



HISTORICAL STAGES OF REFORMS IMPLEMENTED IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF UZBEKISTAN DURING THE YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the successive stages of transformation of the education system in Uzbekistan after 1991. It examines key legislative initiatives, structural changes, investment in education, and digital transformation carried out in the country. Based on open sources and documentary material, it shows that the evolution of education policy includes four significant periods: the initial reforms of the first years of independence, the implementation of the National Training Program, the development of material and technical resources and the expansion of access to education, as well as modern reforms aimed at improving quality, digitalization, and support for teachers.

Keywords: education system, Uzbekistan, reforms, modernization, independence, education policy.

Uzbekistan has consistently been changing its education system since it gained its independence, transitioning from the Soviet model to a national system oriented towards modern international standards. A legal framework was established from an early stage as well as important institutional changes to ensure the stability of the system and to help in training teachers. New universities were created within the early years, a contract-based form of education was introduced (1996), and a testing system was introduced for entry to higher education institutions. Its experimental application began in 1992 and by 1994 already covered most of the country's higher education institutions. The National Training Program was one of the most



ambitious reforms. With it came a large expansion of the educational institution network, with more than 1,400 vocational colleges and about 200 academic lyceums opened since 1997. Moreover, 300 additional educational institutions were planned at the same time which went into stage one of the program – business schools and specialized courses in schools. The employment of graduates was a challenging task but eventually the reforms had to adapt. While the modernization of education was still under way, particular priority was given to infrastructure: for instance, in 2021 the state announced that 30 new schools would be constructed and 320 of the nation's pre-existing educational facilities would be modernized. This was the background around which an electronic education system with a national curriculum designed to promote analytical and creative thinking in students was implemented. In the case of the preschool education system, it was especially dynamic. There were slightly over 5,000 preschool establishments in 2017, but in 2021 this had increased to 19,316, mostly through public-private partnership approaches. A total of 600 billion sums in subsidies were allocated to support continued growth of the kindergartens network, which has enabled the establishment of 2,000 non-state preschool institutions and raised the proportion of the private sector to 25%. The state also aims to improve preschool coverage to 75% by 2023, and by 2021, free school preparation would reach 82% of 6-year-olds. Also significant changes have been introduced at the higher education level.

Several new and international universities have been established, such as Westminster, Moscow State University, Gubkin University, Inha, and many more, and opportunities for academic mobility have been expanded. A process for submitting documents to five universities simultaneously has been implemented since 2017, and the percentage of graduates now holding higher education increased from 9% to 25%. State grants grew by at least 25%, scholarship quotas for girls from low-income families have been doubled, and university teachers' salaries have risen on average 2.5 times. Moreover, special attention is being paid to eliminate regional



disparities: allowances were introduced for teachers in remote schools and rural areas, subsidies were provided for private schools, and regional education development programs. In order to support gifted children, 10 new presidential schools and 197 specialized schools in the fields of science, foreign languages and technology have been opened. The reforms have implemented systematic modernization, including infrastructure development and educational quality, human resource strengthening, international cooperation, process digitization, and educational accessibility improvement at all levels. We thus create a more adaptable and contemporary model of education that is both in alignment with the country's strategic aspirations. Government reforms in Uzbekistan's education sector were not single events - they were phased out, meeting state and social needs during each stage of development. The most important things at the beginning were to hold staff and build a legal framework. Then the aim was to set up professional training systems. Access to education and infrastructure development were eventually central concerns. Now, focus should be on quality, digitalization and integration of students into international education. At the same time difficulties appeared at each stage, from the employment of college graduates, to preparing teachers for a digital society, to regional variations in education quality. However, the outcome of the reforms reflects that educational policy is developed under sustainable and strategic policy development of education.

Uzbekistan's education system has been undergoing a process of deep modernization, which ranges from legal development to social support of teachers at the workplace and school, to digitalization and foreign cooperation. These initiatives focus on preparing human capital development, updating the quality of education, and increasing access, laying the groundwork for an even more advanced qualitative country as well as educating the younger generation to handle world challenges



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