

Alignment of Pre-Service Teacher Education with National Education Reform Agendas in Uzbekistan

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Abstract: Uzbekistan's national education reforms, anchored in the 2019 Concept of Development of Public Education until 2030 (Presidential Decree UP-5712) and reinforced by the 2023–2026 Partnership Compact for Education Reform, target top-30 PISA ranking by 2030, 80% preschool enrollment, and competency-based, inclusive curricula. Pre-service teacher education (PSTE), historically fragmented and theoretically oriented, has been restructured through Presidential Decree UP-73 (28 April 2025), which establishes the National Pedagogical University of Uzbekistan (based on Tashkent State Pedagogical University named after Nizami), centralizes pedagogical higher education institutions under the Ministry of Preschool and School Education (MoPSE), mandates dual-education models, abolishes correspondence programs for pedagogical training, and integrates professional standards with succession between pre- and in-service pathways. This study employs a policy analysis framework to examine alignment across governance, curriculum, practicum, and quality assurance. Data draw from official decrees, the Partnership Compact (estimating needs for 50,000–75,000 new preschool teachers by 2026), and implementation evidence such as the British Council PRESETT program. Findings reveal strengthened governance coherence and emerging practicum intensity (e.g., “4+2” format expansion), but persistent gaps in trainer capacity, standardized practicum hours, full integration of Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) and National Curriculum Framework (NCF) competencies, and outcome monitoring. Recommendations include mandating 600+ practicum hours with mentoring, embedding performance-based assessments, and establishing a unified quality-assurance mechanism. The analysis underscores that while 2025 reforms advance structural alignment, implementation fidelity remains critical for realizing reform goals.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Education Reform, Uzbekistan, Policy Alignment, Competency-Based Education



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Introduction

Uzbekistan has pursued systemic education transformation since 2017 to support economic competitiveness and human capital development. Key policy milestones include the 2017–2021 Action Strategy, the 2019 Concept of Development of Public Education until 2030 (UP-5712), the 2020 Law on Education, and the 2022–2026 Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan. These documents prioritize competency-based learning, inclusive education, digitalization, and international benchmarking (e.g., PISA entry by 2030). The 2023–2026 Partnership Compact for Education Reform, coordinated by UNICEF and partners, identifies misalignment between pre-service teacher education (PSTE) and school-sector needs as a barrier, particularly in preparing teachers for the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), and demographic pressures (e.g., 620,000 new preschool places by 2026).

This study investigates the extent of alignment between PSTE and national reform agendas, focusing on governance, curriculum, pedagogical practice, and quality assurance. It addresses the research question: To what degree do recent reforms, especially Decree UP-73 (2025), enhance congruence between PSTE and national priorities? The analysis relies on primary policy texts and verified reports to ensure evidence-based reasoning.

Methods

This research adopts a qualitative policy analysis approach, drawing on document analysis of official sources. Primary materials include:

- Presidential Decree UP-5712 (2019) – Concept of Development of Public Education until 2030;
- Presidential Decree UP-73 (28 April 2025) – Measures for further enhancement of pedagogical personnel preparation;
- Uzbekistan Partnership Compact for Education Reform 2023–2026 (UNICEF-coordinated, 2023);
- Supporting legislation (e.g., 2020 Law on Education, National Program for Public Education Development 2022–2026);
- Implementation evidence from British Council PRESETT reports and related diagnostics.

Analysis follows a framework adapted from international standards (e.g., OECD TALIS and Darling-Hammond, 2017), evaluating four dimensions: (1) governance coherence, (2) curricular congruence with NCF/ELDS/professional standards, (3) clinical practice intensity, and (4) quality assurance mechanisms. Data were thematically coded for alignment strengths, gaps, and reform impacts. No primary empirical data collection occurred; the study synthesizes secondary sources for objective assessment.

Results

Governance Alignment

Decree UP-73 centralizes oversight by transferring 13 pedagogical HEIs to MoPSE jurisdiction and establishing the National Pedagogical University of Uzbekistan (based on Tashkent State Pedagogical University named after Nizami), with its rector serving as Deputy Minister for pedagogical development. This eliminates prior ministerial fragmentation (MoHESI vs. MoPSE) and mandates succession across pre-service, in-service (via Avloni Institute), and school practice. Correspondence education for pedagogical training is abolished, emphasizing full-time, competency-focused preparation.

Curricular Alignment

Reforms promote dual-education models and international benchmarking. The “4+2” practicum format (4 university days + 2 school days in years 3–4) is expanded nationwide. Integration of transversal competencies (critical thinking, collaboration, digital literacy), SEL (mandated 2024), and inclusive pedagogies aligns with NCF and ELDS priorities. However, diagnostics in the Partnership Compact indicate incomplete embedding of play-based learning, UDL, and gender-responsive practices in most programs.

Practicum and Clinical Practice

UP-73 mandates dual models, increasing school exposure. Pilots like PRESETT demonstrate higher adoption of student-centered strategies (80%+ vs. 40% in traditional tracks). Gaps include absence of national minimum practicum hours and structured mentoring protocols.

Quality Assurance and Standards

Professional standards (school-level approved; preschool in finalization) lack full integration into PSTE accreditation or certification. Trainer capacity remains uneven, with limited recent school experience. No unified framework links PSTE outcomes to student performance metrics (e.g., PISA).

Scale challenges persist: PSTE must support 50,000–75,000 new preschool teachers by 2026 amid enrollment growth.

Discussion

The 2025 reforms via UP-73 represent a pivotal shift toward system coherence, addressing long-standing critiques of theoretical dominance and governance splits. Centralization under MoPSE enables direct linkage to school needs, while dual models align with global evidence on effective PSTE (e.g., OECD, 2020). Nevertheless, implementation risks include capacity constraints in regional institutions, uneven trainer upskilling, and weak monitoring. The Partnership Compact highlights urgency for ELDS/NCF integration to meet preschool targets. Successful models like PRESETT suggest targeted revisions yield measurable gains in reflective practice and assessment literacy. Limitations stem from reliance on policy documents; future research should incorporate

graduate classroom observations or value-added analyses.

Conclusion

Uzbekistan's recent PSTE reforms, particularly Decree UP-73, substantially advance alignment with national agendas by unifying governance, mandating practical training, and prioritizing competency-based preparation. Structural foundations now exist to support the 2030 vision of quality, inclusive education. Sustained focus on practicum depth, standards integration, trainer development, and evidence-based monitoring will determine whether policy intent translates into classroom impact. Targeted scaling of proven interventions and flexible pathways can address demographic and quality imperatives effectively.

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