrastructure, and the psychological well-being of individuals (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Amoah & Mok, 2020; Hans de Wit & Philip G Altbach, 2021).

The governments started to exploit these opportunities that emerged through the globalization. While some countries have been using internationalization strategies to export education services, others have been importing them. Since there are various motives and rationales at country level, the same can be said about organizational and individual level.

Uzbekistan as a young and developing country in the transition economy has also been active in hosting IBCs since the early 2000s. The main motivation of the government to start IBC project was to feed the national economy with qualified human resources (Uralov, 2020). Currently there are 29 IBCs from various parts of the world offering quality education to Uzbek youth.

The establishment and growth of IBCs worldwide, has created a different type of challenges and issues for the governments and higher education community. Student access, quality assurance, recognition of qualifications, marketization of higher education, brain drain, cultural conflicts, and curriculum irrelevance are among the discussed areas by authors (H. de Wit & P. G. Altbach, 2021; Stephen Wilkins, 2021). While most of the research has been from the sending country perspective, the trending areas have been on the topics such as management issues, trends and challenges, student issues and perspectives, academic staff issues, educational hubs, quality assurance, educational policies and trends, cultural differences, awareness, and identity (Escriva-Beltran, Muñoz-de-Prat, & Villó, 2019; Knight & Liu, 2019; Kosmützky & Putty, 2016)

On the other hand, limited research has been conducted on the actual results and benefits of IBCs from the host country's perspective, particularly regarding their impacts on various stakeholders on the receiving end (Knight & Liu, 2019). In

particular, the studies related to economic and skills impacts, and the perspectives of graduates are lacking.

Therefore, the current research aims to explore the perspectives of graduates on the economic impacts of international branch campuses on Uzbekistan with the consideration of human capital development view.

The following sections of the chapter will cover the background and context, followed by the research problem, objectives, questions, significance, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, methods, and definitions.

1.2 Research Background

1.2.1 The Rise of IBCs Globally

The birth and rise of IBCs are a result of other traditional types of cross-border education such as mobility of students and faculty, and later mobility of programs (Knight, 2020). Even though the first case of mobility of providers dates back to 1920s (Jason Lane, Farrugia, & Kinser, 2014), the significant openings occurred in 1980s when the emerging countries started to arrange their education systems based on the skills requirements for the economy (Borgos, 2016). But the rapid growth of the sector happened by the late 1990s and 2000s due to the further progress in technology, infrastructure, and transportation (Knight, 2008). The universities from developed nations such as the US, UK, Australia, France have opened branches in various parts of the world but mainly in Asia (Figures 1.1-1.2). Middle Eastern countries such as the UAE and Qatar, and South-East Asian countries such as China, Malaysia, and Singapore have become the major importing destinations of IBCs (Figures 1.3-1.4). As some authors noted the movement have been from global North to global South, from West to East, or from the center to periphery (Alkuwari, 2020). By 2015 there

were about 249 IBCs globally (Garrett, Kinser, Lane, & Merola, 2016), and by 2020 it reached to more than 300 (C-BERT, 2023).

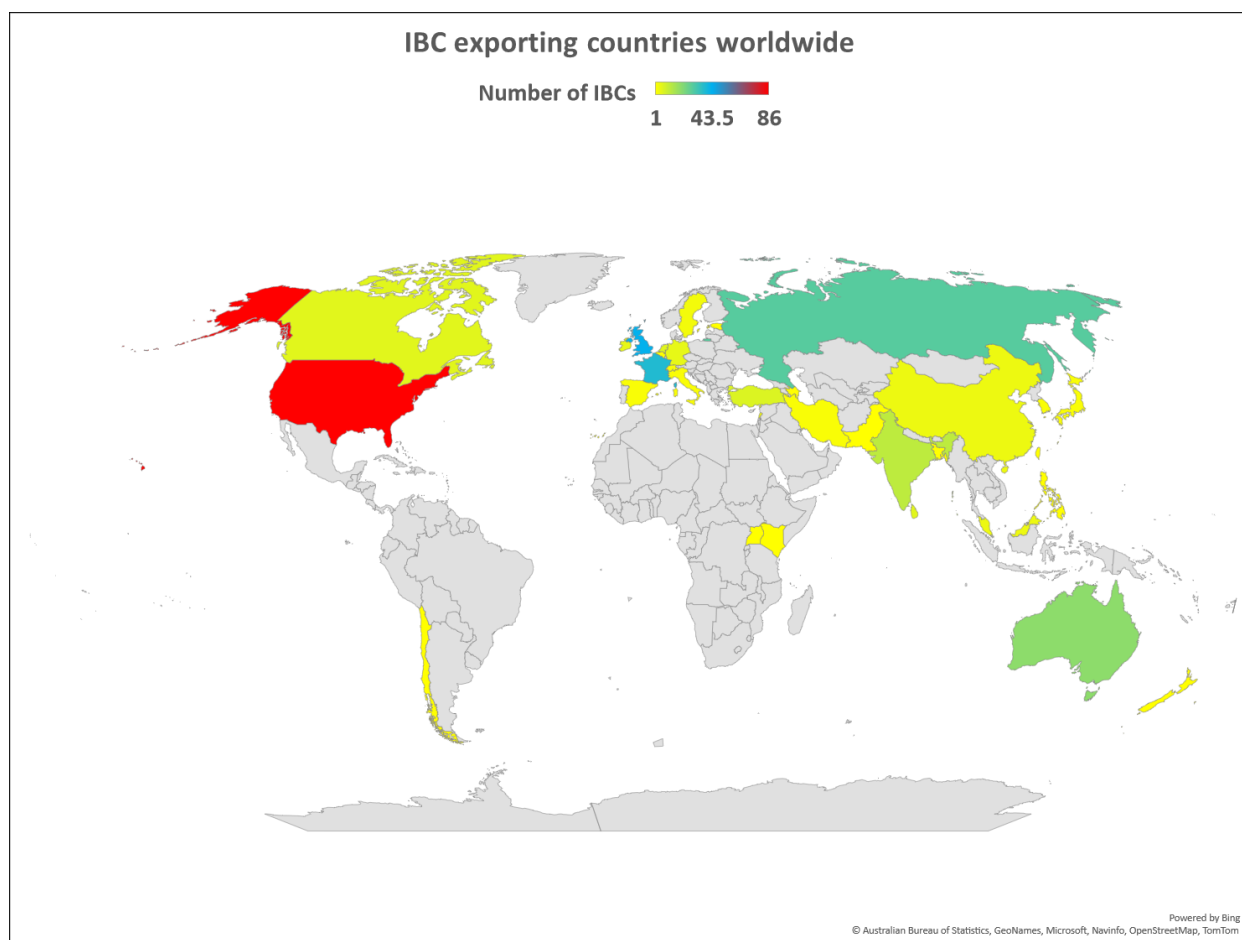


Figure 1.1 IBC exporting countries worldwide (C-BERT, 2023)

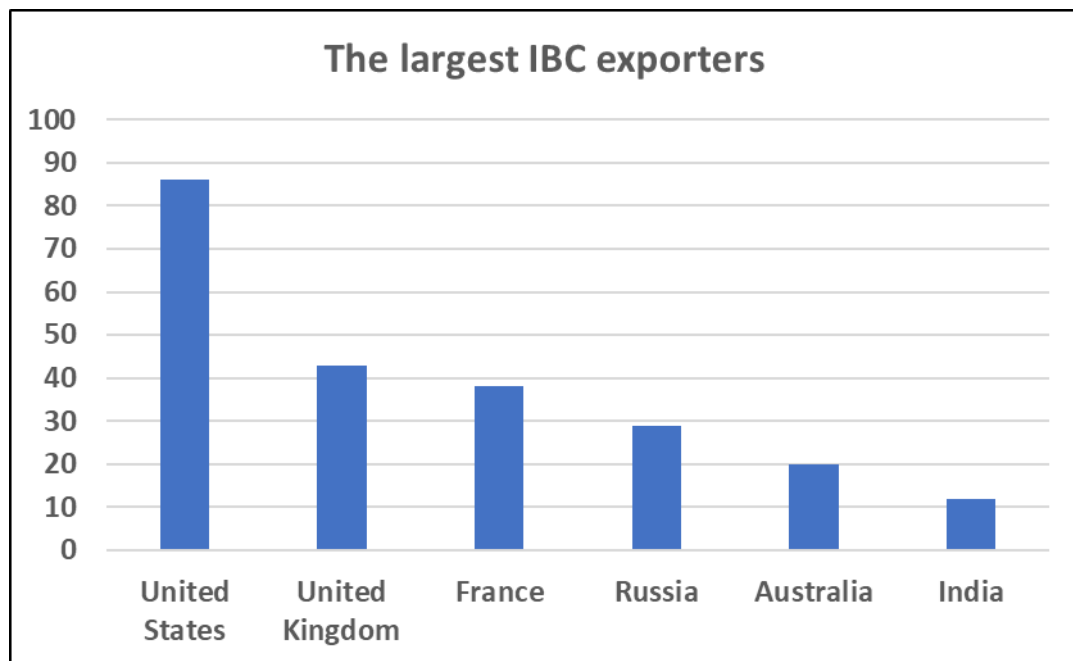


Figure 1.2 The largest IBC exporting countries (C-BERT, 2023)

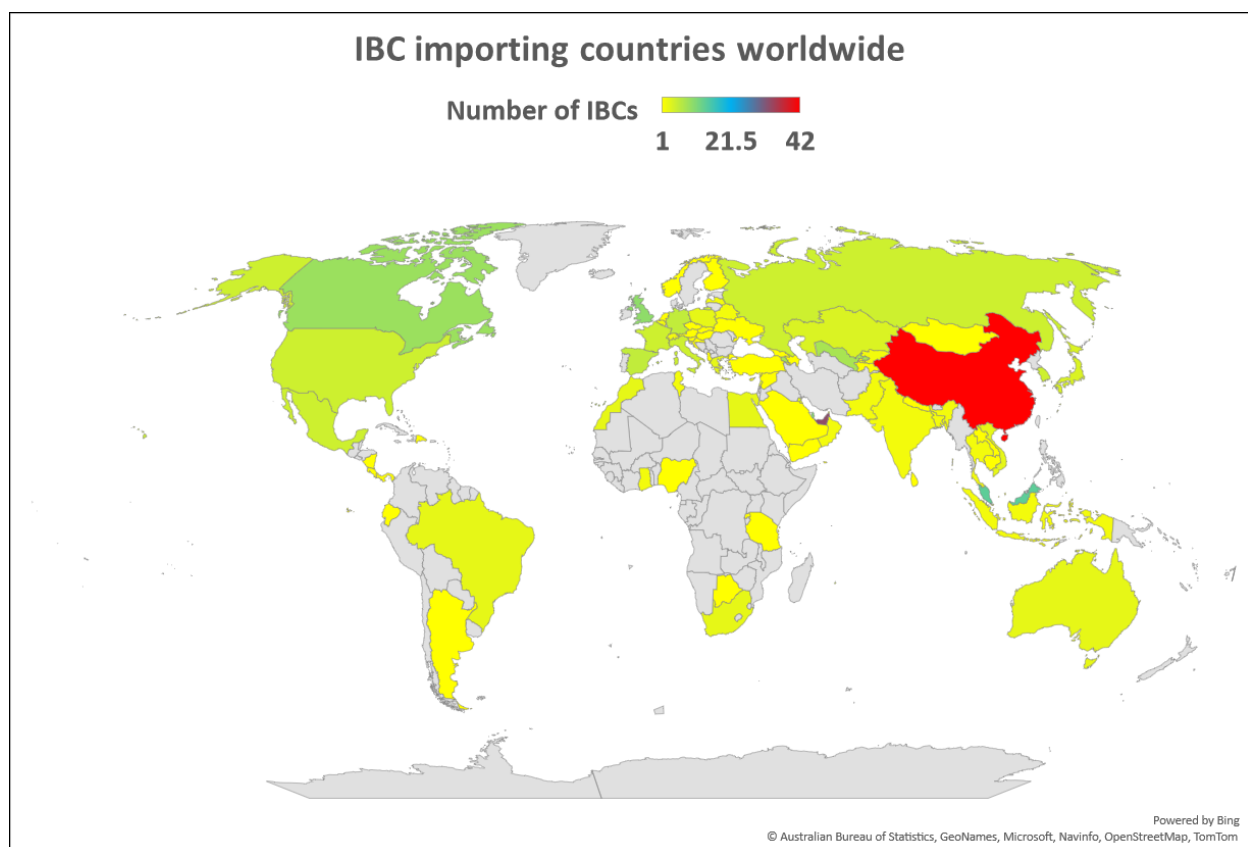


Figure 1.3 IBC importing countries worldwide (C-BERT, 2023)

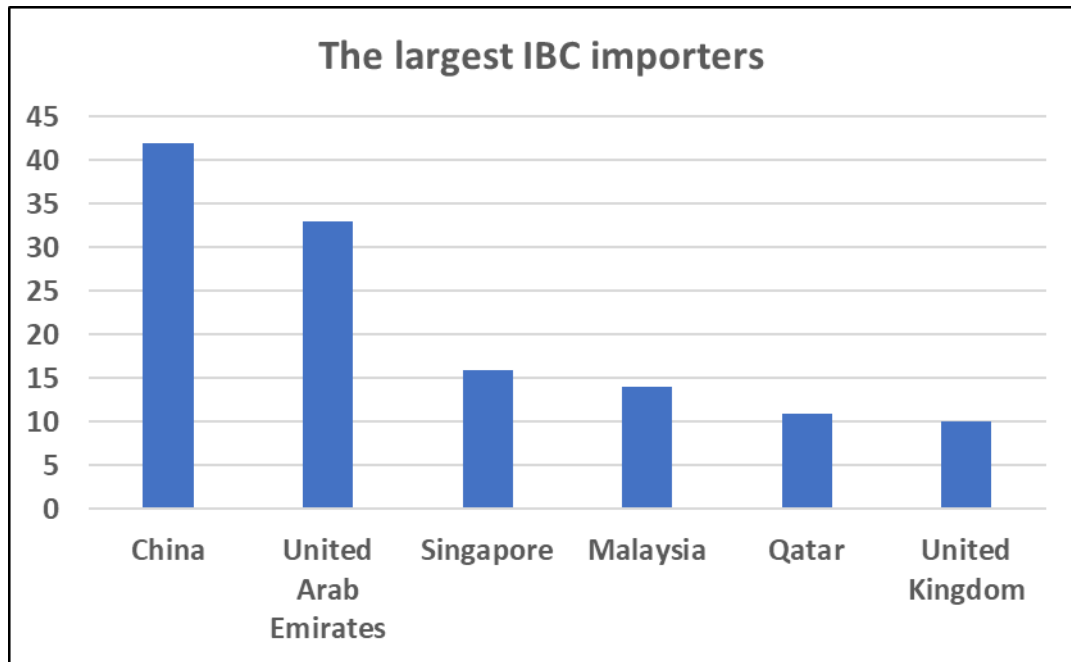


Figure 1.4 The largest IBC importing countries (C-BERT, 2023)

Moreover, due to the further advancement of economies and education systems, a new trend of IBC export from developing countries has emerged. It is estimated that 18% of IBC partnerships are South-to-South, and interestingly there are eight documented cases of South-to-North arrangements. While Russia has been active in opening IBCs in its former colonies in order to retain political power and influence (M. Chankseliani, 2020), Indian private universities are targeting Indian diaspora in countries such as the UAE, USA, and UK, and China has also opened universities in countries such as Malaysia, Japan, and UK as a soft power push (Garrett et al., 2016; Study-in-China, 2016).

Another notable paradigm that emerged because of IBC activities is education hubs. Knight (2024) describes education hubs as a third generation of cross-border activities that came after the movement of students and scholars, and programs and providers, but requires a more strategic approach. Countries and cities such as Qatar,

Bahrain, the UAE, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaysia that acquired a critical mass of education, science, and business institutions in a single location, have started to position themselves as education hubs. Based on the government priorities and approaches these places have been described as student hub, skilled work force hub, or knowledge/innovation hub (Knight, 2024).

Even though the high and fast establishment rate of IBCs has been described by some researchers as “education gold rush” (Lewin, 2008), others questioned the future sustainability of these institutions by bringing valid arguments such as difficulty of replicating the home campus and instability of local environments (Altbach, 2010; Altbach & de Wit, 2020; Healey, 2020). Indeed, there has been a closer or change of a status of 42 branches that equals to about 26% of total IBCs (Garrett et al., 2016). While some reasons originated internally due to enrollment issues and financial losses, others have been due to conflict with local governments such as quality concerns, academic freedom issues or high operation costs (Branch, 2021).

The analyses of transnational education literature in general and IBCs in particular, have shown the emergence of various challenges and complexities. While countries are hosting IBCs to provide an alternative education, the quality of these universities has been questioned, as the relevant policy, statistical data gathering, and quality assurance frameworks have not been well developed (Knight, 2010; Rumbley, Altbach, & Reisberg, 2012). The governments play a vital role on recognition of qualifications as the credibility of degrees is important for students and employers, and the weak policies on this matter may hinder the sustainability of IBCs (Manning, 2021). Another challenge is a brain drain. In contrast to the expectations of the governments, some of the well-educated IBC graduates may decide to leave the country as they have better English language and work skills (Knight, 2016). Finally, some of the degrees

and curriculum may not be appropriate to the local economic and cultural context (Teferra, 2008).

Regardless of challenges of IBCs for institutions and countries, the occurrence of new branch campuses has not stopped, and the well-established ones are keeping their operations successfully by serving their stakeholders, as there are various motivations that drive this phenomenon. Mainly political, economic, cultural and social, and academic rationales have been noted by several authors (Altbach & Knight, 2016; Hans de Wit & Philip G Altbach, 2021). On the macro level the countries are interested in IBCs to enhance economic competitiveness, leverage soft power, and increase the branding of education system (J Lane, Owens, & Kinser, 2015; Jason E Lane, 2015). On the organizational level universities engage in IBC activities to enhance the internationalization of home campus, add additional revenue stream, and increase reputation (Altbach & Knight, 2016). Finally, students may choose to study at IBCs to get a quality education for a lower price without leaving their families.

To conclude, it can be noted that the higher education globally has witnessed the sharp rise of IBCs in the recent two decades that is being driven by various factors such as globalization and internationalization, economic competition, and pursuit for knowledge. Although the main stakeholders engage in these activities with positive rationales and beliefs, the results are not always successful, and the future sustainability of IBCs have reached the debate table. Before moving the topic to the next level, the context country of the current research will be discussed shortly to give the reader a basic understanding.

1.2.2 IBCs in Uzbekistan

Since the formation of a state under the current name of Uzbekistan, the country had been under the Soviet Union for about 70 years and gained independence

in 1991. As a new emerging and transitional country, there was a strong need on qualified and modern thinking workforce who could build the nation. Despite that, the government could not provide equal and quality access to its citizens as the population had been rising sharply, but the quota did not follow this trend (Ruziev & Burkhanov, 2018).

Nevertheless, as a first experiment, in the late 1990s the government had sponsored a batch of smart youth to study abroad, but the project failed, as the majority of graduates did not want to return or the ones who came back could not adopt to government jobs well (Kushnazarov, 2015). As a result of this negative experience, the government shifted its perspective towards inviting foreign universities to the country.

The first IBC, Plekhanov Russian University of Economics in Tashkent was established in 1995 (Plekhanov Russian University of Economics [PRUE], 2022), and the second international university that has been offering degrees in business areas was opened in 2002 in cooperation with Westminster university in UK (Westminster International University in Tashkent, 2022). As it can be seen from the Table 1.1 below, today there are 29 IBCs from ten countries of the world such as Singapore, Italy, US, UK, Latvia, Belarus, and Turkey (Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovations of the Republic of Uzbekistan [MHESI], 2024). However, around half of the IBCs come from Russia, then there are several branches from each of South Korea and India.

Table 1.1 The list of IBCs in Uzbekistan by country of origin (MHESI, 2024)

No.	IBC	Country of origin
1	Tashkent branch of the Russian University of Economics named after G.V. Plekhanov	Russia
2	Westminster International University in Tashkent	UK
3	Branch of M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University in Tashkent	Russia
4	Branch of Russian State Oil and Gas University named after I.M. Gubkin in Tashkent	Russia
5	Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS) in Tashkent	Singapore
6	Turin Polytechnic University in Tashkent	Italy
7	Inha University in Tashkent	South Korea
8	Bucheon University in Tashkent	South Korea
9	Branch of the Higher School of Information Systems Management of Latvia in Fergana	Latvia
10	Branch of Federal state autonomous higher educational institution "National University of Technological Research "MISiS" in Almalyk	Russia
11	Tashkent branch of the federal state autonomous higher educational institution "MMFI" National Research Nuclear University	Russia
12	Branch of Astrakhan State University in Tashkent region	Russia
13	Tashkent branch of the Federal State Budget Higher Education Institution "Russian University of Chemical Technology named after D.I. Mendeleev"	Russia
14	Amity University in Tashkent	India
15	Sharda University in Uzbekistan	India
16	Webster University in Tashkent	USA
17	Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) in Tashkent	Russia
18	Branch of the University of Economics and Technology in Tashkent	Turkey
19	Ajou University in Tashkent	South Korea
20	Tashkent branch of the Federal state budget higher educational institution "MEI" National Research University	Russia
21	Tashkent branch of the Federal State Budget Higher Education Institution of the Russian State Pedagogical University named after A.I.Hertsen	Russia
22	Sambhram University Jizzakh	India
23	Russian State University of Cinematography (VGIK) named after S.A. Gerasimov in Tashkent	Russia
24	TMC Institute in Tashkent	Singapore
25	"Collegium Humanium" Warsaw University of Management Andijan branch	Poland
26	St. Petersburg State University branch of the Federal State Budget Higher Education Institution in Tashkent	Russia
27	Branch of Pisa University of Italy in Tashkent	Italy
28	Branch of Kazan Federal University in Jizzakh	Russia
29	Acharya University	India

According to “2030 Higher Education Development Concept” the government plans to increase the number of IBCs to 45 (MHESI, 2019). However, although the

number of IBCs have dramatically increased recently and will probably increase according to the government vision, there is still no regulation related to the governance of these universities (Muratov & Wilkins, 2024). Each of these IBCs were founded based on the Presidential Decrees that usually mention the government organizations responsible for the support of these IBCs, rationales for the establishment, and the study directions. Accordingly, apart from MHESI, some IBCs have to follow the guidance of other government organizations related to their fields of study. After the Presidential Decrees, the MHESI usually grants higher education licenses for the operations. Since the higher education system in the country requires four years of undergraduate degree studies, some IBCs that originate from the countries with three years of undergraduate education had to add mandatory foundation years (Muratov & Wilkins, 2024).

To have an in-depth understanding about IBCs in Uzbekistan, certain aspects can be noted according to the open data provided in their websites. To begin with, the size of IBCs varies, but most of the branches have less than 1000 students. There are a few in the range of 1000-2000, and only three IBCs have more than 3000 students. Most of the IBCs offer solely undergraduate degrees, a few of them have also Master level courses, and only two institutions have PhD studies.

The highest number of degrees are offered in industrial and technical subjects, followed by social science, then humanities. The language of instruction at Russian IBCs is Russian, and the rest of IBCs teach in English and also offering some courses in Uzbek, Korean, and Japanese.

The notable feature of IBCs in Uzbekistan is that most of them have been invited by the government and the initial infrastructure was also built by the government (Stephen Wilkins & Muratov, 2024). Therefore, the local vice-chancellors

are appointed by the government in the government supported IBCs, but the academic part is managed by the main university staff. Moreover, IBCs enjoy the privileges such as academic and financial freedom.

The tuition fees are in the range of 2000~3500 USD and generally 3-5 times higher than public universities. The Russian instructed programs are usually cheaper than English run degrees. However, almost all IBCs offer scholarships sponsored by government and universities themselves.

The admission exams vary by degree, but usually contains a language exam. In comparison with public university exams that is hold once a year, most of the IBCs offer several chances for applicants. The competition rate is much lower than public universities, and the ones that fulfill the basic requirements can enter the university. Nevertheless, some IBCs that are perceived as high quality and/or offering unique degrees enjoy tougher competition.

1.2.3 The Research Focus

The focus of this research is economic and human capital development impacts of IBCs in Uzbekistan. The positive effect of higher education, in particular transnational education on the economic and social development of regions and countries is widely recognized (Schulze & Kleibert, 2021). By equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed in the labour market, universities promote innovation, knowledge creation and knowledge exchange, which may lead to economic growth (Sarantinos, 2022). As the direct beneficiaries of IBCs, the graduates of these institutions can offer unbiased perspectives on their rationales and motivations to select these institutions, study experiences, and its impacts on their lives. Moreover, since the study participants are mature professionals with several years of job and life experience, they can provide insights about the long-term impacts. Based on this, the

study aims to examine the career and life trajectories of graduates, including employment outcomes, types of industries entered, alignment between skills acquired and job requirements, and financial gains. Moreover, the perspectives of graduates on other social and personal impacts of IBCs will be explored.

1.3 Problem Statement

Assessment of universities' impacts has been among major interests of policy makers, researchers, and practitioners. To justify the public funding and other benefits, the universities and their stakeholders have motives to present their impacts to the society. In the case of Uzbekistan, the higher education is also a public concern. As a post-soviet economy, higher education is still controlled and supported by the government, although the industry has been liberalized recently.

In recent years, the government has supported the establishment of IBCs as an alternative to local public universities. In pursuing this goal, the government aimed at providing better opportunities for local youth to gain quality education, develop human capital for the local economy, and contribute to wider socio-economic development of the country. As a result, the number of IBCs increased from seven to 29 in a very short period of time. However, as these universities received government support and public funding, the actual benefits and impacts, in particular economic, human capital development, social, and other personal impacts remain unclear. Moreover, since the youth employment is among the priorities of the government, little is known about the employment outcomes of graduates of these institutions. Furthermore, the alignment between acquired skills among graduates and labor market demands in Uzbekistan, and its impacts on various industries of the country's economy is yet to be discovered. Lastly, although the motives of the government to invite IBCs to the country may be clear, the intentions of youth on selecting IBCs are not clear. As the experts noted, the

impacts directly depend on rationales and motivations and the alignment of government's vision with the ambitions of youth is vital (Knight, 2016).

The issue of impacts of transnational education and IBCs is also a concern of global researchers. According to Knight and Liu, the major themes in transnational education research are management and development, trends and challenges, and student issues and perspectives (2019). On the other hand, outcomes and impacts, rationales and motivations, pedagogy and curriculum, models of IBCs, and language research areas were noted as scarce. Geographically, the research has been also dominated by the popular sending (Australia, US, UK) and receiving (China, Malaysia, UAE) country landscapes (Knight & Liu, 2019).

Furthermore, the local authors focused on building the research capacity at particular TNE institution (Mirkasimov, Malvicini, Kattaev, & Rikhsiboev, 2021), language practices in academic settings at TNE universities (Arfa-Kaboodvand, Makovskaya, Akbarova, & Rajabzade, 2024), comparison of academic practices at IBCs and local universities (Ubaydullaeva, 2020), and the development of TNE in the country (Muratov & Wilkins, 2024). The source of data in these articles were students, faculty, administrators, researchers, and government officials.

As the enquiry of both global and local literature shows, there is a lack of studies on the impacts of IBCs, in particular economic and human capital development impacts. Furthermore, the perspectives of graduates as the direct beneficiaries and byproducts of these institutions are not explored. Without insights into the career trajectories and lived experiences of IBC graduates, it is difficult to assess whether these institutions fulfill their promise of contributing to economic growth and human capital development. Understanding these dynamics is crucial not only for evaluating the effectiveness of IBCs, but also for informing national education policies, labor

market strategies, and future TNE partnerships. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap.

1.4 Research Objectives

Given the lack of research on impacts of IBCs on host countries globally and particularly in Uzbekistan, the purpose of this case study is to explore the perspectives of graduates on the economic impacts of international branch campuses on Uzbekistan, with a focus on human capital development. Specifically, this research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To explore the perspectives of graduates on rationales and motivations to study at IBCs.
2. To explore the perspectives of graduates on human capital development and economic impacts of IBCs.
3. To explore the perspectives of graduates on other national and personal impacts of IBCs.
4. To explore the perspectives of graduates on improving the policy and management of IBCs, with a focus on enhancing economic and human capital development impacts.

Before investigating the impacts, it is logical to learn the motives that made the graduates study at these universities. Furthermore, the study aims specifically looking at economic impacts from the human capital development view (British Council & DAAD, 2014). By economic impacts, all the financial outputs, and their affects is understood. To narrow the research and have a clear focus, the human capital

development view is applied. The concept of human capital development will be clarified in the following sections. the overall impacts of IBCs on the country and the lives of graduates are explored. Moreover, since the impacts can be various, other social and personal impacts are to be explored. Lastly, the perspectives of graduates on improving the policy and management of IBCs will be taken.

The choice of economic impacts from the human capital development view can be justified theoretically and practically. First, economic and human capital development outcomes of IBCs are among the least discussed areas in the literature. Secondly, as shall be discussed further in the context sections, although Uzbekistan as a newly developing country did not exploit higher education enough as a development tool for the first 25 years of independence, the government knew the importance of education, and therefore started to invite foreign universities to build the necessary human resources for the economy. Furthermore, since 2016 under the new government, the policy changed dramatically for the better, and higher education has become one of the priority areas of economic development that can be witnessed in the rapid growth of all types of universities. For those reasons, the research of IBC impacts from the economic in general and human capital development lens specifically seemed logical.

1.5 Research Questions

In accordance with the purpose and objectives of the research, the central question and sub questions guiding the study are the following:

Central question:

How are the perspectives of graduates on the economic impacts of international branch campuses on Uzbekistan, with a focus on human capital development impacts?

Sub questions:

1. What were the rationales and motivations of graduates to study at IBCs?
2. How do graduates perceive the human capital development and economic impacts of IBCs?
3. How do graduates perceive the other national and personal impacts of IBCs?
4. What are the perspectives of graduates on improving the policy and management of IBCs, with a focus on enhancing economic and human capital development impacts?

1.6 Research Significance

The current research will provide rich qualitative data and new insights into the IBCs and their outcomes, in particular on their impacts on host countries.

The study will be looked through the endogenous growth, human capital, and the forms of capital lenses that will add further unique outcomes to the literature. First, these theories will be applied to the context of Uzbekistan, which may not have received much attention from this aspect. Secondly, these theories will be applied to the context of transnational education and IBCs that are unique forms of higher education. Geographically, it will be the first in-depth research locally and regionally on IBC impacts. Since the current studies focus on other contexts, considering the unique aspects of each nation, their results may not be applicable to this country and region. Moreover, perspectives on IBCs of various countries will be obtained. Since South Korean IBCs have not been established in anywhere else than Uzbekistan, this study will also be a first closer look at them and a unique case for South-to-South

partnerships. Considering that TNE and IBCs mostly imported from West to East, most of the research and understanding of the topic may have been shaped accordingly. However, this study may challenge or add further insights to this discourse. Furthermore, as the main consumers of IBC services, graduates will be given a chance to express their opinions on study experience and outcomes. Finally, it will be a study organized by Uzbek national about his country and industry where he has a practical experience.

The study will be significant for government and policy makers to learn, analyze and compare the outcomes of IBCs with the initial motivations and goals, and decide further strategies and actions. The institutions, on the other hand, will have a chance to view the results of their activities on the eyes of graduates, and make the necessary adjustments on their academic and non-academic operations. The public and society that have limited or negative opinion on IBCs, can get an unbiased knowledge and perspectives that may lead to future interactions with IBCs.

Overall, this study will contribute to the literature both theoretically and practically by looking at the economic impacts of IBCs from the importing country and graduates' perspective.

1.7 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

There are limitations to all proposed researched projects (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Limitations refer to possible weaknesses or issues with the study that the researcher has recognized (Creswell, 2002). The limitations that a study may face can pertain to various aspects, including the methodology employed, the theoretical framework utilized, the insufficient supporting evidence for the themes, or the need for continual modification of the questions to better align with the core phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2016). On the other hand, delimitations specify the scope and

limitations determined by the researcher to maintain a focused investigation (**Coker, 2023**). This step ensures that the study remains aligned with its objectives and research questions. Delimitations are distinct from limitations, which are constraints beyond the researcher's control.

First, since the case study is bounded to the context of Uzbekistan and employs qualitative methods, the generalizability and replicability cannot be achieved. Furthermore, the study is delimited to interview data collection method that may result in certain personal biases and views, and excludes natural setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Also, the graduates are the only group of participants. Other stakeholders such as government, employers, faculty, and staff are excluded from the study. This may result in the collection of experiences that are related to one group of stakeholders that may or may not match the views of others.

Secondly, the study aims to explore the impacts of IBCs from the economic and human capital development views and focuses less on the outcomes and contributions in other areas. Furthermore, there are many other social and economic theories that could be used as a theoretical guide, and result in different interpretation of findings, but they are excluded to have a narrow focus.

Lastly, the focus of the study is IBCs that have already produced graduates. This criterion excludes tens of other IBCs that have been established recently and may not have graduates yet. Moreover, since these IBCs were established in different years, some of the graduates may have a longer post study work and life experience in comparison with the graduates of IBCs that were established much later. In other words, the former graduates may offer much balanced and matured views in comparison to the later graduates. Lastly, even though there are several IBCs

representing different countries, all of them are located in the capital city. However, the graduates may come from different regions of Uzbekistan.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework is a set of formal theories that guide the research and data analysis, explain the relationships, help to understand the results, and make recommendations (Crawford, 2019; Kivunja, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Since the aim of this current research is neither theory building nor testing, the theories of endogenous growth, human capital, and the forms of capital are used as a lens to conduct the research, look at analysis, and interpret the findings.

Among many theories in growth and economic development, the endogenous growth theory is the most suitable option in the case of current research and the context of Uzbekistan. The main claim of the theory is that economies with the largest pool of human capital can develop and grow faster (Romer, 1990). While the firms may not always invest on human capacity and research, the governments should foster the technological innovation by investing in human capital and knowledge (Thorbecke, 2000). Since knowledge is a public good, it can have further spill-over effects in the economy and society, and the country will be able to grow without external aid and assistance (Vincent-Lancrin, 2007).

In the case of Uzbekistan, as the government is the main investor and initiator of the establishment of IBCs as a strategy to prepare qualified personnel to the economy, the impacts of IBCs can be looked through the perspective of endogenous growth theory. By analyzing the economic and human capital development impacts of these universities, the implications and role in the development of the country are drawn.

Secondly, the theory of human capital has also been selected as a guide for current research to explore the economic impacts of IBCs (Becker, 1993). According to the theory, education among other factors is considered as an investment that helps students obtain skills, and as a result improve their productivity for the jobs they are going to perform. Consequently, their earning potential rises in comparison with other people who did not invest or invested less in their human capital.

In the case of current research, the theory of human capital helps to look at the situation on the individual level that has also direct effect on meso and macro levels. In other words, it is assumed that students, who graduated from universities that are more expensive and have higher expected quality, should have greater productivity and earning potential. This would result in emergence of highly competitive firms and organizations in the economy that would also lead to the overall growth of the country.

Although the theories of human capital and endogenous growth are related and may seem similar, they have certain distinctions. The endogenous growth theory looks at the efforts of the government and makes conclusions based on the government's actions such as investments in human capital and skills. On the other hand, the human capital theory looks at the efforts of individuals such as their investments in education and skills upgrading, and assumes that these efforts lead to productivity gains, salary increases, and firm profits.

Finally, the forms of capital by Bourdieu (1986) is utilized to view the human capital development impacts of IBCs in more detailed and specific manner. According to the theory, capital is defined as labor that takes time to accumulate and can potentially produce different forms of profits. Capital can be in four types such as economic, social, cultural, and symbolic. Economic capital represents financial resources and income. Social capital represents social connections and networks.

Cultural capital refers to educational qualifications, skills, and competencies. Symbolic capital simply means a presented and perceived prestige that is formed by other forms of capital.

The implication of this theory in current research can assist at looking on the impacts of IBCs on graduates' lives through the four types of capital. First, since the study also focuses on the personal economic impacts of studies at IBCs, the financial gains and income of graduates may represent the economic capital. Secondly, as the study also looks at other non-economic and social impacts, the friendship and network built during the university years may represent the social capital. Moreover, as the graduates may have gained certain educational qualifications, skills, and competencies during the study year, this may be considered as cultural capital according to this theory. Finally, all of these outcomes and impacts may form a perceived image and prestige about these graduates and represent a symbolic capital.

To sum up, above theories guide my research and assist me to look at the topic from different viewpoints and perspectives.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework has been described by authors as the logical masterplan and an argument about the importance of the study and the appropriateness of means to research that covers the aspects such as the role of the researcher, formal theories, the goal of a study, study setting and context, and macro-sociopolitical context (Crawford, 2019; Kivunja, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Since most of these aspects are covered in other parts of this research, the main points will be briefly summarized, and a diagram will be presented.

The conceptual framework starts with the main construct of study – economic impacts of IBCs (Figure 1.5). Since this study focuses on the perspectives of graduates to find answers for the research questions, they come next in the framework. Moreover, the study employs the theories of endogenous growth, human capital, and forms of capital as a guide. Thus, these theories and the concepts related to each of them are presented in conceptual framework. As a result, the following diagram acts as a conceptual framework and structure to guide the study:

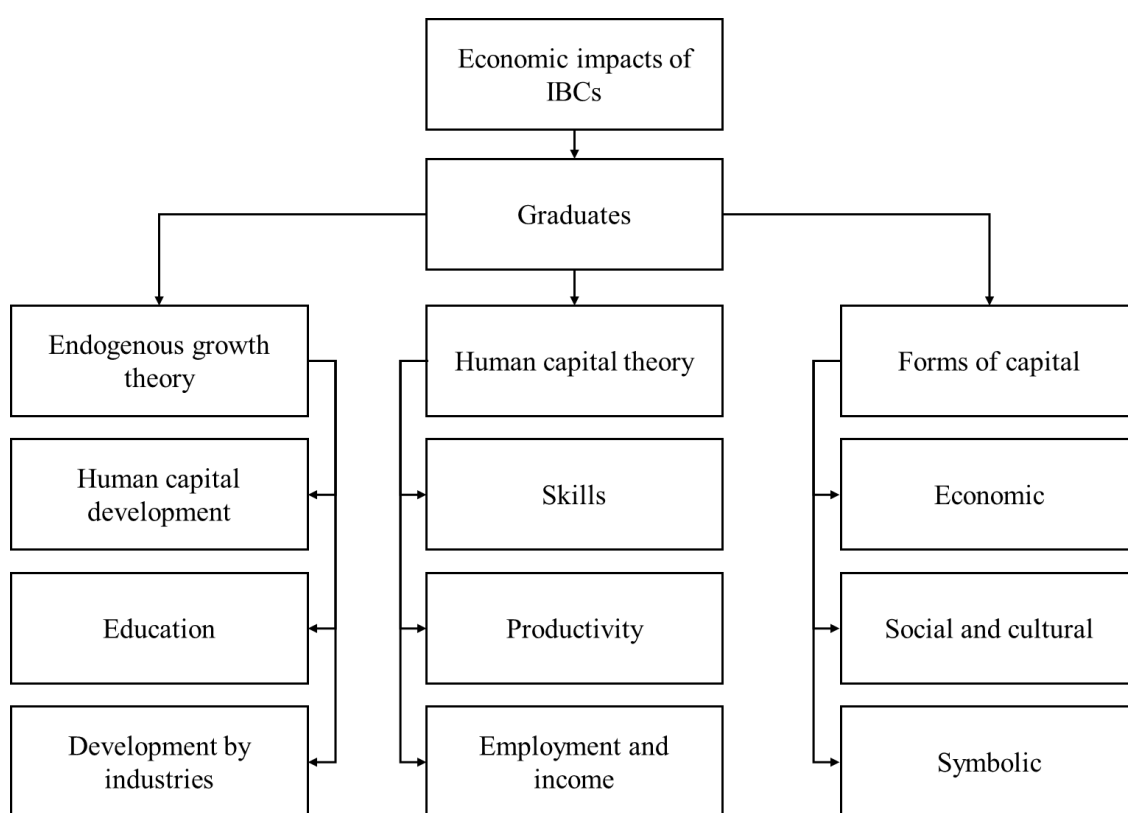


Figure 1.5 Conceptual framework

1.10 Conceptual and Operational Definitions

1.10.1 Economic Impacts

The definition of economic impact may differ according to the context. According to Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.-a), “economic impact refers to

a financial effect that something, especially something new, has on a situation or person”. In the context of universities, the authors mention about direct and indirect forms of economic impacts (B. G. Kotosz, Lukovics, Molnár, & Zuti, 2015). The economic activities such as the expenditures of university, staff and students, the jobs created at the university, and the taxes paid are considered as direct economic impacts. The economic activities that are not related with the direct operations of universities such as the changes in the economy, businesses and industries, and skills due to the supply of graduates, research and development and social activities are considered as indirect impacts.

Since this study investigates the perspectives of graduates and employs the theories related to human capital development, for the purposes of this study, economic impact refers to the indirect economic activities related to the supply of graduates, the skills formed, and the further economic activities of graduates.

1.10.2 International Branch Campus

The next main concept that should be clearly defined to set the boundaries of the study is international branch campus (IBC).

First, the website of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovations and other government resources have been checked for the official definition of the term “IBC” in the context of Uzbekistan. However, there is no defined term and the only way to look at this is through the list of universities that the Ministry recognizes as IBCs. Hence, even this list is confusing, as it includes several universities that do not carry the brand name of the sending institution. On the other hand, it excludes some other universities that would be considered as IBCs according to theoretical definitions (MHESI, 2024).