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THE CURRENT FOCUS ON EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN

Boboxonov Quvoncbek Savkat ogli
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in History
History Teacher at Secondary School No. 5,
Shovot District, Khorezm Region

A B S T R A C T

Education is one of the most important factors determining the social, economic, and intellectual development of a nation. In recent years, Uzbekistan has been implementing significant reforms aimed at modernizing its education system, improving the quality of teaching, expanding access to educational opportunities, and introducing international standards. Particular attention is being paid to the development of preschool and school education, higher education, digital technologies, scientific research, and the professional development of teachers.

K E Y W O R D S

Uzbekistan, education system, educational reforms, quality of education, digital transformation, higher education, preschool education, innovative teaching methods, teacher development, international cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 marked an important turning point in Uzbekistan's education reforms. On 23 September 2020, Law No. ÖRQ-637, entitled *On Education*, was adopted. This law renewed the legal foundations of the education system and established the framework for different types and forms of education, the activities of educational institutions, and the legal status of students and teaching professionals.

One of the most important aspects of this law was the broader legal regulation of different forms of education. In particular, full-time, part-time, evening, distance, dual, and home-based education were recognised within the legislative framework. This created legal opportunities to make education more flexible and responsive to different needs and circumstances, rather than limiting it exclusively to traditional classroom-based learning.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic also had a significant impact on the education system. As it became difficult for schools and higher education institutions to continue conventional classroom lessons, the need for distance learning, televised lessons, and electronic educational resources increased. This development made the improvement of digital education infrastructure an even more urgent priority.

MAIN PART

On 11 May 2022, Presidential Decree No. PF-134 approved the National Programme for the Development of Public Education for 2022–2026. This document became one of the most important strategic foundations for Uzbekistan's education reforms during the 2020-2026 period.

The programme established the following priority areas:

Full implementation of the National Curriculum in school education, developed on the basis of advanced international experience.

Development of modern textbooks and teaching-methodological materials.

Increasing the social prestige of the teaching profession.

Developing teachers' professional capacity and qualifications.

Improving the material and technical infrastructure of schools.

Constructing modern schools and reconstructing existing facilities in accordance with contemporary educational standards.

The significance of this decree lies in the fact that school education reforms were organised within a unified national programme rather than being implemented as separate and unrelated initiatives.

The year 2023 was particularly important for Uzbekistan's education system from the perspective of international assessment. Uzbekistan participated in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2022) for the first time. The results were published on 5 December 2023.

PISA assesses the ability of 15-year-old students to apply their knowledge in mathematics, reading, and science to real-life situations.

Uzbekistan's results were as follows:

Assessment area	Students in Uzbekistan reaching at least Level 2	OECD average
Mathematics	19%	69%
Reading literacy	14%	74%
Science	19%	76%

These results demonstrated that, alongside expanding access to education, it was necessary to strengthen students' abilities to understand, analyse, and practically apply their knowledge.

In 2024, one of the important priorities of education reform was strengthening the legal status of teachers.

On 1 February 2024, Law No. O'RQ-901, entitled *On the Status of Teachers*, was adopted. This law established provisions concerning teachers' rights, responsibilities, guarantees for their professional activities, and social protection.

The law is particularly important in the following areas:

Protecting teachers against unlawful interference in their professional activities.

Protecting their honour, dignity, and professional reputation.

Restricting the assignment of duties unrelated to their professional responsibilities.

Establishing a legal basis for teachers' professional development and qualification improvement.

These changes reinforced at the legislative level the understanding that teachers play a decisive role in improving the quality of education.

In addition, legislative changes aimed at improving public administration in the education sector were introduced in September 2024. This process was associated with the reorganisation and clarification of administrative responsibilities within the preschool and school education systems.

By 2025, the number of public, private, and foreign higher education institutions operating in Uzbekistan had expanded considerably.

According to the official briefing of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation summarising the results of 2025, the following figures were reported:

207 higher education institutions

101 public institutions

74 non-state institutions

32 foreign institutions and branches

Approximately 1.7 million students enrolled in higher education.

More than 44% higher education enrolment coverage.

52 universities offering distance learning.

40 academic programmes that had received international accreditation.

Source: Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, 20 December 2025.

In addition:

Agreements were reached on 17 joint educational programmes in cooperation with nine foreign universities ranked among the world's TOP 500.

Approximately 20,000 international students were reported to be studying at higher education institutions in Uzbekistan.

A total of 3,859 foreign professors and lecturers were involved in the educational process.

Some 6,139 Uzbek academic staff members received professional development training abroad.

Forty academic programmes at 11 higher education institutions underwent international accreditation.

On 29 September 2026, the President reviewed a presentation concerning reforms in the school and higher education systems.

According to the official report, an analysis of existing textbooks identified 1,257 errors across 260 textbooks. In addition, 464 translation errors were identified in 51 textbooks.

As a result, greater attention is being given to international experience, age-appropriate learning materials, and practical assignments in the development of a new generation of textbooks.

In particular:

Primary school textbooks are being improved using Finnish experience.

Singaporean experience is being used in the development of mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology textbooks for Grades 5–7.

The development of 1,342 titles of textbooks and teaching-methodological materials is planned by 2027.

A total of 110,000 primary school teachers have completed professional development programmes.

CONCLUSION

The period from 2020 to 2026 was characterised by extensive institutional and substantive changes in Uzbekistan’s education system.

In 2020, the adoption of the new Law on Education strengthened the legal foundations of reform. In 2022, the National Programme for the Development of School Education was approved. In 2023,

Uzbekistan's first participation in the PISA international assessment created an opportunity to analyse educational outcomes according to international standards. In 2024, the legal status of teachers was strengthened. In 2025, efforts to improve the international integration of higher education and the teacher-training system continued. In 2026, the new National Curriculum, textbook revision, and modernisation of educational quality assessment mechanisms became major priorities.

The overall assessment is that the reforms implemented between 2020 and 2026 expanded the coverage, legal foundations, and institutional capacities of Uzbekistan's education system.

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