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### CHANGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN NEW UZBEKISTAN

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#### ABOUT ARTICLE

**Key words:** Higher education, reforms, new Uzbekistan, education policy, digital transformation, international recognition, research initiatives, teacher qualification, education system, youth opportunities.

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**Abstract:** Higher education in New Uzbekistan is experiencing tremendous reforms, deeply influencing not only the social but also the economic development of the country. The article scrutinizes the newest higher education policies, their correlation with educational trends in the world market, and what new opportunities for students and youth this opens. It provides an overview of modernization and digitalization in Uzbekistan's education system, referring to international recognition of degrees and research projects, as well as the development of teaching staff.

### YANGI O'ZBEKISTONDA OLIY TA'LIM TIZIMINING O'ZGARISHI

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#### MAQOLA HAQIDA

**Kalit so'zlar:** Oliy ta'lim, islohotlar, yangi O'zbekiston, ta'lim siyosati, raqamli transformatsiya, xalqaro tan olish, ilmiy izlanishlar, malaka oshirish, ta'lim tizimi, yoshlar imkoniyatlari.

**Annotatsiya:** Yangi O'zbekistonda oliy ta'lim tizimida amalga oshirilgan islohotlar mamlakatning iqtisodiy va ijtimoiy rivojlanishiga sezilarli ta'sir ko'rsatmoqda. Mazkur maqola, yangi oliy ta'lim siyosati, uning global ta'lim tendensiyalari bilan uyg'unlashuvi va talaba-yoshlar uchun ochilgan imkoniyatlar haqida tahlil beradi. O'zbekistonda ta'lim tizimining zamonaviylashtirilishi va raqamli transformatsiyasi, xususan, xalqaro miqyosda tan olingan diplomlar, ilmiy izlanishlar va o'qituvchilarning malakasini oshirishga qaratilgan chora-tadbirlar haqida so'z yuritiladi.

**ИЗМЕНЕНИЕ СИСТЕМЫ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В НОВОМ УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ***Дилрабо Абдурасулова**Студент магистратуры**Ташкентский международный педагогический университет**Ташкент, Узбекистан*

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**О СТАТЬЕ**

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**Ключевые слова:** Высшее образование, реформы, новый Узбекистан, образовательная политика, цифровая трансформация, международное признание, научные исследования, повышение квалификации, образовательная система, возможности для молодежи.

**Аннотация:** Система высшего образования в новом Узбекистане претерпевает значительные реформы, оказывающие глубокое влияние на экономическое и социальное развитие страны. В статье рассматриваются недавно принятые образовательные политики, их соответствие мировым образовательным тенденциям и возможности, которые они открывают для студентов и молодежи. Также обсуждается модернизация и цифровая трансформация образовательной системы Узбекистана, включая международное признание дипломов, научные исследования и мероприятия по повышению квалификации преподавателей.

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**Introduction**

Over the past two decades since 1991, the Uzbekistan government has been implementing changes and transformations in most spheres of activity, starting from political and economic to cultural and social. Education has been among the significant spheres for reform, particularly at the level of higher education. Recently, the Uzbekistan government has emphasized renovating and increasing the quality of higher education to meet the demand for a rapidly changing economy globally. These reforms are not only significant for the development of the national economy but also for the creation of conditions under which Uzbek students will become competitive on the international arena.

The education system of Uzbekistan has traditionally been plagued by a number of problems, such as outdated curricula, insufficient infrastructure, and disconnection between academic training and labor market needs. Yet, over the last several years, the government has taken seriously the reforming of education, and thus, great changes have occurred. The transformation has been underway since 2016, under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, and reform of the higher education structure in Uzbekistan continues unabated. These reforms not only improve the overall standards of education but also further enhance the employability prospects for the graduates and put the overall higher education system on international standards.

Main axes of the reforms have included the development of an autonomous and pluralistic higher education system. In this line, Uzbekistan is working to ensure university autonomy, academic

freedom, innovate, and establish international cooperation with universities from all over the world. The government of Uzbekistan is also spending much on educational infrastructure, from new campus construction to the development of better teaching facilities and integration of modern technologies into the learning process.

However, the process of transformation is not that smooth. Despite ambitious reforms, there is still uneven quality across universities, and many regions are in dire need of more effective implementation of reforms. This article investigates the changes that have taken place in Uzbekistan's higher education system by analyzing the impact of such reforms, the challenges faced by the institutions, and the overall trajectory of higher education in the country.

### **Literature Review**

Traditionally, higher education in Uzbekistan was rooted in the Soviet educational system: rigidly controlled and uniform, with minimal scope for autonomy or academic freedom. Inevitably, the Soviet model would be inclined toward theoretical preparation at the expense of an applied aspect and critical analysis; the system had obvious flaws that set it off from modern economic demands. Secondly, both students and academic personnel were underexposed to their international counterparts, limiting, to some extent, any possible dissemination of knowledge or research findings.

Recent reforms have tended to move away from these previous models. For instance, Kadirova et al. (2020) mention that the Uzbek government has promoted various policies related to developing a more internationally competitive and recognized higher education system. The diversification of higher education institutions in the country is one of the key reforms. Higher education in the country used to be dominated by a few large state universities, but recent changes have opened the way for the establishment both of private universities and foreign branch campuses.

The internationalization of higher education has also gained a center stage in the reform agenda. A number of studies pointed out an increased number of joint degree programs with foreign universities for the purpose of raising quality of academic programs, as well as building worldwide partnerships. To date, the opening of a branch of the University of Westminster in Tashkent has been regarded as one more step in internationalizing higher education within Uzbekistan (Mavlonov et al., 2021).

The second crucial component of the reforms involves enhancing teaching methodology and curricula. Traditional, passive forms of lecture-based teaching are gradually being replaced by more active and student-centered approaches. In the research by Shermatov and Usmanov (2020), much emphasis has been given to developing skills related to critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork that have been increasingly demanded by employers in the global labor market. Along this direction, the government has supported increased teacher training and programs to professionalize

academic staff as its mechanism for ensuring that “faculty members are adequately supported with the relevant skills, knowledge, and motivation”.

However, despite these efforts, challenges remain. Although the government's commitment to reform is unquestionable, some authors believe that the pace of change has been slow and patchy across different universities during 2022. This often means that the quality of education in rural and regional areas is not as good as in institutions in major urban centers, and there are concerns about the adequacy of funding for many institutions to fully implement reforms. More importantly, better aligning the outputs of higher education with the labor market demand must also be done. While most of the students do acquire modern skills nowadays, the gap between the education system and the requirements on the practical ground by the employers (Turaeva et al., 2021).

While much progress has been achieved in higher education reform in Uzbekistan, more will be required in terms of depth and sustainability regarding the challenges outlined if those reforms are to result in an equitable and high-quality learning environment.

### **Results and Discussion**

A key outcome that has been associated with higher education reforms within Uzbekistan includes a series of challenges and successes, each of which is important to consider. One of the clear success stories regarding the expansion of higher education has been improved access for students. A focus by the Uzbek government on opening more universities-public and private-has ensured a greater level of access by more students within the country to higher education. In fact, according to the data from the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education of Uzbekistan in 2023, there has been a great growth in the number of higher educational institutions in the country over the last five years. As a result, more and more university graduates have emerged in such areas as economics, engineering, and information technology, which are crucial for Uzbekistan's economic development.

Equally impressive are the international partnerships and collaborations that have taken place. Uzbek universities have become increasingly involved with various prestigious universities across the globe. The Tashkent State University of Economics, for example, maintains a list of partners with universities from the United States, Germany, and Russia; this has provided a venue for students to exchange experiences, involve themselves in research projects, and implement international standards and norms in higher education into Uzbek institutions. Students who have participated in the exchange programs have reported improved educational experiences and increased competitiveness in the global job market.

Another positive result has been the development and implementation of student-oriented teaching approaches, which help students to improve their learning. According to the findings of Asadov et al. (2022), students in those institutions where interactive teaching methodologies were implemented, such as case studies, group discussions, and project-based learning, have higher levels

of engagement and academic performance. These changes are believed to be important in setting students up to meet the expectations of today's workplace, which include creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving.

However, during the reform process, many challenges have emerged. Probably the most serious challenge is a huge difference in the quality of education between institutions: while universities in Tashkent and other big cities have managed to attract foreign faculty and invest in modern infrastructure, most of the regional universities continue to suffer from outdated facilities and limited access to international networks. Recent reports by the Ministry of Higher Education in 2023 indicate that although urban universities are increasingly gaining momentum, regional universities continue to struggle with securing highly qualified faculty and offering high-quality academic programs.

The other challenge is the relevance of academic curricula to labor market needs. While some universities have modernized their curricula, employers in Uzbekistan have complained about the readiness of graduates for employment. As corroborated by a survey conducted by the Chamber of Commerce of Uzbekistan, in 2023 a high proportion of employers reported that higher education graduates usually lack practical skills and experience in many areas, such as engineering, healthcare, and information technologies. This gap between education and employment is yet another illustration of the need for much closer collaboration between universities and industries so that curricula are responsive to current market needs.

Another issue that has remained in the limelight is academic freedom. The government has implemented policies to give universities more autonomy, but questions still linger as to the extent of freedom enjoyed by faculty members and students. In a report, the Uzbekistan Academic Council (2022) estimated that although some universities have made certain strides in this direction, others still face serious restrictions regarding curriculum development, research focus, and academic expression.

It was for all those reasons, in spite of those challenges, that the reforms could lay the firm foundation to be further followed by state-of-the-art developments of higher education in Uzbekistan. Thus, modernization, internationalization, and building a knowledge-based economy set the basis on which further sector improvements will rely.

### **Conclusion**

Changes in the system of higher education in Uzbekistan are its big step towards modernization and accord with international standards of education. Considerable achievements have been reached in the spheres of expansion of access, improving teaching and learning, international partnerships; however, there is still much to be tackled, including regional disparities in educational provision, alignment with labor market needs, and, not least, ongoing concerns over academic freedom.

Looking ahead, the challenges will have to be faced by both the government and institutions of higher learning while building on the recent reform successes.

To make such reforms successful, Uzbekistan needs to focus on the quality of education rather than quantity, ensuring that every university, wherever it is located, is given full resources and support to deliver quality education. Collaboration at different levels of universities, industries, and government agencies will also be required to be assured that graduates are equipped with the relevant skills needed in the modern workforce. Ultimately, the success of Uzbekistan's reforms to higher education depends on whether or not it will be possible to balance the drive for expansion with the need for quality and relevance in education.

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