

UZBEKISTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN: STEPS TOWARD EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION AND DIGITAL FUTURE

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ABSTRACT: This article analyzes the development prospects of the higher education systems in Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, their institutional structure and modernization processes, educational integration, and digital platforms. It examines the main factors influencing the development of higher education in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, including aligning the education systems with international standards, strengthening the integration of science and education, implementing digital technologies, and expanding international cooperation.

Keywords: Institutional character, modernization, integration of education, digital platforms, international standards, integration, international cooperation

"The comprehensive improvement of the education system, its development based on international standards, and the further strengthening of foreign cooperation are of vital importance"

*Shavkat Mirziyoyev***INTRODUCTION**

Today, our country is developing at a rapid pace. Along with this development, the greatest attention is being paid to the field of education. Moreover, the following thoughts expressed by our President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in one of his speeches, which determine the progress of the state and society, inspired us as educators: "I never tire of repeatedly quoting the wise words of our esteemed enlightener ancestor Abdulla Avloni: 'Education is for us a matter of either life or death, either salvation or destruction, either happiness or disaster.'" In recent years, such an approach to the issue has become the criterion for activity in the field of education. Indeed, thoughts such as "if we change education, education changes the person. If the person changes, our entire society changes" are clear examples of our thinking. Today, the reforms being implemented in the education system will lay the foundation for the Third Renaissance in Uzbekistan. Therefore, currently, special attention is being paid in our country to improving continuous education, comprehensively educating our youth as mature individuals, radically improving the training of highly qualified pedagogical personnel, and creating conditions for them.



New types of educational institutions have been established, including Presidential schools, creative schools, classical universities, academies, universities of applied sciences, specialized higher education institutions, distance online universities, and specialized schools.

In the context of modern globalization processes and the formation of a knowledge-based economy, the higher education system is being viewed as one of the important strategic sectors ensuring the socio-economic development of states. Higher education not only trains highly qualified specialists but also plays an important role in developing scientific potential, introducing innovative technologies, and increasing the intellectual capacity of society.

Analyzing the role of the education system in the development of modern society, Philip G. Altbach evaluates higher education as the main institution of the global knowledge economy and emphasizes that its international integration is one of the important factors determining the competitiveness of states. For this reason, many countries are implementing large-scale reforms aimed at modernizing their national higher education systems, improving the quality of education, and integrating with the international educational space.

In recent years, relations between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have been elevated to a new level based on the "Spirit of Central Asia" principle. By 2026, these two neighboring countries aspire not only to trade but also to regional leadership through the integration of high technologies and intellectual capacity in the educational process.

The integration of Kyrgyzstan's higher education system with the international educational space is of great importance. In particular, reforms are being implemented in the country's higher education system to introduce the credit-module system, form a three-level education model (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral studies), and develop academic mobility.

Analyzing the modernization process of the education system, we believe that the main goal of both countries is to ensure that higher education institutions comply with international standards and improve mechanisms for ensuring educational quality, which is an important condition for forming globally competitive universities. At the same time, issues of expanding international cooperation relations of higher education institutions, introducing modern educational technologies, and improving mechanisms for ensuring educational quality are also of urgent importance.

Additionally, there are certain problems in the higher education systems of both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, which manifest themselves in issues related to educational quality, insufficient development of material-technical bases, efficiency of scientific research activities, and improvement of the management system of higher education institutions. To solve these problems and further develop the higher education system, it is of great importance to improve educational policy, introduce international experience, and ensure the innovative development of the education system.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS

Kyrgyzstan is Uzbekistan's reliable partner and closest neighbor. The history and culture of the two peoples are inextricably linked, and close fraternal relations serve as a solid foundation for warm friendship and good neighborliness. From the first days of independence, diplomatic relations were established between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, and cooperation in the education system was raised to an unprecedented level.

Constructive, multifaceted, and mutually beneficial dialogue based on the principles of good neighborliness and strategic partnership with Kyrgyzstan is one of the priority directions of Uzbekistan's foreign policy. In particular, the contractual and legal base, which includes nearly 200 concluded agreements and contracts covering trade-economic, scientific, tourism, transport, cultural, and other spheres, is proof of our opinion.

The "Silk Road" International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage in Samarkand hosted the II Forum of Rectors of Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan, organized by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovations. At the conference on the topic "Features of the



Development of Higher Education and Science in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan at the Modern Stage," about 30 rectors of higher education institutions from the neighboring country led by the Minister of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, Dogdurkul Kendirbayeva, and more than 30 heads of higher education institutions from our country, as well as officials from ministries and departments, participated. At the beginning of the forum, Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Innovations of Uzbekistan Qongirotoy Sharipov and Minister of Education and Science of Kyrgyzstan Kendirbayeva Dogdurkul spoke, noting that thanks to the active foreign policy of the leaders of the two countries, cooperation relations between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are developing comprehensively, which is also being reflected in the field of education.

Several years ago, during my trip to Kyrgyzstan, I became convinced at the ancient Burana Tower, located near the city of Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan, built at the end of the 9th century with a height of 45 meters, in the capital of the Karakhanid state, Balasagun (Tokmok), and its museum that the works of our thinkers were widely spread throughout the world along the "Silk Road," conducting scientific, cultural, and trade affairs. These kinds of historical sources clearly show that Kyrgyz-Uzbek cooperation has been continuing since ancient times. As a supplement to this thought, the author says: "In the first book of the series, we included stories about 34 Kyrgyz and Uzbek-Turkic figures who worked during the period from the great Kyrgyz representative Manas to Chingiz Aitmatov, from al-Oshiy to Muganniy... In subsequent books, I plan to dedicate [works] to tens and hundreds more thinkers." The stories are arranged chronologically, and the reader is provided with interesting information about great figures such as Yusuf Balasaguni, Imam Sarahsi, Mahmud Kashgari, Sirojiddin al-Oshiy, Ketbuka, Toktagul, Isomiddin Pahlavan, Qazi Oshiy, and Khojanazar Huvaydo.

It was noted that in the Middle Ages, Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur visited the city of Osh several times. He mentioned this in his work "Baburnama." He directed his attention to political, economic, scientific, and cultural spheres. "The air of Osh is extremely good, with many flowing waters. Spring comes very beautifully, with thick tulips and flowers blooming. The Andijan River flows through the center of present-day Osh and goes to Andijan; both banks of the river are covered with gardens. In these gardens, the spring-blooming poppies are very beautiful. There is no city in the Fergana region that equals Osh in the purity and freshness of its air" (Baburnama, p. 31) — we can read such information.

To scientifically analyze issues of developing the higher education system in the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan, existing problems, and prospective directions, we focus our attention on various theoretical and practical aspects characteristic of political science, educational policy, and international education research. Through literature and scientific research, we have obtained information about the activities of higher education institutions, educational management, normative-legal foundations, and the interconnection between educational policy. Additionally, normative-legal documents related to the higher education systems of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan, state strategies, reports of international organizations, and scientific literature were studied. Through this, the main directions of educational policy, problems in the education system, and development prospects were identified.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The higher education systems in the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan have undergone significant changes and developments in the post-independence period. After independence, both countries implemented reforms aimed at modernizing the higher education system, liberalizing the activities of educational institutions, and ensuring integration with the international educational space. Starting from the 1990s in Kyrgyzstan and from 1998-2000 in Uzbekistan, state and non-state higher education institutions began their activities. This process led to the formation of an educational services market. As a result, the number of higher



education institutions in the country increased, but problems related to educational quality and the efficiency of the educational process also emerged. Therefore, in subsequent stages, issues of regulating the education system, improving educational standards, and monitoring educational quality became important directions of state policy.

Starting from the 2000s in Kyrgyzstan and from the late 1990s and early 2000s in Uzbekistan, the higher education system began to actively implement the process of integration with the international educational space. In particular, measures were implemented to introduce the credit-module system, form a three-level education model (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral studies), and develop academic mobility. These processes served to bring the higher education system into compliance with international standards. The implementation of the Erasmus+ program, as well as the activities carried out by users operating within the framework of the program, must be carried out in full compliance with the fundamental values of the European Union, such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minority groups.

There are problems in every field. Additionally, the material-technical base of some higher education institutions is not at the level of modern requirements in some cases. The insufficient development of educational infrastructure affects the efficiency of the educational process. Furthermore, the low level of funding for scientific research is also considered one of the factors limiting the development of scientific activity. Another important problem is related to the quality of personnel in the higher education system. The scientific degrees and scientific activities of the teaching staff are not at the same level in all higher education institutions. This may negatively affect the quality of education.

The prospects for developing the higher education systems of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are related to modernizing the education system, expanding international cooperation, and introducing innovative educational technologies. In recent years, important measures have been implemented in the country's higher education system to introduce digital technologies, develop the distance education system, and expand cooperation with international universities. Additionally, increasing the scientific potential of higher education institutions and developing cooperation between universities and research centers is also considered one of the important prospective directions. This process serves to strengthen the integration of education and science.

The following proposals can be put forward to further develop the higher education systems in the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan:

- Improving the system of enhancing educational quality. It is necessary to introduce modern mechanisms for monitoring educational quality in higher education institutions and strengthen cooperation with international accreditation systems.
- Developing scientific research activities. It is necessary to strengthen scientific potential by supporting scientific research at universities, increasing the number of international and scientific grants (Erasmus+), programs, and innovative projects.
- Improving the qualifications of teaching staff. Expanding the international experience of academic personnel, training them at foreign universities, and stimulating scientific research activities are of great importance.
- Widely introducing digital educational technologies. Developing distance education platforms, expanding electronic educational resources, and digitizing the educational process serve to improve educational quality.
- Developing international academic cooperation between higher education institutions, introducing joint educational programs, and expanding academic mobility are considered important.

To develop the higher education systems in the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, modernizing educational policy, supporting scientific and innovative activities, and



expanding international cooperation are of great importance, and these measures serve to increase the competitiveness of the country's higher education system.

In 2026, cooperation in the field of education transitioned from traditional student exchange to the "Technological Transfer" stage. Based on memorandums of cooperation between IT-Park in Tashkent and High Tech Park (HTP) in Bishkek, a single ecosystem was created for young startup founders. Within the framework of Uzbekistan's "5 Million Programmers" project, quotas are being allocated for young people from Kyrgyzstan as well. Kyrgyzstan's experience in cybersecurity is being introduced in Uzbekistani higher education institutions. The unification of educational standards between the two countries (within the Bologna system) and the number of joint diploma (Double Degree) programs have exceeded 50.

On March 25, 2026, Rector of Uzbekistan State University of Physical Education and Sport Rashid Matkarimov and Rector of the Kyrgyz State Academy of Physical Education and Sport named after B.T. Turusbekov, Yermek Tukeyev, signed an official contract to elevate inter-institutional cooperation to a new level. On March 26, 2026, cooperation agreements were signed between Osh State University and Shakhrisabz State Pedagogical Institute regarding the integration of the educational process.

CONCLUSION

The higher education systems in the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan have undergone important institutional changes and modernization processes in the post-independence period. At the same time, there are certain problems in the higher education systems of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, which manifest themselves in issues related to educational quality, insufficient development of material-technical bases, efficiency of scientific research activities, and the quality of academic personnel. These problems were assessed as factors hindering the effective development of the higher education system to a certain extent.

Like any integration process, there are also specific difficulties on this path: these include infrastructure differences, where digital infrastructure (internet speed and coverage) is not uniform in rural areas; technical delays in fully digitizing customs and logistics systems; and the shortage and insufficiency of qualified managers and AI specialists to manage high-tech projects.

At the same time, it was determined that the prospects for developing the higher education systems of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are closely linked to modernizing the education system, supporting scientific research activities, expanding the academic independence of universities, and developing international cooperation. Furthermore, introducing digital educational technologies, digitizing the educational process, and widely applying innovative teaching methods serve as important factors in increasing the competitiveness of the higher education system.

In conclusion, improving educational policy, strengthening the integration of science and education, and expanding cooperation with the international educational space are of great importance in the process of developing the higher education systems in the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. Consistent reforms implemented in these directions serve to ensure the stable development of the higher education systems of the countries and strengthen their position in the global education system. In this regard, the following steps are considered important to further accelerate integration for the development and future of education in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan: it would be appropriate to create a single platform for distance education with the help of teaching staff and AI-tutors from both countries.

The integration between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan is not just neighborhood, but the only way to be competitive in the global market. Modern technologies serve as the main catalyst in this process. By combining intellectual resources, the two countries have the opportunity to become the center of the "Digital Silk Road."



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