

Uzbekistan

Abduvali Ismailov
Furkat Kholmiraev
Kodir Karimberdiev

Introduction

Overview of Education System

The education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan¹ includes national education standards, national education requirements, and curricula and study programs. Implementation is carried out by educational institutions, organizations that assess the quality of education, scientific and pedagogical institutions that carry out necessary studies to ensure the functioning and development of the education system, and public administration bodies in the field of education, as well as organizations under their jurisdiction. The education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan is unique and provides an education for students at all stages of learning.

The Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan:

- Implements a unified national policy in the field of education
- Approves and ensures the implementation of national programs in the field of education
- Determines the procedure for employing teaching staff in educational organizations and for assessing their activities
- Establishes the procedure for determining the rating of educational organizations
- Determines the procedure for retraining and advanced training of specialists
- Forms government orders for training of specialists in educational institutions based on the forecast and analysis of labor market needs
- Establishes material and technical, infrastructural, and parametric requirements for educational organizations
- Establishes the procedure for the preparation and publication of textbooks and teaching aids, as well as the requirements for their delivery and use in educational organizations

The Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan may exercise other powers in accordance with the legislation.²

The State Inspectorate for Supervision of Quality in Education under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan (hereinafter referred to as the Education Inspectorate) is a special authorized body of state administration in the field of education and implements state policy to monitor the quality of the education process, teaching staff, training, retraining, and professional development of specialists in the education system. The Education Inspectorate conducts

certification and state accreditation of educational organizations, as well as certification of teaching staff of educational organizations; monitors the quality of the education process in educational institutions; exercises control and participates in the process of assigning positions and qualification categories to teachers of preschool, general secondary, secondary specialized, vocational, and out-of-school educational organizations; issues licenses to nonstate educational organizations; and determines the rating of educational organizations.

The Ministry of Public Education deals with:

- Developing and implementing a unified state policy in the field of general secondary and extracurricular education, further improving the spiritual, moral, intellectual, and physical development of students
- Implementing methodological guidance of the activities of general education institutions in accordance with the national education standards of general secondary education and national requirements for extracurricular education
- Raising the status and authority of the teaching profession, and providing material and social support to the staff of educational institutions, as well as to employees of the public education system
- Introducing innovative forms of education, modern pedagogical and information technologies, effective methods of professional orientation, and training and education about the education process that considers how to optimize the educational, psychological, and physical loads of students
- Preparing and publishing education and methodical literature that is developed according to updated curricula and programs, meets international requirements for content and quality, and uses new pedagogical information and communication technologies among others³

Education in the Republic of Uzbekistan⁴ comprises the following:

- Preschool education and upbringing
- General secondary and specialized secondary education
- Vocational education
- Higher education
- Postgraduate education
- Retraining and advanced training of specialists
- Out-of-school education

Use and Impact of PIRLS

Uzbekistan has recently begun participation in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS),⁵ Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA),⁶ Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS),⁷ and Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)⁸ for the first time in the history of the country. Participation in PIRLS 2021 and

other international assessment programs are supported politically. In accordance with the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers, dated December 8, 2018,⁹ the National Center for the Implementation of International Studies on the Assessment of the Quality of Education (hereinafter referred to as the National Center) was established under the Education Inspectorate.

Two main tasks of the National Center are to organize and coordinate international studies as a representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan and ensure the successful participation of general secondary education institutions in international studies. As a public body, the National Center was responsible for ensuring the participation of schools in PIRLS 2021.

The National Center conducted the main survey of PIRLS 2021 in 180 sampled schools in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Education and regional administrations.¹⁰

The Language/Reading Curriculum in Primary Grades

In accordance with the Order of the Ministry of Public Education, dated December 9, 2020, No. 297,¹¹ the number of study hours for fourth grade students was set at 23 hours per week. In Grades 3 and 4, four hours of instruction for the subject Mother Tongue and three hours of instruction for Reading were distributed accordingly. Later, the newly adopted Order of the Ministry of Public Education¹² changed the number of weekly study hours for fourth grade students to 24 hours, but four hours of Mother Tongue instruction and three hours of Reading instruction distributed accordingly in fourth grade. In the 2022–2023 academic year, Reading will be replaced by a single subject called Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy in third grade.

Reading lessons in the primary grades of general secondary education not only teach students to read consciously, correctly, and expressively, but also develop in them a culture of reading and speaking, as well as the ability to think independently. The main purposes of teaching the subject of Reading in primary school are to:

- Form and develop students' spiritual and moral world; literary and aesthetic taste; and independent thinking, knowledge, skills, and abilities of figurative thinking through the teaching of rare examples of national and world literature
- Expand and strengthen students' spirituality and worldview by formation of a world human nature and culture, values (national and universal), as well as a culture of reading by teaching works of fiction

The main tasks of teaching the subject of Reading in fourth grade are to:

- Ensure the formation and development of students' oral communicative competence and oral speech based on the norms of literary language
- In written discourse: high literacy, adhere to the norms of literary language, develop skills and abilities to use methodological diversity, and teach first familiar and then unfamiliar texts expressively, identifying the student's skills. Quantitative indicators—for example, reading speed and how many words can be read per minute—also are determined.¹³

The child is expected to be able to read and retell the full text, as well as to hear and understand the speech of others. Texts on the theme of the homeland help acquaint students with the sociopolitical, cultural, and educational life of the country and the creative work of the people from Uzbekistan.

Reading lessons in the fourth grade mostly focus on reading the text and working with the text. Lessons include the use of positive tasks such as increasing the activity of students, enriching their imagination, reading activities based on attention to genre, retelling on behalf of the protagonists, continuing the story of the hero's fate, and composing oral stories on interesting topics.¹⁴

Professional Development Requirements and Programs

Professional development is fulfilled through a system for managers, teachers, and specialists in public education (hereinafter, public education staff/employees).¹⁵ The following forms of education are used in continual professional development:

- Education that occurs outside of the workplace
- Education that occurs at the workplace
- Distance learning
- Dual education
- Independent learning
- Alternative forms of professional development

Professional development of staff is implemented by territorial public education organizations or specialized educational organizations directly on the orders of the Ministry. Employees must attend professional development programs for a certain amount of time each year and collect a set amount of credit points. The total annual duration of staff professional development is set at a minimum of 30 hours for managers and specialists of the public education system, and at least 36 hours for teaching staff. Staff who have fully mastered the refresher course are issued a document (certificate) by the educational institution that organized the course. The document is generated electronically in the state sample and certified by electronic signature or another form (QR code, barcode). In addition, staff can use an electronic platform for continual professional development.

The trainee reads and masters each training module included in the curriculum and professional development courses, completes work on the training module, and is evaluated by the electronic platform (credit scores are given). The resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan aims to revise and harmonize the educational programs of higher education institutions according to the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework, the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011), and international assessment programs (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS, TALIS).¹⁶

Monitoring Student Progress in Reading

To ensure the quality of education of students and develop their learning outcomes in accordance with the state education standards of general secondary education, the following types of control (i.e., assessment) are implemented in general education institutions:¹⁷

- Current control assessments are carried out using surveys or tests to regularly monitor the knowledge, skills, and abilities of students.
- A midterm examination (in the form of written work or tests) is administered at the end of the quarter to assess students' knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- Staged control occurs at the end of the academic year in the form of oral examinations, written examinations, and tests. The final grade, rating of the student, and decision to transfer the student to the next grade all depend on the results of the staged control.
- Final control is carried out in the form of a final state certification after the completion of basic secondary education and secondary education.

The Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan establishes the procedure for conducting staged control examinations and final certifications of students of general education institutions. In addition, educational organizations are accredited and certified by the Education Inspectorate.¹⁸ In general secondary and secondary special education institutions, the level of student knowledge is checked for compliance with state education standards and curricula. Certification is the main form of state control in the evaluation of the activities of educational institutions and is done to determine the content, level, and quality of training in educational institutions in accordance with state education standards and state education requirements and curricula. Certification occurs in two ways: internal evaluation and external evaluation of the activities of educational institutions. Internal evaluation involves a self-assessment by the institutions.

The procedure for conducting internal audits is as follows:

- In the process of internal evaluation of the activities of general secondary school, control works are taken from all students in Grades 4 to 11.
- Dictation in Grades 4 to 7 and creative essay in Grades 8 to 11 are written in the control work on the subject of Mother Tongue.
- Tests, written works, dictation, and creative narrative texts for control works on the subjects specified in the course of internal assessment are prepared and examined by district (city) departments of public education.
- The examined control works are placed in envelopes, sealed, and handed over to the chairman of the Internal Evaluation Commission. The inspections adopted by the Commission will be introduced for internal evaluation.¹⁹

Special Reading Initiatives

On March 19, 2019, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev held a video conference on strengthening the attention to youth; their involvement in culture, arts, physical culture, and sports; the formation of skills in using information technology; promoting reading among young people; increasing women’s employment; and five important initiatives to organize work in the spiritual and education spheres on the basis of a new system. In particular, the fourth initiative is aimed at raising the morale of young people, including the organization of systematic work to promote reading.²⁰ In 2020, as part of the Caravan of Enlightenment (*Ma’rifat karvoni*), more than 3 million books were delivered to youth throughout the country, and more than 590,000 fiction books of 59 titles were published under the heading “Youth Library” and distributed to libraries of all educational institutions in the country.²¹

In accordance with the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, No. PP-4354, dated June 7, 2019, the concept “Development of the information and library sector in the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2019–2024” (hereinafter, the Concept)²² was approved. This aims to establish a system of measures to support and develop information and library activities in the country in accordance with the provisions governing the right to free access to information regardless of social status and place of residence, regulating information and library activities and cultural policy.

The priorities for the development of the information and library sphere are the development of information and library services for the population, ensuring the constitutional rights of citizens to free access to information, familiarization with the national and world cultural heritage, and practical and fundamental knowledge.

Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Teaching and Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

On March 15, 2020, the first case of COVID-19 was registered in Uzbekistan. In response, the Uzbek government announced that all schools would be closed as of March 18. As a result, there were relatively few positive test cases at the time. In the fall of 2020, schools gradually reopened, allowing families to assess their situation and decide whether or not to send their children back to school. The school break period lasted an average of eight months.²³

Uzbekistan is identified as a centralized education system, with the Ministry of Public Education typically responsible for all aspects of school education. This changed slightly during the COVID-19 disruption. During the disruption, district councils or commissions, with the input of sanitary and epidemiological centers, district public education systems, and district administration, were able to make decisions over the learning format taking place in their schools. Therefore, responsibility for establishing directions and guidance for teaching and learning in schools was shared across multiple authorities (both national and local).

Impact of the Pandemic on Student Learning

In Uzbekistan, mandated assessments took place as scheduled during the disruption. Furthermore, no special assessments were required to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 disruption on learning progress. However, sample-based or census data on student achievement, attendance, students' emotional and physical health, and teacher physical health were collected and used for this purpose.

Policy and Practice Changes

A number of decisions by the Republican Special Commissions, published as orders by the Ministry of Public Education, outlined plans to address the COVID-19 disruption to school education. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the public education system had already been using some online information systems and websites; however, some other sources were newly introduced during the disruption. Beginning in March 2020, teachers and other specialists in public education were encouraged to prepare television and video lessons. Television lessons were broadcast across six TV channels of the National TV and Radio Company. Digital lessons or learning materials, physically distributed materials, assessments for student learning, and television broadcasts were all required during the disruption. A number of priorities were set through plans and policies aimed at addressing the COVID-19 disruption to education, such as professional development for teachers' use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), developing student ICT-related competencies, use of ICT to improve communication with parents, support of students falling behind, collaboration among teaching staff, guidance for schools on how to support parents/guardians, and socio-emotional support for teachers. These continued to be priorities for Uzbekistan as schools entered the 2020–2021 academic year.²⁴

As the coronavirus-related situation continues, a number of health safety measures have been required for schools. These measures include different start and different break times for different groups of students, increased hygiene (soap/antiseptic), increased cleaning in school buildings, maintaining social distance between students, maintaining social distance between adults, reducing the number of students in the classroom, continuing distance learning, replacing face-to-face teaching with distance learning, and infection control measures (e.g., wearing a mandatory medical mask).

The school break was introduced in Uzbekistan and lasted for eight months. During this period, the number of positive test cases in Uzbekistan grew. As a centralized school system, the Ministry of Public Education of Uzbekistan and a number of other agencies have guided schools in overcoming the problems associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Public Education has supported and continues to support the development of digital materials to support distance learning.

Uzbekistan has continued to be proactive in responding to emergencies and has called for a number of health and safety measures to be taken to prevent the spread of the virus in schools. As

Uzbekistan started the 2020–2021 academic year, the Ministry of Public Education launched a number of projects to improve the professional skills of teachers in the use of ICT for general, pedagogical, collaborative, and communicative purposes, to support underprivileged students, and to create a safe and healthy work environment.

Suggested Readings

Committee on Youth, Culture and Sports of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2021). Boyovut District Council of People’s Deputies Joint Resolution No. 19 / 118-6, February 25, 2021, On the information of the heads of sectors of the Boyovut district on the work carried out in the framework of the five important initiatives put forward by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. <https://lex.uz/> (online national database of legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan).

Ismailov, A. A., et al. (2019). *Assessment of students’ reading literacy in international studies*. “Sharq” Publishing and Printing Joint-Stock Company, Tashkent.

Ismailov, A. A., et al. (2019). *Assessment of reading literacy of primary school students in international studies*. “Sharq” Publishing and Printing Joint-Stock Company, Tashkent.

Mullis, I. V. S., & Martin, M. O. (Eds.). (2019). *PIRLS 2021 assessment frameworks*. International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

Official website of the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan. <http://uzedu.uz>

Official website of the State Inspectorate for Supervision of Quality in Education. www.tdi.uz

Order of the State Inspectorate for Supervision of Quality in Education. (2020). On the organization of the field trial of the PIRLS 2021 study at a high level, No. 146, October 8, 2020.

Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2020). On measures to regulate the circulation of drugs, medical devices and medical equipment during the coronavirus pandemic, No. 449, July 22, 2020. <https://lex.uz/>

Website of the National Center for International Studies on the Assessment of Quality in Education. tsbm.uz

References

- ¹ Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2020). On education, No. LRU-637, September 23, 2020. Retrieved from <https://lex.uz/>
- ² Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2020). On education, No. LRU-637, September 23, 2020. Chapter 3, Article 23. Retrieved from <https://lex.uz/>
- ³ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2019). On approval of the regulations on the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, No. 146, February 20, 2019.
- ⁴ Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2020). On education, No. LRU-637, September 23, 2020. Article 7. Retrieved from <https://lex.uz/>
- ⁵ Progress in International Reading Literacy Study. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://pirls.bc.edu/>
- ⁶ Programme for International Student Assessment. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/>

- 7 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://timss.bc.edu/>
- 8 Teaching and Learning International Survey. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/education/talis/>
- 9 Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2018). On measures to organize international studies in the field of assessment of the quality of education in the system of public education, No. 997, December 8, 2018. Retrieved from <https://lex.uz/>
- 10 Resolution of the State Inspectorate No. 15 of May 31, 2021, and the Ministry of Public Education No. 19 q/q (joint order) 10 of May 31, 2021.
- 11 Order of the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2020). On approval of the basic curriculum for general secondary schools for the 2021–2022 academic year, No. 297, December 9, 2020.
- 12 Order of the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2021). No. 414, December 24, 2021.
- 13 Gafur, E. (2021). Educational significance and methodology of literary science high school graduates. *The American Journal of Management and Economics Innovations*, 3(9), 31-33.
- 14 On the module of teaching methods of primary education “LEARNING - METHODOLOGICAL COMPLEX (PART I).” Tashkent 2018. Retrieved from <https://giu.uz/wp-content/uploads/4.2.-Boshlangich-1-%D2%9B%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BC.pdf>
- 15 Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2022). On approval of the Regulation on the procedure for organizing the system of continuous professional development of public educators, No. 25, January 17, 2022. Retrieved from <https://lex.uz/>
- 16 Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2022). On measures to improve the quality of pedagogical education and further development of the activities of higher educational institutions carrying out training of pedagogical staff, No. 289, June 21, 2022. Retrieved from <https://lex.uz/>
- 17 Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2017). On approval of the Regulations on general secondary education, No. 140, March 15, 2017. Retrieved from <https://lex.uz/>
- 18 Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. On improving the procedure for certification and state accreditation of public educational institutions and non-governmental educational organizations, No. 470, June 7, 2019. Retrieved from <https://lex.uz/>
- 19 UNICEF. (2020). *On accreditation of general secondary education*. Republic of Uzbekistan, Tashkent.
- 20 State Unitary Enterprise. (2020). 5 important initiatives for the youth, *New Uzbekistan and Pravda Vostoka*, December 18, 2020. Retrieved from <https://yuz.uz/news/5-muhim-tashabbus-yoshlarga-qanot>
- 21 State Unitary Enterprise. (2020). 5 important initiatives for the youth, *New Uzbekistan and Pravda Vostoka*, December 18, 2020. Retrieved from <https://yuz.uz/news/5-muhim-tashabbus-yoshlarga-qanot>
- 22 Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2019). On further improvement of information and library services to the population of the Republic of Uzbekistan, No. PO-4354, June 7, 2019. Retrieved from <https://lex.uz/>
- 23 UNICEF. (2020). *Education continuity in COVID-19 pandemic times: Impressions on introducing distance learning in basic education in Uzbekistan*. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/media/3606/file/DL%20Rapid%20Assessment%20report%20Oct%20%2020%20eng.pdf>
- 24 UNESCO and International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). (2022). *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education: International evidence from the Responses to Educational Disruption Survey (REDS)*. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380398>