

Education – at The Center of Reforms

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Abstract

This article discusses the priority directions of reforming the higher education system of Uzbekistan, reforms in the higher education system, the creation of necessary conditions for students' education, improving the quality of educational and upbringing work, training competitive personnel, developing creativity in future specialists, as well as assessing certain aspects of the current state of the higher education system today.

Keywords: Independence, Education, Upbringing, Innovation, “Uzbek Model”, “Development Strategy”, “Action Strategy”, Pedagogical Staff, Specialist, Intellectual Potential, Human Capital, International Ranking, Scientific Research, Modernization, Talent, Reform, National Ranking

1. Introduction

Since the early years of independence, large-scale efforts have been carried out in our country to fundamentally reform the education and upbringing system, to ensure that our children acquire modern knowledge and professions at the level of world standards, to grow up as physically and spiritually mature individuals, and to reveal their abilities, talents, and intellectual potential. The future of the state is directly connected with the level of education of young people. Therefore, paying attention to the development of the education system at the government level is one of the important tasks of every state. [1][2]

The President of the Republic, Sh.M. Mirziyoyev, emphasized: “We will mobilize all the strength and opportunities of our state and society so that our youth grow into independent thinkers, possessing high intellectual and spiritual potential, and who in no field will lag behind their peers around the world, and become happy individuals.” [3]

Indeed, education can achieve its intended results only when it is able to connect its roots with science, industry, social life—in a word, with life itself—and when it is fully integrated with internal and related sectors. A state that ensures a deep, comprehensive, and continuous connection between science, education, upbringing, and the economy, and applies them to all spheres of society, achieves development.[4]

2. Research Method

Fundamentally improving the education system, defining targeted directions for training highly educated specialists, and especially continuously improving the professional skills and knowledge level of pedagogical staff are among the most urgent issues.[5]

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Article history

: Vasiyeva D.I.
: submitted; 2026/03/20 revised; 2026/04/10 accepted; 2026/04/30 published 2026/05/21

In the independent, democratic Republic of Uzbekistan, the improvement of education, declared a priority sphere in the social, economic, spiritual, and cultural development of society, is primarily aimed at achieving a qualitatively new state. This is an extremely complex, comprehensive problem addressed in many directions. One of them includes improving and restructuring the management mechanism of the education system, which is a specific form of managing social life.[6]

In this regard, the following are of particular importance:

- Presidential Decree No. PQ-2909 dated April 20, 2017 “On measures for further development of the higher education system”;
- Presidential Decree No. PQ-3151 dated July 27, 2017 “On measures to further expand the participation of economic sectors in improving the quality of training highly educated specialists”;
- Presidential Decree No. PQ-3775 dated June 5, 2018 “On measures to improve the quality of higher education institutions and ensure their active participation in large-scale reforms carried out in the country”;
- Presidential Decree No. PF-5847 dated October 8, 2019 “On approval of the concept for the development of the higher education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030”;
- Presidential Decree No. PQ-4391 dated July 11, 2019 “On measures to introduce new principles of governance into the system of higher and secondary specialized education”;
- Resolution No. 967 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated December 3, 2019 “On the gradual transition of higher education institutions to self-financing”;
- Order No. 133-f dated February 25, 2019;
- Presidential Decree No. PF-60 dated January 28, 2022 “On the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026”;
- Presidential Decree No. PQ-60 dated December 24, 2021 “On additional measures to ensure academic and organizational-management independence of state higher education institutions.”[7][8][9]

In countries around the world, training personnel in higher education remains a priority and retains its relevance. Today, increasing globalization processes require the training of highly qualified specialists in every country. According to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, higher education is becoming a leading factor in national development.[10]

3. Results

In developing countries, the demand for specialists is continuously increasing, and the coverage of higher education is expanding. Globally, the rate of training highly qualified personnel is sharply increasing, and the number of students is expected to reach 414 million by 2030, which is 4.2 times more than in 2000.[11]

In our country, improving the attractiveness and competitiveness of the higher education system, studying advanced foreign experience, adapting educational programs to international standards, and expanding cooperation with developed countries in education are of great importance.[12]

In recent years, Uzbekistan has defined priority directions for systemic reform of higher education, raising the process of training highly qualified specialists with modern knowledge and strong moral qualities to a new level, modernizing higher education, and developing social and economic sectors based on advanced educational technologies.[13]

The President’s address to the Oliy Majlis for 2023 also emphasizes the importance of science, education, and their relationship with socio-economic life.

Today, education has become the most important priority of state policy. Since independence, the structure of state budget expenditures has changed qualitatively. Currently, social protection and social policy take a major share of expenditures. In 2024, 50% of the state budget expenditures are directed to the social sphere. In particular, 72% of social expenditures are allocated to education, science, and healthcare. In the past three years, funding for education has increased by nearly 12 trillion soum and reached 45 trillion soum.

Education plays an important role in implementing social policy for three main reasons:

- Education is one of the main factors enabling people to exercise their rights to participate in building a law-based and democratic society;
- Education ensures economic growth and provides people with the skills necessary to contribute materially to the economy;
- Education is an important part of social wealth and serves as a basis for restoring the rich thinking and national heritage of the Uzbek people.

Education is an investment in the human factor. In general, society benefits from it. The rise in the level and quality of education ensures economic growth, increases labor productivity, and provides solutions to social problems, ultimately determining the country's position in the international community.[14]

In a highly competitive international environment, it is necessary to fully and effectively utilize the intellectual potential of the population to solve existing economic problems. One of the main principles of state policy in education is encouraging knowledge and talent; harmonizing state and public management in the education system; and ensuring that education and upbringing are humanistic and democratic in nature.

Knowledge, as a product of the education system, has specific characteristics: it is an invaluable social good; it is unlimited and does not decrease when used; it is not bound to place; it is not repeatable; its value does not depend on later usage intensity; it is time-related, etc.

The beginning of market reforms in Uzbekistan required a fundamental restructuring of the system oriented toward personnel training under a planned economy, which had determined not only the demand for personnel but also the form, methods, and ideology of education. New conditions changed the structure of higher education, and the requirements for knowledge and skills of specialists.

Today, there is a high demand for professionals who can apply new knowledge, understand the scope of innovation in their professional field, and possess analytical thinking and decision-making abilities.

While acknowledging the positive achievements in education and personnel training during the years of independence, it should also be noted that there were significant shortcomings due to the lack of clear goal-setting, insufficient analysis of labor market demands, mismatch between supply and demand, and neglect of public needs and expectations.

Indeed, thanks to the efforts of President Sh.M. Mirziyoyev, in recent years special attention has been given to reforming the education system, fundamentally improving personnel training quality, and introducing advanced foreign experience into the system.

4. Discussion

The higher education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan must be capable of training competitive personnel taking into account global developments in science, technology, and high technologies, as well as trends in economic development. The new generation of

competitive specialists must be able to address urgent issues of education system reform, possess high culture and economic thinking, and be able to independently analyze scientific, technical, and socio-economic information and make appropriate decisions.[15]

In this regard, the following principles and approaches to reforming the education system of the country are recognized internationally:

- In the 21st century—the era of intellectual thinking—only countries that prioritize investment in human capital can achieve high development;
- A country’s competitiveness in the global market depends not only on natural resources but primarily on a highly educated and disciplined workforce capable of mastering modern, continuously updated technologies;
- Only individuals who combine national and universal values with modern knowledge, intellectual potential, and advanced technologies can achieve strategic development goals;
- Increasing the status of educated and intellectually advanced individuals should be a key principle of education reform;
- Continuous development of international cooperation among educational sectors is necessary.

The main indicator of a higher education institution’s capability is its ability to foresee changes in society and organize its activities accordingly. Only then will its scientific and educational results be fully demanded by society. The reputation and social importance of the institution also influence employers’ choices.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, during the years of independence, Uzbekistan’s continuous education system, including higher education, has been built in accordance with world standards and on the basis of high spirituality, and has been provided with state educational standards and relevant curricula. Therefore, continuous reform of the education system, improvement of teaching methods and tools, and enrichment of educational content are important requirements of today. This, in turn, increases the requirements for the training and qualifications of modern competitive personnel.

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