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Uzbekistan's Education Reforms: **Building on Progress and Advancing Quality**



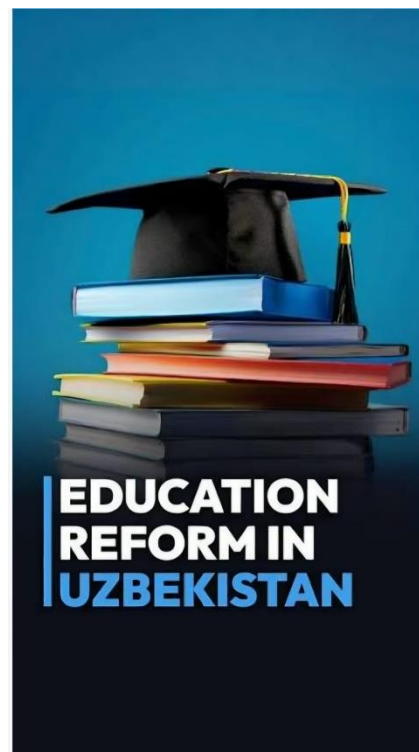
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Over the past decade, Uzbekistan has expanded access to education. The next step is to ensure these opportunities result in improved learning and the skills needed for a changing economy.

This focus should guide the next phase of reform. Expanding enrolment, renewing infrastructure, and attracting investment have established essential foundations. The impact of these efforts will depend on how well education prepares people to think independently, secure meaningful employment, and contribute to national development.

The scale of change is significant. Pre-school enrolment increased from 25.4 per cent in 2017 to 78 per cent in 2025. Higher education participation among 18- to 23-year-olds rose from 7.2 per cent in 2016 to 47.7 per cent in 2024. These changes have expanded opportunities from early childhood through to qualifications that support young adults entering the workforce.



This expansion addressed years of limited access and longstanding challenges. More children, including those in remote areas, now attend early education, and more young people can pursue university degrees. The next challenge is to ensure the quality of these opportunities matches their increased availability.

A child's progress should depend on teaching quality, not location. University admission should provide a credible path to knowledge and professional competence. These expectations should guide the next stage of reform.

Renewing school curricula and textbooks is essential. Emphasising critical thinking, practical examples, and project work will help students apply what they learn beyond the

classroom. Success will depend on integrating these changes into daily teaching, enabling students to analyse problems, assess evidence, and apply knowledge in new situations.

Teachers are central to achieving these goals. The share of schoolteachers with university degrees increased from 83.5 per cent in 2017 to 89.3 per cent in 2021. Reforms in certification, grading, and salary supplements have strengthened the profession. Ongoing professional development should now provide teachers with practical support to implement new curricula and address students' needs. Improved materials will only be effective if teachers have the confidence and skills to use them well.

Digital reforms should also support these objectives. Electronic school records, university management systems, and online admissions can reduce bureaucracy and increase transparency. Their effectiveness should be measured by whether they give teachers more time to teach and provide institutions with better information to support learning.

Private education has driven further change. The number of private schools grew from 30 in 2017 to 705 in 2025, and private nurseries also increased. Public-private partnerships and provider incentives have expanded parental choice and introduced new approaches, such as international curricula and enhanced foreign language instruction. The policy challenge is to ensure this diversity drives improvement across the education system, maintaining strong standards for both public and private institutions.



Specialised schools present an opportunity to share effective practices. By 2025, the network of Presidential and specialised schools reached 216 institutions. Their laboratories, international partnerships, and focus on independent inquiry create environments for

developing new teaching methods. Their impact will be greater if these approaches benefit the broader school system.

Uzbek pupils' success in international academic Olympiads demonstrates the value of sustained support for talent. Annual medals increased from 30 in 2019 to 210 in 2025. These achievements merit recognition and should inspire a broader goal: improving learning for all pupils nationwide. Exceptional results and stronger everyday education should reinforce each other.



Universities face a similar challenge. Joint programmes with overseas institutions grew from 267 in 2019 to 441 in 2025, and Uzbek universities now appear in international rankings. These developments can enhance international connections and recognition. Their long-term value depends on teaching quality and the skills students gain. Rigorous accreditation should accompany the expansion of university places.

The link between education and employment is especially evident in vocational training. Dual education, combining study with workplace training, aligns curricula with employer needs. By the end of 2025, 67,400 students participated in these programmes with 17,040 employers, and 47 technical colleges had introduced international education programmes.

The current task is to make these partnerships sustainable and the training effective. Employers should help design programmes, and qualifications should reflect demonstrable graduate skills. Establishing dedicated vocational education and quality assurance bodies offers a chance to embed these expectations in institutional assessments.



The next stage of reform should align funding and institutional accountability with these outcomes. Human capital investment is successful when people apply their learning to improve their lives and contribute to a more productive economy.

Uzbekistan has shown it can expand educational opportunity on a large scale. The next phase requires a strong focus on teaching and learning. Transforming broader access into lasting knowledge and practical skills should now define the country's education reforms.