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Abstract. This article explores the current state and future prospects of preschool education in Uzbekistan. As a country undergoing major educational reforms, Uzbekistan has recognized early childhood development as a strategic priority for improving human capital and ensuring long-term socio-economic growth. The article examines the recent policy initiatives, institutional reforms, and international collaborations aimed at expanding preschool coverage, improving quality, and ensuring inclusivity. It also highlights challenges such as uneven access, lack of qualified staff, and the need for innovative teaching methods.

Keywords: Preschool education, Uzbekistan, early childhood development, educational reforms, inclusivity, teacher training, innovative pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is widely regarded as the foundation for lifelong learning and personal development. Research has shown that children who receive quality preschool education are more likely to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally in later life. In Uzbekistan, preschool education has gained significant attention in recent years as part of the government's broader efforts to modernize the national education system. With the adoption of several state programs, the expansion of preschool institutions, and the introduction of innovative pedagogical methods, the sector is experiencing dynamic growth. However, the task of creating a comprehensive and equitable preschool education system remains challenging. Exploring the prospects of preschool education in Uzbekistan is therefore essential for understanding the country's path toward sustainable development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The prospects for preschool education in Uzbekistan are closely linked to state policy and strategic planning. Over the last decade, the government has made early childhood education a top priority. The establishment of the Ministry of Preschool Education in 2017 marked a turning point, demonstrating political will to strengthen the sector. The "First Step" national program and other initiatives aim to ensure universal access to preschool education by gradually increasing enrollment rates. These efforts are supported by significant investments in building new kindergartens, renovating existing facilities, and introducing public-private partnerships to expand opportunities for families.

Another promising direction is the emphasis on quality improvement. Expanding access alone is insufficient if educational quality does not meet developmental needs. Uzbekistan has begun updating preschool curricula to align with international standards, emphasizing child-centered approaches, creativity, and holistic development. Play-based learning, interactive methods, and early literacy and numeracy skills are being integrated into programs to better prepare children for school. In addition, the adoption of information and communication technologies (ICT) in preschool education is expected to create new opportunities for interactive learning and parental involvement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The prospects of preschool education also depend on the professional development of teachers. Qualified and motivated educators are the backbone of any successful preschool system. Uzbekistan has recognized this by introducing new training programs, increasing salaries, and developing continuous professional development opportunities for preschool staff. Partnerships with international organizations such as UNICEF and UNESCO have further supported capacity-building, providing access to modern teaching strategies and global best practices. Nevertheless, addressing the shortage of highly trained specialists in rural and remote areas remains a priority for the future [2].

Another important aspect of future development is ensuring inclusivity and equity. The government has committed to creating conditions for children with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds to access preschool education. Inclusive kindergartens are being developed, and special pedagogical support is provided to meet diverse learning needs. Efforts are also underway to close the urban-rural gap by constructing facilities in underrepresented regions and offering mobile or alternative forms of preschool services. Such measures are crucial for achieving social justice and ensuring that all children, regardless of background, have equal opportunities for early development [3].

The integration of cultural and national values into preschool education also offers significant prospects. While adopting international standards, Uzbekistan emphasizes the importance of fostering national identity, language, and traditions in early childhood curricula. Songs, stories, and games rooted in Uzbek culture are combined with modern pedagogical approaches to create a balanced program that respects heritage while preparing children for a globalized world. This dual focus ensures that children grow up with both cultural pride and openness to innovation.

Looking to the future, Uzbekistan is likely to continue expanding international cooperation in preschool education. Participation in global initiatives, adoption of comparative studies, and exchange of experiences with advanced educational systems will contribute to the modernization of the sector. Collaboration with NGOs and private institutions is also expected to broaden opportunities and introduce new models of early childhood education, such as Montessori and Reggio Emilia approaches, adapted to the Uzbek context [4].

CONCLUSION

Preschool education in Uzbekistan stands at a promising crossroads. Considerable progress has already been made in expanding access, improving quality, and laying the foundation for inclusive practices. The future prospects are shaped by strong political will, significant investments, and growing international collaboration. However, challenges remain, including ensuring equal access across regions, addressing the shortage of qualified teachers, and sustaining high-quality learning environments. By focusing on inclusivity, innovation, and professional development, Uzbekistan has the opportunity to build a preschool education system that not only prepares children for school but also contributes to the long-term development of society.

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THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

VOLUME-5, ISSUE-9

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