

## Stages of Development and Future Strategies of Preschool Education in the New Uzbekistan

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**Abstract:** The system of preschool education in New Uzbekistan has undergone dynamic transformation over the past decade, reflecting nationwide reforms aimed at improving human capital and ensuring equal access to early childhood development. This study analyzes the main stages of preschool education development, beginning with the expansion of enrollment coverage, modernization of infrastructure, introduction of public–private partnership models, and implementation of updated state educational standards. Special attention is given to the transition from a traditional care-based model to a competency-based approach focused on cognitive, moral, social, and linguistic development. The research also highlights the digitalization of preschool education, teacher professional development programs, and the creation of inclusive learning environments. Based on current achievements, the paper outlines future strategic priorities, including strengthening pedagogical innovation, enhancing quality assurance mechanisms, expanding early childhood services in rural areas, and integrating STEAM and digital literacy programs into preschool curricula. The findings emphasize that sustained investment, evidence-based policy, and community engagement will play a key role in shaping a modern and globally competitive preschool education system in New Uzbekistan.

**Key words:** Preschool education, New Uzbekistan, early childhood development, educational reforms, modernization, public–private partnership, digitalization, inclusive education, curriculum development, teacher professional development, quality assurance, policy strategy.

**Introduction:** Preschool education has become one of the most strategically significant areas in the socio-economic development agenda of New Uzbekistan. In the context of ongoing national reforms, early childhood development is increasingly recognized as a foundational stage that determines the future intellectual, moral, and social capacity of society. The modernization efforts carried out over the past years reflect a new approach: shifting preschool institutions from a traditional care-oriented model to a comprehensive developmental system that cultivates cognitive, emotional, communicative, and creative competencies in children.

Since the adoption of major government programs devoted to expanding access and improving quality, the preschool sector of Uzbekistan has experienced rapid transformation. One of the most notable shifts has been the substantial increase in preschool enrollment rates, facilitated by targeted policies, infrastructure development, and the creation of a diversified network of institutions, including state, private, family-based, and alternative early education models. These changes are aligned with the broader national objective of strengthening human capital and preparing a knowledgeable, adaptable, and innovative young generation.

In addition, New Uzbekistan has introduced updated state requirements for early childhood education, emphasizing child-centered pedagogy, developmental standards, and competency-based learning outcomes. These standards focus on a holistic view of the child, incorporating cognitive development, moral and ethical upbringing, socio-emotional skills, early literacy, numeracy, and cultural awareness. As part of the reform agenda, significant attention is also paid to creating inclusive educational

environments, enabling children with special educational needs to participate fully in preschool programs.

The introduction of digitalization into preschool education represents another important step in the system's modernization. The development of electronic management platforms, digital learning tools, and multimedia educational resources has expanded the potential for both teachers and children, while also improving transparency and efficiency in the management of preschool institutions. The widespread use of digital technologies became especially relevant in the post-pandemic era, highlighting the need for flexible, innovative educational practices.

Teacher professional development remains central to achieving sustainable improvements in preschool education. In recent years, specialized training programs, retraining modules, and competency-based certification systems have been introduced to raise the professional capacity of educators. Pedagogical innovation, reflective teaching, and methodological research are increasingly encouraged as essential components of teacher growth in the evolving educational landscape.

Despite notable achievements, several challenges continue to shape future policy directions. These include ensuring equal access in remote rural areas, strengthening quality assurance mechanisms, supporting inclusive education, and enhancing the integration of modern educational approaches such as STEAM, digital literacy, and creative pedagogy. Therefore, the study of the stages of development and the identification of future strategic priorities for preschool education in New Uzbekistan is not only timely but also essential for guiding long-term progress.

This article examines the major developmental phases of preschool education during the ongoing national transformation and outlines forward-looking strategies aimed at building a modern, innovative, and globally competitive early childhood education system. Through systematic analysis, it seeks to highlight the achievements, challenges, and prospects that define the next stage of development in this vital area.

**Literature Review:** The development of preschool education has been widely examined in both international and national research, emphasizing its crucial role in shaping children's early cognitive, social, and emotional competencies. Global studies by UNESCO (2019), OECD (2020), and UNICEF (2021) affirm that early childhood education is one of the most cost-effective investments in human capital, providing long-term benefits in terms of academic achievement, social inclusion, and economic productivity. These organizations highlight that countries undergoing educational modernization typically prioritize preschool accessibility, quality assurance, and child-centered curriculum reforms—elements that closely align with current transformations in New Uzbekistan.

Scholars such as J. Heckman (2012) and S. Barnett (2017) argue that quality early education yields high social returns, especially when programs integrate developmental standards, trained educators, and inclusive practices. Their findings underscore that educational reforms are most effective when implemented systematically, involving policy, pedagogy, infrastructure, and community participation. This theoretical perspective supports the ongoing shift in Uzbekistan from a predominantly custodial model to a competency-based, developmental approach.

In the regional context, Central Asian researchers (Abdirasilova, 2018; Toktasinova, 2020) note that preschool education has historically faced challenges such as limited coverage, inadequate facilities, and shortages of trained personnel. However, recent reforms across the region—including curriculum renewal, teacher retraining, and digitalization—reflect broader global trends. These studies provide an analytical framework for understanding Uzbekistan's reform trajectory, especially the expansion of diverse early education models such as private kindergartens, family-based centers, and state-private partnerships.

Uzbek researchers have also contributed significantly to the study of preschool education modernization. Works by T. Tashpulatova (2019), M. Khudayberganova (2021), and U. Rakhmatov (2022) emphasize the importance of aligning preschool education with national development priorities, improving teacher competency, and integrating cultural–moral values into early childhood programs. Their research stresses that effective preschool education must consider the cultural context of Uzbekistan while adapting to global educational innovations. Studies in the field additionally highlight challenges such as rural urban disparities, insufficient methodological resources, and the necessity for continuous teacher development—issues addressed in current policy strategies.

Furthermore, the introduction of digital technology and innovative teaching practices has become a strong sub-theme in contemporary literature. Authors such as Alper and Hirsh-Pasek (2020) argue that digitalization enhances learning opportunities, develops early digital literacy, and supports differentiated instruction when used appropriately. This perspective aligns with Uzbekistan’s broader national policy for expanding digital infrastructure and integrating multimedia resources in preschool institutions.

A notable area of focus in both global and domestic literature is inclusive education. Research by Loreman (2017) and Blackwell et al. (2020) shows that inclusive preschool environments promote social development, empathy, and academic readiness for all children, including those with special educational needs. Uzbekistan’s recent emphasis on inclusive learning environments is consistent with this evidence-based approach, underscoring the importance of equity and accessibility in early childhood systems.

The research base provides a strong foundation for analyzing how New Uzbekistan has structured its developmental stages and how future strategies can continue advancing quality, accessibility, and innovation in early childhood education.

**Analysis and results:** The transformation of preschool education in New Uzbekistan has occurred through several interconnected stages that reflect national priorities, socio-economic reforms, and global educational trends. Each stage represents a shift in policy, structure, and pedagogical philosophy aimed at strengthening early childhood development as a foundation of human capital.

**Re-establishing Institutional Framework (2017–2018).** The first stage centered on reconstructing the governance and regulatory foundations of preschool education. With the establishment of the Ministry of Preschool Education in 2017, the sector gained an autonomous institutional structure capable of implementing targeted reforms. This stage focused on identifying systemic issues such as low enrollment rates, outdated infrastructure, limited teacher qualifications, and insufficient methodological resources. Early government programs aimed at expanding institutional capacity, developing new standards, and creating the organizational basis for future reforms. During this initial phase, the preschool system shifted from fragmented administrative oversight to a consolidated, strategically coordinated model.

**Expanding Access and Diversifying Preschool Institutions (2018–2020).** The second stage prioritized increasing access to preschool education, especially in rural and underserved regions. Nationwide measures were implemented to increase the number of institutions through state funding, construction of new kindergartens, and introduction of public–private partnerships (PPP). The creation of private kindergartens and family-type educational centers diversified early education services, enabling parents to select programs that aligned with their needs and economic circumstances. By expanding multiple organizational models, the government sought to increase enrollment rates while maintaining flexibility and affordability. This stage marked a shift toward inclusivity and the democratization of early education services.

**Standardization and Curriculum Modernization (2019–2021).** The third stage focused on updating the pedagogical content of preschool education. New state educational standards and curricula were introduced, emphasizing child-centered learning, competency-based development, and age-appropriate pedagogical methods. These reforms aligned with international frameworks for early childhood

development, integrating domains such as socio-emotional skills, moral upbringing, early literacy, numeracy, creativity, and physical development. Methodological centers and training hubs were established to support educators in implementing renewed curricula. This stage represented a transition from traditional care-based models to developmental education grounded in holistic child growth.

Digitalization and Innovation Introduction (2020–2022). The fourth stage coincided with global shifts toward digital education, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Uzbekistan began integrating technological solutions into preschool education through digital management platforms, electronic enrollment systems, and multimedia learning tools. The ministry developed digital resources, animated materials, and interactive platforms to support remote learning where necessary. Digitalization also enhanced administrative transparency, allowing for the monitoring of attendance, quality indicators, and resource allocation. This stage laid the foundations for future technological integration, promoting early digital literacy and expanding pedagogical possibilities.

Strengthening Teacher Professional Competencies (2021–2023). Recognizing that educational quality depends largely on teacher expertise, the fifth stage prioritized the professional development of preschool educators. National retraining programs, competency-based certification systems, and new pedagogical training standards were introduced. Teachers were encouraged to adopt innovative practices, reflective teaching approaches, and research-based methods. Collaborative networks between educators, methodologists, and institutions strengthened knowledge exchange. These initiatives aimed to elevate the professional status of preschool educators and ensure that modern curricula were delivered effectively across diverse regions.

Integration of Inclusive and Equitable Education (2022–present). The final ongoing stage emphasizes inclusivity and equity in preschool education. Policies were introduced to expand early intervention services, support children with special educational needs (SEN), and create barrier-free learning environments. Inclusive pedagogical models, assistive technologies, and specialized training for teachers have gradually been integrated into preschool institutions. This stage reflects a broader national commitment to ensuring equal opportunities for all children regardless of socio-economic, linguistic, or developmental backgrounds. Additionally, the government continues to address rural–urban disparities by constructing new institutions and expanding mobile and family-based educational programs.

The analysis of the development stages of preschool education in New Uzbekistan shows that the sector has undergone significant quantitative and qualitative transformation aligned with national reforms. One of the most notable results is the rapid increase in preschool enrollment rates, which grew from less than 30% a decade ago to over 70% due to the expansion of public institutions, the introduction of private-sector partnerships, and community-based early education centers. This expansion reflects the government's prioritization of early childhood development as a foundation for improving national human capital.

Qualitative improvements are evident in the modernization of educational programs, particularly the transition to the updated State Curriculum, which emphasizes child-centered, competency-based learning instead of the previously dominant care-oriented approach. Teachers report improvements in children's cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional skills as a result of the revised pedagogical methods, which integrate play-based learning and early STEAM elements. The professional development of educators represents another critical result. Large-scale retraining programs, continuous qualification upgrades, and partnerships with international organizations have contributed to strengthening teacher competencies. Survey results from educators indicate that digital teaching tools, interactive methods, and inclusive education practices are increasingly used in preschool classrooms. The infrastructure modernization process has also produced observable outcomes. Many preschool institutions have introduced modern learning environments, safe play areas, digital devices, and specialized rooms for art, music, and physical development.



These upgrades have been particularly impactful in rural and remote regions where early childhood facilities were historically limited. Despite significant progress, the analysis reveals several challenges that remain. These include disparities in access between urban and rural areas, unequal distribution of qualified teachers, limited inclusion facilities for children with disabilities, and the insufficient integration of modern educational technologies in all institutions. In addition, while private preschools have contributed to rapid expansion, variations in quality control across private providers indicate the need for stronger monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The overall results demonstrate that preschool education in New Uzbekistan is shifting toward a more modern, inclusive, and development-oriented system. The data suggest that sustained reform efforts—particularly in quality assurance, teacher training, digitalization, and rural access—are essential for ensuring long-term success. Continuous analysis of outcomes confirms that the next stage of policy must prioritize balancing quantitative expansion with deep qualitative improvement to meet global early childhood education standards.

**Conclusion:** The development of preschool education in New Uzbekistan demonstrates a strategic, long-term commitment to strengthening the foundations of human capital and creating equal opportunities for every child. Over the past decade, the sector has experienced substantial growth through the expansion of preschool coverage, modernization of infrastructure, revision of state educational standards, improvement of teacher qualifications, and increased participation of private and community-based institutions. These reforms have transformed preschool education from a limited, care-based system into a modern, child-centered, and competency-oriented stage of learning aligned with global early childhood development principles.

The analysis shows that the most important achievements include a significant rise in enrollment, broader institutional diversity, the introduction of digital tools, and enhanced pedagogical approaches that support children's cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development. However, the sustainability of these achievements requires continuous efforts to address remaining challenges, such as ensuring equal access in rural regions, strengthening inclusion for children with special educational needs, ensuring high-quality teacher preparation, and reducing disparities between public and private institutions.

Looking ahead, the future strategies of preschool education in New Uzbekistan should focus on deeper quality assurance mechanisms, systematic digital transformation, the integration of STEAM and innovative learning methods, and the creation of supportive family-community partnerships. Continued investment in data-based policymaking, teacher professionalization, and engagement with international best practices will further advance the sector's stability and global competitiveness.

In conclusion, the reforms carried out in New Uzbekistan mark an important milestone in building a new generation of well-educated, socially responsible, and innovative citizens. Preschool education is becoming not only the first stage of learning, but also a strategic tool for shaping the country's long-term socio-economic development.

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