

The Infrastructure of Preschool Educational Institutions and its Impact on Children's Lives

Kholiyorova Maftuna Azamat qizi

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Abstract: This article reflects on the infrastructure of preschool educational institutions and its impact on children's lives.

Keywords: infrastructure, inclusive education.

INTRODUCTION

Preschool education institutions were first introduced thanks to the German educator Friedrich Froebel. In 1837, he opened an institution named “Kindergarten,” which applied the idea of providing special education and upbringing for the younger generation. When translated literally from German, this term means “children's garden.” According to the famous Russian pedagogue Pyotr Lesgaf: “The period of childhood in a kindergarten determines what character traits will appear in the future, and the foundation of moral qualities is established.” Kindergarten helps form a sense of teamwork in children. The ability to divide tasks, reach agreements, and communicate with peers are skills that children develop in kindergarten. Kindergarten also has a psychological impact on the growing child. The role of the preschool educational institution in the life of future generations is so crucial that we cannot take it lightly. Since the future of our country lies in the hands of these children, the conditions and facilities provided in the place where their first steps into life are taught must meet the required standards. Today's urgent problem is precisely the sad state of such an important institution. A preschool education institution is like a second home for children, as they spend a significant part of their day there. But how is it organized? In what condition? Does it meet the required standards? Are sanitary and hygiene rules followed? Why are children contracting illnesses from kindergarten? These are serious questions that need to be addressed.

RESEARCH MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

As of August 1, 2023, there are a total of 30,792 kindergartens operating in the republic. Of these, 6,734 are state-owned, and 24,058 are private. For comparison, in 2017, there were 5,211, in 2018 — 7,104, in 2019 — 13,530, in 2020 — 18,254, and by 2021, the number of kindergartens sharply increased to 27,609. In 2022, this number grew to 29,420, and by 2023, it reached 30,792. Over the course of 6 months, 1,310 family-based preschool institutions started operating, serving a total of 41,920 children. Additionally, more than 21,000 private preschool institutions, encompassing approximately 740,000 children in Uzbekistan, were allocated 1.2 trillion UZS in subsidies from the state budget during these 6 months. In Uzbekistan, nearly 61% of the 2.7 million children of preschool age attend kindergartens. This indicator was 27.7% in 2017 (708,247 children), 37.7% in 2018 (932,310 children), and 52.3% in 2019 (1,413,290 children). In total, 116,996 pedagogues work with these children. President Sh. Mirziyoyev tasked with increasing the preschool education coverage to 75% by 2023.

Article 8 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education" states: "Preschool education and upbringing is a type of education aimed at teaching and educating children, developing them intellectually, morally, ethically, aesthetically, and physically, as well as preparing them for general secondary education." The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Preschool Education and Upbringing" provides comprehensive information on this topic.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

According to the results of the analysis, the low quality of the preschool education system is attributed to the following reasons:

- The state budget expenditure on preschool education is unevenly distributed.
- Almost 16% of preschool institutions need major repairs, and 4.6% are in completely unsuitable conditions.
- The lack of vitamins in the food provided in kindergartens and the incomplete nutrition provided.
- 70% of preschool institutions are not connected to the sewage system, which means they do not meet sanitary requirements and negatively affect children's health by increasing the level of harmful emissions into the atmosphere.
- The lack of green spaces in kindergarten designs.
- High teacher workload in Tashkent city and Tashkent region.
- A shortage of foreign language specialists in preschool institutions.
- A lack of teachers in sports, music, dance, and art education.
- Low levels of higher pedagogical education among educators.
- Almost no professional specialists are available.
- Toys in kindergartens are often unattended and even unsuitable for use.
- The absence of small libraries in kindergartens.
- The inconvenient location of kindergartens, which does not comply with building codes and sanitary requirements.
- Improperly designed parking lots in kindergarten areas.
- Many preschool institutions lack properly equipped medical offices.
- The insufficient number of kindergartens in certain areas, meaning not all children are covered.

Based on the identified problems, a comprehensive approach is recommended to improve the quality of the preschool education system. First and foremost, it is essential to repair and improve the infrastructure of preschool institutions, raise the qualifications of educators, and encourage parents to take a more active role in their children's upbringing.

A video conference meeting was held under the leadership of the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, to analyze the effectiveness of measures taken to reform and develop the preschool education system. During the meeting, the President emphasized the need for special attention to the development of preschool education, which is the first and most crucial stage of education for the younger generation. On September 30, 2017, a decree on "Radical Improvement of Preschool Education System Management" and a resolution on the establishment of the Ministry of Preschool Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan were adopted. Various tasks were set during the meetings held during presidential visits to the regions. The condition of preschool institutions in the regions, as well as measures to accelerate improvements in the sector, were discussed. The President thoroughly analyzed the situation,

paying attention to even the smallest details that had previously been overlooked. For example, in the Andijan region, it was criticized that there were no kindergartens in 87 districts, and local governments had not set clear measures for turning 84 kindergarten branches into independent institutions or establishing private kindergartens through public-private partnerships. Among the 451 preschool institutions in the region, 200 lacked proper storage facilities for food, 134 had no music rooms, and 420 had no small libraries. Similar issues were observed in the Namangan, Samarkand, Fergana, and Jizzakh regions. To address these shortcomings, significant financial resources are being allocated by the government to improve preschool institutions.

In accordance with the investment projects list approved for 2018, 60 kindergartens will be newly built, 295 will be reconstructed, and 176 will undergo major repairs, with a total budget of 771 billion UZS. At the meeting, it was emphasized that a detailed list of preschool institutions to be built, renovated, and equipped should be prepared. The material and technical condition of kindergartens, including the need for furniture, kitchen equipment, playgrounds, and sports inventory, should be carefully studied. In the next two years, plans will be made to equip all kindergartens in the country.

The issue of poor quality construction and repairs in many kindergartens was also discussed. For instance, in Urgench city in Khorezm region, the renovation work at kindergarten No. 14 was substandard, with incomplete connection to engineering networks and missing equipment. Similarly, repairs in several kindergartens in Kashkadarya, Bukhara, and other regions were incomplete.

To address these problems, specific instructions were given to local authorities, the Ministry of Preschool Education, and the State Architecture and Construction Committee to ensure that the necessary repairs and improvements are carried out.

One of the key issues identified was the expansion of the network of private kindergartens through public-private partnerships. The establishment of more than 3,000 private kindergartens for 222,000 children is planned, with 1,200 new buildings, 1,360 in existing buildings, and 470 as home-based kindergartens. In some regions, this process has been slow, particularly in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Khorezm, and Navoi regions. Some leaders have attempted to privatize functioning state kindergartens, which has sparked public objections. The President emphasized that such facilities should only be handed over to entrepreneurs under the condition that they are renovated and equipped for continued use as kindergartens.

In terms of funding, the Ministry of Finance was tasked with establishing a fund for the development of private preschool education, with favorable loans to purchase, reconstruct, or repair private kindergartens. Additionally, the Ministry of Preschool Education is responsible for developing models for public-private partnerships in the sector.

The issue of proper nutrition for children in kindergartens was also discussed. Despite existing standards, milk products and fruits are often provided in insufficient amounts, and fish is rarely served. The Ministry of Health will strictly monitor compliance with sanitary standards in the preparation, storage, and distribution of food in kindergartens.

At the meeting, the qualifications of preschool teachers were also addressed. Only 21% of the approximately 60,000 preschool educators have higher education, while 79% have specialized secondary education. It was emphasized that only highly qualified teachers, with the ability to work individually with each child, can ensure the proper development of children. In the next 3 years, over 47,000 highly educated pedagogical staff will be prepared. Special attention will also be paid to training future teachers in the field of art, music, and sports education. A special plan for the training of preschool teachers will be developed for each region.

CONCLUSION

The article highlights the importance of infrastructure in preschool education and the need for comprehensive reforms. The development of this sector directly affects the education and

upbringing of future generations. The government's current focus on improving and modernizing preschool institutions is a step in the right direction, but sustained efforts are necessary to address existing challenges and ensure that every child has access to quality early childhood education.

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