

## GLOBALIZATION EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN: REFORMING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN UZBEKISTAN WITH THE PARTNERSHIP OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

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### Abstract:

This article explores the historical development of the education in Uzbekistan during Soviet Union period till our days. Additionally, it discusses the challenges on promoting the education in the country after the collapse of Soviet Union. Also it states the significant role of international organizations in reforming Uzbek model in education.

**Keywords:** International organization, Globalization, education system of Uzbekistan, Soviet Union, communistic ideology, vocational and professional colleges, TVET, radical reforms, socialistic republics, centralized education system.

### Abbreviations

**ADB** Asian Development Bank

**EU** European Union

**NPPT** National Program for Personal Training

**NAP-EFA** National Action Plan on Education for All

**OSI** Open Society Institute

**TVET** Technical and Vocational Education and Training

**UNDP** United Nation Development Program

**UNICEF** United Nations Children's Fund

**UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**UK** United Kingdom

### Historical perspectives of the education in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is a double landlocked country in Central Asia bordering with Kazakhstan from the north, Kyrgyzstan from the northeast, Tajikistan from the southeast, with Afghanistan and Turkmenistan from the southwest. Uzbekistan got its independence in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet-Union. Its population is diverse and over 33 million people. Uzbekistan is rich in mineral recourses, its main economy depends on

cultivating and exporting cotton abroad. Uzbekistan is considered one of the leading distributor of cotton in the world.

Before Russian colonization, the land of Central Asia split into Khokand, Bukhara, and Hiva *khanates* (empires). In 1917 Communist took power over the bourgeois capitalistic class and established the Soviet Union. Due to the National Territorial Delamination process, Central Asia was divided into ethnically-based republics. Accordingly, in 1924 Uzbekistan Socialistic Republic was established by the former Soviet Union. In 1991 Uzbekistan proclaimed its independence and sovereignty.

#### *Education during the Soviet Union*

The history of Uzbekistan educational system divided into four periods: Soviet education (1923-1991), post-Soviet educational transformation (1991-1997), educational reforms (1997-2018), political transformation (2018-present).

The Soviet education system divided into nursery (3-7 years old), elementary (1-4 grades), and secondary schools (5-11 years). At that time it was compulsory for students to finish 1-9 grades then they may opt to continue further education in the secondary specialized institution such as *PTUs*( or *technikums* (1.5-3 years). They had also a choice to finish 11 years in secondary school then pursue higher education (5 years). All educational schools were for free except nursery schools and kindergartens. Soviet Education was centralized and controlled from Moscow for all socialistic republics (Read, 1989). During socialism period Soviet Union education was portrayed as the best in the world, however, it was fully centralized, bureaucratic and hierarchically managed (Silova 2009a; Kobakhidze, 2018). Read (1989) described it as a social and educational levelled, stagnated and resistant to change the system. Marxist-Leninist communistic ideology was a core concept at that time and it significantly reflected on education.

The educational system of Uzbekistan almost resembled the Soviet Union system at the beginning of the post-Soviet transformation period. Uzbekistan inherited hierarchical central planning and inefficient resource allocation policy which brought many issues in budgeting not only education but also other sectors. In fact, during the transformation process, Uzbekistan experienced a catastrophic decline in economics. UNESCO/ADB (2001) data suggests that government spending on education decreased to 6.8 % but voluntarily contribution of parents increased to 55% (as cited in OSI, 2002). The country cannot afford much investment in education and attempted to decentralize it simply the transferring financial burden to local authorities, schools, and parents (OSI, 2002). Delays of teachers' salaries increased corruption in enrolling for higher education but for school teachers, private tutoring has become a means of earning (Khaydarov, 2018). Quality of education declined drastically. Moreover, equity and equality issues emerged. The country was unable to undertake fundamental reforms in the education system therefore, the government was open for a partnership to make radical changes. Despite all of this complexity, it

was time to identify major problems and contradictions, analyse along with economic and political transformations (UNDP, 2007-2008).

#### *Reforms during Post-Soviet transformation*

According to UNDP (2007-2008), 1997-2001 period was a time for framing national education policy in Uzbekistan. In 1997 the government adopted National Program for Personal Training (NPPT) and it was formulated into national law (UNESCO, 2011). NPPT stopped ad hoc reforms in education in the early post-Soviet period and provided with a coherent framework to undertake educational reforms (Ruziyev et al., 2018). In 1998, with the initiative of the first president of Uzbekistan a significant reform was executed in the sector. The secondary education was modified to be compulsory, Technical and Vocational Educational Training (TVET in the view of colleges) and special secondary education (in the view of lyceums) were introduced. From 2001 every student should enrol at colleges or lyceums on a full-time basis (3years) after finishing 5 years in high-schools. The purpose of TVET was to raise teaching quality, to develop professional skills of youth, and create more opportunity to enter the labour market (UNDP, 2007-2008).

Also, there was a need to undertake reforms in higher education of Uzbekistan. The following important reforms were adopted to refine it: introducing of automated entrance examination; adopting of three stage higher education system comprised of bachelor, master and doctorate program; establishing partnership with foreign higher educational institutions; and switching from fully centralized funding of higher education into personal financing model (Ruziyev et al., 2018).

#### **International Organizations in Uzbekistan**

The assistance of international organizations such as Asia Development Bank, World Bank, UNESCO/UNICEF, European Union, and others has become very much salient especially, in the first decade of the post-Soviet period. The intervention of these organizations solved many issues concerning not only financing education but also policy management in education. Open Society Institute (OSI) indicated that Uzbekistan government cannot achieve education reform goals without the right kind of international assistance or without an effective mobilization of local resources and stakeholders (2002). It was noted in the same report that following strategies were important to redesign educational policy: develop information system and independent policy analysis; promote quality in education; build social coalitions and institutional partnerships around education goals; invest physical and virtual infrastructure; establish policies for equity and access (OSI, 2002).

Next table shows the financial and management assistance of donor organizations in Uzbekistan.

International organizations	Loans/ Programs/ Activities
Asia Development Bank (ADB)	37 500 000\$ (Investment Loan) Education sector development project (expected approval in 2002) 70 000 000\$ (Policy &Project Loan) Education Sector Development Program (2002) 57 000 000\$ (Loan) Senior Secondary Education Project (2000-2004) 40 000 000\$ Basic Education Textbook Development Project (1998-2003) 900 000\$ Monitoring and Evaluation of Education Reform (1998-2000) 500 000\$ Capacity Building in Education Finance (1999) 350 000\$ Basic Education Staff Development / Teacher Education Reform (1999) 8000000\$ Technical Assistance
World Bank	Basic education loans to support preschools and primary schools: 15.0 million\$ (i) Basic Education Project, the first phase (2006) 28.0 million \$ (ii) the second phase (2009)
European Union	1 660 000\$ Restructuring of the Education System (1998-2000) 950 000\$ Assistance for the Reform of Vocational Education (1999-2001)
Germany Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (DGTZ) Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KFW)	7000000 \$ Support for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (1999-2001)  1071000\$ Assistance to Primary Professional Education (1997-1998)
UNESCO	150 000\$ Education Program (2000-2001) Education Management Information System (2004–2006).
Soros Foundation	1 090 000\$ Education Programs of OSIAF-Uzbekistan (2002) English Language Program; Secondary Education Program; Youth Program; Scholarship Program
UNICEF	296 000 (RR) 788 000 (OR) Early Childhood Growth and Development Program (2000-2004) 2 626 000 (RR) 3 250 000 (OR) Child-Enrichment Program (2000-2004)

	1 600 000 (RR) 3 750 000 (OR) Young People's Well-being Program (2000-2004)
Save the Children	1 000 000 (UK Pounds)
Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC)	60 000 000\$ (Soft Loan) Vocational Education Development (announced in 2001 for 10 years)
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	Basic Education Sector Strengthening Program (2003-2005).
Government of PRC	Provision of information and communication technology in basic education (2004).
Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)	10.3 million \$ loan on construction and equipping of secondary schools (2007-2008).
British Council	Development of English textbooks and teacher training (2006-2010).

Source: OSI (2002); ABD (2010)

From the table above it is apparent that support of international organizations was fundamental for Uzbekistan to develop its own strategy in education. Particularly, the partnership of ABD brought substantial changes in education. The total value of ADB loans to Uzbekistan was \$1.29 billion during 1996-2009, of which \$290.5 million (22.5%) were loans to the education sector (ABD, 2010). ABD and Uzbekistan partnership was based on improving quality of education, raising system efficiency, and strengthening national capacities to manage sector reforms. ABD loans came from ordinary capital resources (72.5%) and Asia Development Fund (27.5%) which included textbooks loans and rural school loans (ADB, 2010). In post-Soviet period the shortage of textbooks was already visible in Uzbekistan due to curriculum change. Besides, the shift from Cyrillic to Latin alphabet in 1996 increased critical situation in the country. Significant resource investment was required to publish new books in Latin and train teachers to a new alphabet. Therefore, ABD financed two projects: Education Textbook Development Project in 1998-2003 and Basic Education Staff Development /Teacher Education Reform in 1999, which were substantial at that time. ADB has become the leading development partner in the education sector and its assistance was assessed meaningful and successful in the report of Country Evaluation Study of Uzbekistan ( ABD, 2010).

### Successful Reforms

Adoption of NPPT was a trigger for implementing a series of reforms in the education system of Uzbekistan. Accordingly, in 2000 National Action Plan on Education for All

(NAP-EFA) project was elaborated with recommendations of UNESCO consultants (The Ministry of Public Education and the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan/UNESCO, 2002). The project put goals to improve quality of education by 2015; to make accessible education for all children with different SES and gender disparity; to create equal access to adult and women to all levels of education. By the end of 2015, the project achieved tangible outcomes in female enrolment for education where it reached 98.6% in primary and 91% in secondary education in 2015 (UNESCO statistics, 2017). Literacy rate increased to 1.6% from 2000 and reached 99.9% of the population (UNESCO, 2015). Albeit, the given data is not impressive, it is necessary to note that the population illiterately rate diminished and became insignificant. However, the enrolment rate for tertiary education declined when it was 13% in 2000 and dropped to 8.1% in 2015 (World Bank, 1986-2017). Besides, gender disparity became more visible in enrolment for tertiary education by dropping down from 8.13% in 2003 to 6.3% in 2015. The most plausible justification for this phenomenon could be the expansion of secondary education, particularly TVET, because students practice specialization and get diploma. The financial position of most Uzbek families is not stable. Therefore, many young people want to help financially to their parents and enter the labour market once completing secondary schools. Moreover, people's stereotypes also play a great role in decision making on the further educational development of girls. Parents give priority to investing boys' education as they consider the future of girls will be connected with motherhood at home and they will financially be depended on their husbands.

Uzbekistan and the European Union (EU) partnership was launched to reform Uzbekistan education system and adapt it to the standards of the globalized world. Radical reforms have been accomplished in higher education with the assistance of the EU. Uzbekistan was involved in EU education assistance programs such as Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, The EU-Central Asia Education Platform, and The Central Asia Research and Education Network (CAREN). With the assistance of these programs cooperation between local and foreign universities was established; students and teachers staff mobility was promoted by educational training programs and individual scholarships; access to globalized distance learning programs was enhanced. Furthermore, the connection of Central Asian students and researches was strengthened in the field of telemedicine, disaster risk management, water resources management, and geo-hazard potential of retreating glaciers (Peyrouse, 2018).

Until 1997 tertiary education comprised 5 years of study but due to reforms, it was redesigned to be two-tire, consisting of bachelor (4 years) and master (2 years) courses. The number of higher institutions increased from 43 in 1989 to 78 in 2015 and relatively the number of full-time students increased from 180000 to 250000 (Ruziyev et al., 2018). Leading foreign universities such as Westminster University



(UK), Inha University (Korea), Turin Polytechnic University, Lomonosov Moscow State University (Russia), and Management Development Institute of Singapore opened their branches in capital city Tashkent. Currently, each region has its own university and specialized institutes preparing professionals to meet the challenges of regional development.

In early 1990, evening and correspondence courses were phased out to make higher education effective and responding to the international standards (Ruziyev et al., 2018). Reforms also affected the organizational structure of higher education. Now it is classified into institutes, comprehensive universities, specialized universities, academies, regional branches of specialized higher educational institutions and branches of foreign universities.

One more significant reform was an introduction of automated exam system for tertiary education in 1994. Due to this reform students of different level gained equal opportunity to enrol for the tertiary institution and continue higher education. During the Soviet Union the admission for higher education based on oral and written examination which was corrupted and far from fairness (Roziyev et al., 2018). Students from lower-income families could not enrol in higher institutions. Usually, high-income families were able to buy places for their children. However, this corrupted system was banned and replaced by automated and transparent exam.

### **Limitations of the Reforms**

It is salient to note that not all the post-Soviet reforms in Uzbekistan turned to be successful. For example, financial decentralization of higher education and making it on payment basis aroused inequality among people. 69% of enrolled students pay tuition fee for studies at bachelor level and 75% for master level. Therefore, 59% of university students belong to well-off families (Peyrouse, 2018). The social economic position of Uzbek household cannot afford the university tuition fees. There are some students cannot even afford to pay house rent or everyday transport to the university.

Another less successful reform was transforming secondary schools into compulsory education. In 1999 4+7 (primary school education+ high school education) system was changed into 4+5+3 (primary school education+ high school education + secondary professional education) system. Introducing TVET seemed would stop problems with unemployment. It was aimed to form a new generation with a new professional culture responding to the labour market needs (Education Sector Plan for 2013-2017, 2013). Finishing colleges students get diploma confirming of special professional education in specific areas. School should play an important role in providing students with jobs, therefore, school and organization partnership should be ongoing process. However, this reform did not approve its expectations in Uzbekistan. It brought a bunch of issues such as:

- An additional year of compulsory education increased students' absenteeism and drop-out rate.
- Secondary, higher education and TVETs did not meet labour market needs, the number of unemployed and immigrating youth increased
- Weak partnership with private sector/industry, poor facilities and learning resources, and corruption emerged
- Quality of education significantly declined
- Gender disparity expanded in tertiary education

Considerable amount (31.6% of total expenditure in education) of resources was annually spent to refine secondary education in Uzbekistan (UNESCO, 2007). However, it did not help to achieve envisioned objectives. Many secondary schools, especially in rural areas, lacked equipped classrooms and fully qualified teachers (UNESCO, 2011) Daily report of colleges about students' attendance was lower than the real numbers. The situation in rural schools took catastrophic turn and attendance dropped dramatically that schools could not manage the situation. What was the reason for the failure of implementing TVET as compulsory education? No empirical investigation has been done on this issue. As a matter of fact, the investment of Uzbekistan government and international organizations was sufficient to develop this sector. The rationale of these outcomes could be one more extra year of compulsory education is not favoured by the majority of low-income Uzbek families. Also, poor equipped colleges, training facilities and unqualified specialists to prepare students for the future job increased discontentment of population. Reforming secondary education into compulsory education maybe successfully accomplished in other countries but there is no established blueprint that can be applied generally to all countries (Riddell & Nino-Zarazua, 2016). It seems the country was not ready for reforms in secondary education and it became a burden to the populace.

The arrival of the next president Shavkat Mirziyoyev in 2016, brought about new reforms in the education sector. Ministry of Preschool Education was established in 2017 to increase enrolment of children into preschool education. Secondary specialized schools and TVETs redesigned to be elective and compulsory education decreased from 12 years to 11. However, secondary education was not banned but took a new vision to serve to the public. TVETs modified to be on a fee basis and shortened for 1,5/ 2 years. Students after finishing high-school have the choice to enter tertiary or secondary education. As a usual who fails exams for tertiary education apply for TVET. Currently, Uzbekistan continues to develop TVET policy and puts new goals to achieve.



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## **Conclusion**

After becoming an independent country in 1991, Uzbekistan chose its own path to the development. From the analysis of the economic situation in 1990-1996 government practised recession in financing all sectors including education. This brought a decline of adequately educated youth and fully qualified specialist in the country. At this stage, financial and practical assistance of international organizations was very substantial to develop a system. International organizations such as UNESCO, ABD, UNICEF, World Bank and others have done a great deal of work to improve effectiveness the education in Uzbekistan and assisted practically to make it more accessible to all level of population. Implementation of NAP-EFA project in Uzbekistan enhanced education system made it more accessible to all level of population. The partnership of Uzbekistan and world organization brought a new turn in the education system of the country. Particularly, a considerable investment of ABD raised quality standards of education in Uzbekistan. As the newly independent country, Uzbekistan was at the stage of the great economic recession, and all sectors required radical reforms but lack of resources limited government opportunity. External intervention and assistance saved the country from greater loses. However, not all of the executed reforms were successful in implementation. If a strategy was successful in one country it may not give the same results in another one. Therefore, blindly following reforms which are offered by international organizations may bring unexpected outcomes. In reform implementation, all aspects should be considered such as the economic situation of people and their financial opportunity. As long as all reforms should serve the wellbeing of the people.

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