

The activities of educational centers in the Fergana region, 1991-2021

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Abstract: The article highlights the formation, stages of development and specific features of the activities of educational centers in the Fergana region during the first thirty years of Uzbekistan's independence (1991-2021). In the early years of independence, socio-political and economic changes, the increased demand for new knowledge and skills among the population and young people led to the emergence of non-state educational institutions, in particular, educational centers.

Keywords: training centers, non-state education sector, education system, education reforms, independence period (1991-2021), foreign languages, preparation of applicants, computer literacy, information technologies, vocational training, modern professions (marketing, programming, design) and preschool education

Introduction

After Uzbekistan gained independence, fundamental reforms began in all spheres of the country's socio-political and economic life, including education. The issue of schools, education and upbringing, under state and public control, and taking into account the demands and needs of our entire nation, the emergence and development of non-state educational institutions alongside state educational institutions became one of the important features of the new era. The foundation of our future is created in educational institutions; in other words, the future of our nation depends on the quality of education and upbringing our children receive today [2.61]. Due to the high population density, richness in labor resources, and a large proportion of youth in Fergana region, this area is characterized by an increasing demand for non-state education, particularly for training centers. This article aims to highlight the contribution of training centers in Fergana region to the educational process and socio-economic development of the region by analyzing their activities between 1991 and 2021.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

This research primarily utilized historical-comparative analysis, the study and generalization of statistical data.

In addition, interviews were conducted with employees of currently operating training centers. Scientific literature, legal and regulatory documents, and statistical data related to the topic were analyzed.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the initial years of independence, the legal foundation for non-state educational activities was established. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education," adopted on July 2, 1992, became the basis for the operation of non-state educational institutions. This law, by stipulating the right to education for everyone in Article 41 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, provided an impetus for the emergence of the non-state sector [1.3]. The Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M. Mirziyoyev "On measures for further development of non-state educational services" No. PQ-3276 dated September 15, 2017 [3.2], the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures for further development of non-state educational services" dated September 15, 2017 [4.3], and the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M. Mirziyoyev No. PF79 "On measures for effective organization of activities of the Ministry of Preschool and School Education and its system organizations" dated May 26, 2023, led to the development of this sector, enhancing the knowledge and skills of young students, ensuring their employment, and increasing labor resources [5.2].

During this period, training centers in Fergana region mainly emerged in unorganized forms, partnerships, or as individual entrepreneurship [6.1]. Their main areas of activity were as follows:

1. Emergence, Legal Basis, and Formation of Non-State Education in the Initial Years of Independence (1991-2000)

In the early years of independence, fundamental changes occurred in the economic and social spheres in Uzbekistan, including Fergana region. The government was forced to work with a planned economy due to the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the specialization of the Republic's economy in a single sector. This way, the economic crisis was overcome. Despite this situation, the need for training courses and preparatory courses for university applicants remained among the population. Between 1991 and 2000, training centers became popular in large cities such as Fergana, Kokand, and Margilan, and their number began to increase significantly. The activities of these training centers expanded to include the following:

2. Preparatory training centers for university applicants:

High competition for admission to higher educational institutions and the introduction of test exams starting in 1992 sharply increased the demand for specialized preparatory courses.

3. Foreign language teaching: The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the "Cold War" led to the expansion of international relations. Interest in learning foreign languages, especially English and Russian, intensified.

These centers were mainly established in small rooms, by individual entrepreneurs or a group of teachers. Their activities were based on public demand and aimed at providing additional knowledge in subjects within state educational programs. In the years 1991-2000, mechanisms for licensing and controlling the activities of training centers were not yet perfect. Nevertheless, it was precisely in these years that the foundation of a new educational system in the region was laid, one that quickly adapted to market demands and met the population's needs for additional education [8.3].

4. Systematic Development and Expansion of Activities (2001-2016)

In the early 2000s, the legislative framework regulating the activities of non-state educational institutions in Uzbekistan was improved. These changes served to strengthen the legal basis of training centers and bring their activities into the legal sphere.

5. Preparation of applicants: This direction remained the main and most in-demand part of the activities of training centers. Preparatory courses for entrance examinations to higher educational institutions helped thousands of young people become students [9.3].

6. Computer literacy: With the advent of computer technologies, initial computer literacy courses began to appear.

7. The emergence of additional paid classes for preschool institutions and primary school children to teach foreign languages, English and Russian, was observed.

8. Preschool education: Some training centers also started operating preparatory courses for children for school [7.3].

9. Vocational training: Short-term vocational courses such as sewing, cooking, hairdressing, and computer design played an important role in ensuring the employment of the population, women, and youth.

10. Period of Reforms and Qualitative Changes (2017-2021)

After 2017, extensive work was carried out in the education sector in Uzbekistan, including the development of non-state educational institutions.

11. The activities of training centers for applicant preparation were able to change their situation positively compared to previous years; that is, young people solved the issue of early admission to higher educational institutions by obtaining national certificates and B2 or IELTS certificates in English.

12. The opportunity for pedagogues working in schools and lyceums to receive a 50% bonus for national certificates increased the demand for training centers.

13. The increasing development of digital technology in the modern world led to an increase in demand for studying in the information technology field.

14. Preparatory courses in mental arithmetic for preschool children and primary school children also became popular.

15. This led to the establishment of training courses for entrance exams in critical-logical mathematics, mathematics, and English for Presidential schools and specialized schools that began their activities in 2017.

The Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures for further development of non-state educational services" No. PQ-3276 dated September 15, 2017, and other regulatory legal documents gave a strong impetus to the development of the sector [3.2]. These documents provided a number of benefits and opportunities to private educational institutions. The licensing procedure was simplified, and tax and customs privileges were granted to non-state educational institutions. Qualitative changes were also observed in the activities of training centers in the region. Many centers strengthened their material and technical base, introduced modern educational technologies, and attracted highly qualified teachers. The conditions in these

institutions were adapted to new international standards, allowing them to operate in large buildings with bright and comfortable rooms, equipment, and technology that met modern requirements.

As of January 1, 2022, 109 non-state educational institutions were operating in the region during the 2021/2022 academic year, enrolling 5542 students and employing 529 teachers. Additionally, educational complexes specialized in vocational training for unemployed citizens in Fergana city were actively functioning. These centers were not limited to teaching languages or preparing applicants but also trained qualified personnel for professions in high demand in the labor market [10.5].

CONCLUSION

The activities of training centers in Fergana region between 1991 and 2021 played a significant role in modernizing the region's education system and adapting it to market economy conditions. Their development was an integral part of the education reforms during the years of independence, establishing their place in developing and improving the quality of youth education. Over the past thirty years, training centers in Fergana region have undergone a complex path of development, from unorganized, small circles in the early years of independence to comprehensive service-providing institutions that are an integral part of the region's education system today.

During this period, changes in legislation, market demands, and the population's aspirations for education served as the main driving forces behind the activities of training centers. Although there are some difficulties in compiling complete statistical data on their activities from 1991-2021, available sources and analyses show that training centers have made a significant contribution to the socio-economic development of Fergana region, particularly in improving the quality of education, ensuring employment, and enhancing the intellectual potential of youth. In the future, a deeper study of this area, an analysis of the activities of training centers in each district and city, and highlighting their role in the education system will become one of the important scientific tasks.

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