

History of Reforms in Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools of Uzbekistan

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Abstract: The article is defined about purposes, reforms of educational fields and directions developing with modern methods in the Republic of Uzbekistan. It is expressed the activities of non-governmental educational centres too.

Key words: education, training specialists, reforms, foreign languages, non-governmental, developing, centre.

Introduction

Human life has entered a period of rapid development where intellectual potential, common sense, and innovation are paramount. Indeed, the 21st century is often heralded as the age of intellectual wealth. To reach and harness this potential, fundamental reform of the educational system is not just necessary but urgent. Consequently, the reforms being implemented in our country, and their results and effectiveness, are intrinsically tied to the transformations within the education system.

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, widely recognized as a pragmatic reformer and a visionary leader, has placed significant emphasis on the education sector in Uzbekistan. Under his initiative, the 2017-2021 Strategy of Actions for Uzbekistan's development prioritizes the "fundamental improvement of the quality of education" with a special focus on subjects in high demand such as foreign languages and informatics [1]. These comprehensive reforms aim not only to enhance educational standards but also to establish a legal democratic state, ensure prosperous living, and strengthen Uzbekistan's international standing.

The "National Model" of education is a cornerstone of our socio-economic development and a key component of the "Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan," which advocates for a gradual development approach. Reflecting this commitment, approximately 10% of the state budget is allocated to education. This is significant when compared to South Korea, where 8% of the national budget is devoted to education, illustrating a parallel in prioritization [2.292]. Furthermore, Uzbekistan ranks 18th worldwide in terms of the percentage of national budget allocated to education [3.36], underscoring our longstanding commitment to this vital sector.

It is also pertinent to note that despite global progress, the UN reports that there are still approximately 771 million illiterate individuals today, highlighting the ongoing global challenge in education.

This article employs generally accepted historical methods, including historicity, comparative-logical analysis, sequence, interdisciplinary approach, statistical research, and the principles of objectivity. It examines the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Uzbekistan, with particular focus on specific aspects of the activities of non-governmental educational centers.

The history of foreign language learning among different nations is rich and could fill several volumes of scholarly work. However, despite the lack of comprehensive systematic research in this field, there exists a body of literature and research related to education. Several researchers have explored issues pertaining to the introduction of foreign language teaching and the development of personnel training policies in this area.

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For instance, the orientalist scholar M. Abdusamatov highlighted the importance of learning foreign languages, particularly Eastern languages, and provided insights into the relevant scientific research. Similarly, scholars like M. Umarkho'jaev and J. Jalolov have published works emphasizing the significance of foreign language proficiency.

Following Uzbekistan's independence, scientific studies were conducted to shed light on the growing interest in learning multiple languages and the related initiatives undertaken. Specialist training and foreign language instruction in non-specialized higher educational institutions are now carried out in a distinctive manner.

Discussion

In Uzbekistan, investment in education significantly surpasses global averages, accounting for more than 10 percent of the GDP, while most countries allocate only 3-5 percent. This commitment to education is reflected in the country's literacy rate, which is among the highest worldwide at 99.2 percent.

A comparative analysis by CNN highlights Uzbekistan's achievements in educational innovation, ranking it second in the world with 75.38 points, closely following Ireland, which leads with 75.70 points[4]. Since gaining independence, Uzbekistan has enacted numerous legal documents aimed at fostering human development and well-being.

The recurring themes in historical debates on national development and statehood also resonate in contemporary discussions. The views of Mahmudhoja Behbudi, a prominent enlightened figure from the early 20th century, remain particularly pertinent. Behbudi advocated for multilingualism as essential for national development, famously stating in the August 13, 1913, issue of the *Oyina* magazine, which he founded and edited, "Not two, but four languages are necessary." His commitment to language acquisition was further demonstrated by the publication of his magazine in four languages, emphasizing the practical need for learning foreign languages[5.65]. Behbudi personally ensured that his children, one daughter and three sons, were proficient in four languages, exemplifying his educational ideals.

Results

Following the enactment of Decision PQ-2909 by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on April 20, 2017, "On measures to further develop the higher education system," a series of significant steps were undertaken to enhance the teaching of foreign languages. These initiatives included the development of innovative teaching methods, the preparation and publication of a new generation of foreign language textbooks, and teaching-methodical complexes by the Republican Scientific-Practical Center.

To achieve these goals, collaboration was established with leading foreign educational centers and international experts. These collaborations aimed at developing educational standards, programs, and plans, and also assisted in the organization of the educational process in many of Uzbekistan's higher education institutions.

Furthermore, the system of teaching foreign languages was revised to integrate seamlessly with production sectors. Following the President's Decision PQ-3769 on June 4, 2018, evening education programs were introduced in nine higher education institutions, including the State University of World Languages of Uzbekistan [7.65].

This led to the creation of a comprehensive system for teaching foreign languages across all educational stages in Uzbekistan. Initiatives were introduced to ensure continuous learning, enhance teacher qualifications, and provide modern teaching methods and materials. Notably, English language instruction was innovatively designed to begin in the form of a game starting from the first grade, and formal teaching from the second grade.

Drawing parallels with global practices, South Korea exemplifies a unique approach where, alongside thorough instruction in Korean during primary education, English teaching receives special focus



starting from the 7th grade. Additionally, learning the Chinese language is also mandatory in South Korea [8.293].

Summary

In Uzbekistan, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a pivotal role in supporting the educational sector amidst a climate of economic interests. Under the "Regulation on Licensing the Activities of Non-Governmental Educational Institutions," numerous educational centers engaged in entrepreneurial activities are officially registered, primarily in Tashkent city and the regions of Tashkent, Andijan, Fergana, and Namangan.

These centers offer a variety of courses, notably in foreign languages, computer literacy, tailoring, knitting, and pastry making, providing valuable supplemental education alongside state offerings. The competitive environment among institutions specializing in foreign language instruction has spurred significant advancements in the quality of language teaching and the adoption of cutting-edge educational technologies.

A case in point is the "Andijan Development Center," which has been operational since 1995. Over the years, it has expanded significantly, now running more than 40 groups across three departments with teachers who have advanced their qualifications in Japan, the USA, and Europe. Originally focused on English, the center has diversified its language offerings to include Korean, French, German, Chinese, and Russian in response to evolving demands and global trends.

The curriculum at the center involves multi-level exams culminating in the awarding of a diploma or certificate. Each educational stage lasts two months, with a strong emphasis on grammar and speech culture. Graduates are prepared for the IELTS (International English Language Testing System), with 85% achieving certification on their first attempt.

In language-focused educational centers in Uzbekistan, traditional teaching methods have been largely replaced with innovative, non-traditional approaches. Teachers at these centers face rigorous demands; they are expected to be experts in their fields, proficient in modern technologies, and quick to adopt contemporary pedagogical innovations.

During instruction, a variety of interactive methods are employed to enhance learning outcomes. Techniques such as debates, the Socratic method, clustering, brainstorming, BBB technology, fishing, and interviews are utilized extensively, leading to high levels of effectiveness. The proficiency of graduates is notably high, with 75% of certificate holders scoring well enough to enter the philology departments of top higher educational institutions within the Republic.

However, to further enhance the performance of these centers, several improvements are recommended:

The establishment of a training course for teachers of NGO educational centers under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation.

A focus on aligning educational programs with global educational standards.

An enhancement of the mutual obligations specified in contracts with educational centers.

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