

Education Reforms in Uzbekistan During the Years of Independence

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Abstract. The article considers the educational reforms in Uzbekistan over the years of independence as a specialization of school education, continuing professional education, quality standards of higher education, the remote influence of the coronavirus.

Keywords: educational reforms, years of independence, school education, continuing education, vocational education, quality standards, higher education, the impact of the coronavirus. .

It is not by chance that the term “knowledge economy” appeared in the economic vocabulary a decade ago. This testifies to the cardinal importance for the development of the modern economy of high competence of workers, which cannot be achieved without high-quality education. In the modern world, the quality of education has already become one of the most important factors in the competitiveness of the economy.

That is why, in the “Action Strategy for Five Priority Areas of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021,” adopted at the beginning of a new stage of reforms in Uzbekistan in February 2017, one of the priorities is “to continue the course of further improving the system of lifelong education, increasing the availability of quality educational services, training highly qualified personnel in accordance with the modern needs of the labor market ”. The development of improving the competitiveness of education in the country on the national and international labor markets was also included in the Concept of Integrated Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030.

Prior to the start of a new stage of reforms, preschool education in Uzbekistan did not receive much attention. This changed in 2017 when the Ministry of Preschool Education (MDE) was created. If earlier the coverage of children with this form of education was only 27%, then by the end of 2019 it had already increased to 44.5%. During this period, the number of public preschool institutions (preschool institutions) increased 1.5 times (from 4940 to 7500), and private preschool institutions - 3 times (from 269 to 783). If in 2017, 51 thousand teachers worked in the preschool education system, then by the end of 2019 - more than 80 thousand.

Much attention was paid to the training of personnel for preschool education. With the aim of better training of specialists, 97 pedagogical colleges have completely come under the jurisdiction of the MDO. In all pedagogical universities, quotas for preschool education were increased. In 2019, the faculty of evening education of the Tashkent State Pedagogical University was opened for the first time. Specialists in preschool education began to be trained at the faculty of preschool education at the branch of Buchan University in Tashkent. The Institute for Retraining and Advanced Training of Heads and Specialists of Preschool Educational Institutions was opened at the MDO.

In order to organize healthy and safe food in kindergartens, conditions have been created for the purchase of food products for preschool educational institutions directly from manufacturing enterprises; catering has been launched in a pilot manner using catering.

A well-developed school infrastructure has been created in Uzbekistan, which made it possible to fully cover children with universal primary and secondary education. The gross enrollment rate for general primary and secondary education remained at 99%.

In the course of reforms in secondary education in schools, education was restored in grades 10-11. The share of teachers with higher education in general education schools exceeded 80%, which can be considered as an indicator of the quality of education. The educational reform was accompanied by an increase in the salaries of secondary school teachers, which were increased in three stages and, as a result, increased by an average of 50%. During the reform, 4 academic lyceums were also abolished, the educational and material base of which did not meet modern requirements. And 54 lyceums, located far from universities and having low rates of graduate admission to universities, have been gradually transformed into professional colleges.

At the same time, new innovative technologies of scientific and technical education are being introduced more and more in the world. In Uzbekistan, the prerequisites and conditions are being created for the transition to such teaching technologies, which is reflected in the Concept for the development of the public education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030. Of great importance in this direction is the creation of a system of presidential schools, where gifted children who graduated from the fourth grade according to test results are selected. Presidential schools are already operating in Tashkent, Namangan, Nukus and Khiva, schools are opening in Bukhara, Jizzak, Samarkand and Fergana this year, and in 2021 they will be opened in Andijan, Navoi, Surkhandarya, Syrdarya and Tashkent regions.

Specialized educational institutions with in-depth study of ICT, exact sciences, as well as aerospace and astronomy are being created. Thus, by the decrees of the President, a school named after al-Khorezmi and a boarding school named after Mirzo Ulugbek were established in Tashkent at the Astronomical Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. There are also private specialized schools. In 2015, the first elementary private robotics school Robokidz Education was created in Tashkent, where courses in robotics, elementary programming and the "Internet of things" are taught. And in 2017, the private school Artel global school was opened, focused on in-depth study of mathematics, physics, chemistry. Robotics, 3D modeling and programming are also taught here.

Reforms in vocational education are carried out on the basis of the Presidential Decree "On additional measures to improve the vocational education system", adopted on September 6, 2019. According to this decree, a new system of continuous vocational education is being introduced: primary, secondary and secondary specialized vocational education. Vocational training centers are organized for adults and unemployed citizens.

Currently, in the field of vocational education, a network of educational institutions has been created, consisting of 340 vocational schools, 147 colleges and 143 technical schools, the training of personnel in which should be carried out on the basis of educational programs corresponding to 3, 4 and 5 levels of the International Standard Classification of Education 2011.

Vocational schools provide vocational education for 9th grade graduates. Most of the training time here is devoted to hands-on exercises. The training is focused on the areas of family business, construction, services, livestock, poultry, beekeeping, fishing, etc.

Colleges provide training for specialists with at least general secondary education in the form of full-time, evening and part-time studies with a duration of up to two years. For college graduates, large potential employers create a portfolio of orders based on the current and future need for workers, which guarantees the employment of graduates.

Graduates of technical schools who have successfully completed educational programs are given the right to continue their studies from the 2nd year of the relevant areas of undergraduate education in higher educational institutions without entrance examinations on the basis of an individual interview. Thus, there is an opportunity to continue training and improve their professional knowledge and skills.

On April 20, 2017, by the Decree of the President, the Program for the Comprehensive Development of the Higher Education System for the period 2017-2021 was approved, which includes measures to radically improve and qualitatively improve the level of higher education.

The procedure for admission to universities was changed, exams began to be held from August 1 to 15, and their results began to be published the next day. Testing for admission to universities in creative areas has been canceled. Since September 2017, the teaching load for the teaching staff has decreased in favor of conducting research work. The correspondence form of education has been restored. The salaries of university professors have doubled.

The independence of universities has increased. Starting from the 2018/2019 academic year, leading higher educational institutions independently develop curricula and programs in the relevant areas and specialties of education, taking into account the demand of consumers of personnel. Universities are allowed to carry out additional admission of students at higher contract rates.

On October 8, 2019, the President issued a Decree “On Approval of the Concept of the Year. At the same time, the transition to this system has already begun. Universities in the country that provide for a gradual transition to the implementation of advanced higher education standards, a gradual transfer of the educational process to a credit-modular system, which should be introduced in 16% of higher educational institutions in 2023, 57% in 2025 and 85% - in 2030) is phasing in the transition to the credit education system from the 2018/2019 academic year. The national, law universities, the University of Oriental Studies and the Tashkent Medical Academy began work in the same direction.

The coronavirus infection and related quarantine restrictions have greatly affected the education sector. On the one hand, quarantine restrictions led to disruptions in the continuity of educational processes, on the other hand, they became a catalyst that accelerated the development of distance learning.

The first case of coronavirus infection in Uzbekistan was detected on March 15, and already on March 16, by the decision of the Special Republican Commission, preschool, secondary and higher educational institutions were closed for a three-week quarantine. About 80 thousand students who studied in Tashkent from other regions of the country were given 50% discounts on transport services to return home.

There were about 8.4 million students at home in quarantine, about 6 million of whom were students of general education schools. To ensure a continuous educational process, various types of distance learning were organized. In particular, the Ministry of Public Education prepared broadcasting of lessons for all classes in accordance with the curriculum. The schedule and direct recordings of TV lessons for all classes began to be published on the official telegram channel of the UZEDU ministry and on the YouTube video hosting channel.

Also promptly, the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education formed online resources on higher education standards and launched the EDUUZ telegram channel, where materials for self-education began to be posted. At the same time, the process of forming more than 3500 electronic textbooks in various disciplines continued on the website "Innovation Kutubhona".

Of the packages adopted due to the coronavirus pandemic, many related to education issues. Parents of pupils of preschool educational organizations and primary school students of general education schools were given annual leave, including for those who had worked for less than 6 months. Timely payment of wages was guaranteed to employees of preschool, general secondary, secondary specialized and higher educational institutions, sports and cultural institutions financed from the State budget and suspended their activities. For those caring for children under the age of 14, benefits for temporary disability at the rate of 100 percent of the average wage began to be paid.

The measures taken made it possible to resolve three main issues related to the closure of educational institutions. The first is to look after the students of preschool and general education institutions, the second is financial support during quarantine, and the third is the possibility of continuing the educational process on a distance basis.

Conclusion

Summing up, it can be stated that over the four years of a new stage of reforms in all educational sectors of Uzbekistan, serious foundations have been laid for bringing them to a qualitatively new level that meets modern international requirements. But many of the existing problems have not yet been resolved.

The sphere of education is rather "conservative" from the point of view of reforming the region in view of the fact that it objectively trains personnel, educates people for life in the future. It takes two decades to prepare a new generation for life, and this problem cannot be solved in three or five years. To train highly qualified specialists in universities, competent applicants are required. For the successful mastering of school, more and more complex educational programs, the development of children's abilities and their high-quality preparation in preschool institutions are necessary.

In the course of educational reforms being carried out in Uzbekistan, the main emphasis has been placed on identifying and developing talents among young people. However, it is necessary to develop talents from kindergarten and from school, which the previously insufficiently effective system of school and preschool education did not contribute to. This is evidenced by the low level of training of applicants.

In this regard, reforms in education are most effective with an integrated approach and harmonization of reforming sectors and different stages of education. Therefore, the need to form an integral education system that ensures close cooperation between preschool, general secondary, secondary specialized, professional, higher educational and scientific institutions comes to the forefront of reforms.

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