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ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS OF STUDENT TOURISM IN CENTRAL ASIA: VISA POLICIES FOR STUDENT MOBILITY

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Abstract. *As Central Asia becomes an increasingly popular destination for academic pursuits and cultural exchanges, enhancing the visa framework is essential for student tourism development. Therefore, this article provides an overview of the current visa policy for student tourism in Central Asia.*

Keywords: *student tourism, Central Asia, visa policy, student mobility.*

Visa policies governing student mobility in Central Asia are closely related to many factors, including historical heritage, cultural dynamics, and international influences. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the nations of Central Asia inherited education systems characterized by centralized, Soviet-style structures, which they later struggled to transition to more modern, decentralized systems. This historical background has significantly shaped current visa policies and has often led to restrictive measures limiting access for both domestic and international students. The evolution of language policies, closely linked to cultural identity in the region, further complicates the situation, as they can facilitate or hinder educational institutions from reaching a diverse student group. In recent years, Central Asian countries have increasingly sought to adapt their education systems to Western standards based on initiatives aimed at promoting international cooperation and regulatory regionalism. However, these efforts have not turned into constant changes in visa policy, which remains unsolved. Rich cultural heritage in the regions offer unique

opportunities for educational collaborations which are beneficial for academic landscape. Serious reforms are needed to create a more inclusive and conducive environment for local and international students to take advantage of these opportunities.

The current level of visa policy for students in Central Asia is shaped by a complex interplay of historical legacies, international influences, and regional dynamics. The region's visa policies are influenced by the remnants of Soviet-era educational structures, the adoption of Western educational reforms, and the strategic interests of global powers. *These factors* collectively impact the accessibility and mobility of students within and beyond Central Asia.

1. *Historical and Cultural Influences:* the collapse of the Soviet Union left Central Asian countries with educational systems heavily influenced by Soviet centralist traditions. This legacy has affected the development of visa policies, as these countries navigate the transition to independent educational frameworks [1]. Language policy, an important aspect of cultural identity in Central Asia, also plays a role in shaping education and visa policy. Language policies in the region have evolved alongside education reforms, affecting student mobility and access to education [3].

2. *International Influences and Reforms:* Central Asian countries are increasingly adopting Western educational discourses hybridized with local traditions. This led to reforms that emphasized decentralization, privatization, and curriculum change, and had an indirect effect by bringing visa policies in line with international standards [1]. The EU and other international bodies have been actively involved in educational initiatives in Central Asia. These initiatives are aimed at harmonizing education standards and facilitating student mobility, which may influence visa policies to make them more accessible to international students. [2].

3. *Economic and Political Context:* The transition to a market economy in Central Asia has created challenges for education financing and infrastructure, affecting the region's ability to support international student exchange. Economic constraints have led to a focus on strategic partnerships and international aid to strengthen the education system [4]. The geopolitical interests of major countries such as the USA and the EU have also shaped the visa policy. These powers have strategic interests in the region, which will influence their involvement in education reforms and visa facilitation.

4. *Challenges and Opportunities:* Despite international support, Central Asian countries are facing serious problems in reforming the education system. Issues such as low literacy rates, deteriorating infrastructure and teacher shortages are affecting the region's attractiveness to international students. However, the region's strategic location and cultural richness create opportunities for educational cooperation and student exchange. Visa policies that facilitate such exchanges can improve the region's educational status and global integration [5].

Table 1.

International influences on student tourism.

<i>International impacts</i>		
1	Visa Restrictions and Geopolitical Considerations	a) visa policies are often used by nation-states as tools to manage mobility, balancing economic and political interests with security concerns. This results in unequal access to foreign spaces, where students from Central Asia may face more stringent visa requirements compared to those from more privileged nations [8]. b) the global network of visa policies is influenced by the actions of democratic and autocratic states. Central Asian countries, often characterized by stable authoritarian regimes, may not be central in the global visa network, which can limit their students' mobility [9, 10].
2	International Partnerships and Economic Interests	a) the European Union's engagement with Central Asia, driven by both security and economic interests, has led to initiatives aimed at promoting good governance. However, these efforts are often hampered by the prioritization of interest-based objectives over governance-related ambitions [11]. b) China and Japan's foreign policies towards Central Asia reflect their economic interests and the need to redefine their roles in international affairs. These policies can influence visa accessibility by shaping bilateral relations and economic partnerships [12].
3	Educational Reforms and International Aid	a) since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Central Asian countries have been influenced by Western education discourses, leading to reforms that align with global standards. These “traveling policies” are often supported by international aid, which can indirectly affect visa policies by promoting educational exchanges and collaborations [1]. b) international agencies and financial institutions have played a crucial role in supporting education reforms in Central Asia, which can enhance student mobility by improving educational infrastructure and opportunities [14].
4	Regional Integration and Student Mobility	a) in the Asia-Pacific region, there is a growing trend of intra-regional student mobility, driven by globalization and regional integration efforts. This trend may influence Central Asian countries to adopt more open visa policies to facilitate student exchanges within the region [13]. b) the international mobility of students and educational programs in Asia highlights the importance of cross-border collaborations, which can lead to more accessible visa policies for Central Asian students seeking education abroad.

Source: Formed by the author.

By developing cooperation with global educational institutions, Central Asia can create a more dynamic and interconnected academic environment. This not only attracts international students, but also encourages local talent to seek

opportunities abroad, thereby enriching the region's academic and cultural diversity. Furthermore, the establishment of scholarship programs and exchange initiatives can further encourage students to engage in cross-border educational experiences, thereby strengthening ties between Central Asian countries and their global counterparts. In addition, the developing picture of student mobility in Central Asia is further complicated by the increasing number of international educational partnerships that seek to attract foreign students from different nationalities. For example, countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have become popular destinations for Indian students for medical education due to their low tuition fees and proximity [7], which not only enhances regional cooperation but also poses challenges related to language proficiency and cultural integration.

Based on the concepts given above, we suggest that international influences significantly should shape the accessibility of visa policies for students in Central Asia with the help of ***geopolitical, economic, and educational factors***. These influences can be in the form of *visa restrictions, international partnerships, and educational reforms*, which collectively impact student mobility in the regions. The following sections explore these dynamics in detail in Table 1.

While international influences play a significant role in shaping visa policies for Central Asian students, domestic factors such as political stability, economic conditions, and educational infrastructure also impact these policies. The interplay between international and domestic influences creates a complex environment where visa accessibility is continually negotiated and redefined.

In conclusion, the current level of student visa policy in Central Asia reflects a multifaceted situation influenced by historical heritage, cultural dynamics and international pressures. Although the region has significant potential for educational cooperation and student mobility, existing policies often remain restrictive and inadequate in meeting the needs of local and international students. The remnants of Soviet-era educational structures and contemporary challenges such as economic instability and bureaucratic inefficiency impede the development of a progressive visa system. Furthermore, cultural aspects, while important to regional identity, may inadvertently limit the appeal of Central Asian institutions to a diverse student body. Despite international efforts to reform education and encourage student exchange, the application of visa policy has been inconsistent. The geopolitical interests of major powers further complicate the landscape and often overshadow the immediate need for real educational progress. To take advantage of the region's strategic location and cultural wealth, Central Asian countries need to implement significant reforms in their education systems and visa policies. This includes fostering partnerships that improve local education standards and create an inclusive environment for international students.

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ELABORATION OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS OF THE REGION

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Annotation: This article presents modern trends in the development of foreign economic relations of the region, strategies and practices aimed at strengthening economic ties between countries and regions, as well as globalization and integration of these modern trends, digital economy, sustainable development, development of transport, logistics infrastructure, innovation and technological progress. These trends are the main factors in the development of interregional economic relations, which serve to ensure economic growth, increase trade and investment flows, and support sustainable development. In our country, these trends play an important role in ensuring the country's economic stability and increasing its competitiveness in international trade.

Key words: Country, economy, foreign economic relations, export, import, foreign trade, network, global trade agreements, goods and services.