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**SUMMARY AND UPDATE ON EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND
POLICIES IN CENTRAL ASIA - UZBEKISTAN**

Review Report



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1 Introduction

1.1 Context and objectives of the study

The Central Asia Education Platform Phase 2 (CAEP 2) project is about to close in mid-March 2019. In the second project phase (2015–2019), the project has commissioned, produced and disseminated a series of stock-taking and review reports, discussion and background papers on the priority themes identified both during the Riga and Astana Ministerial Meetings (including National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF), Mobility, Employability, Gender Equality).

In order to complete project activities under component 3 “Studies” and to enhance the visibility and communication of project results under component 2 “Communication and Mapping”, the project will elaborate a **final review report with information briefs covering all thematic priorities underlying the CAEP project**. The report shall also support the work of EU Commission services in developing the outline for the planned CAEP phase 3 by providing up-to-date information on CAEP 2 priority themes.

The **report and the information briefs shall cover both Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET), provide a final update on the current developments in the CA countries** (e.g. on NQF, where the report dates back to 2016), and a concise and brief overview on thematic areas and recent policy developments not covered by review reports, but relevant to the project (e.g. on Quality Assurance and Accreditation, or more specifically, the introduction of autonomy to HEI in Kazakhstan, internationalisation of education in Uzbekistan etc.).

Furthermore, the information briefs will reflect the presentations held during the respective CAEP events (national meetings, regional conferences, peer learning and working group meetings, webinars) and **sum up the information contained in various subsections of the CAEP website in an updated, user-friendly way, providing a first-hand source of information about the current and on-going reform activities in the CA countries**.

In the second step, the **project will disseminate these information briefs** through the website, the conclusive CAEP Newsletter and direct mailing of the CAEP and wider education community.

This review report/ summary and information briefs will be produced by EU based experts in close cooperation with CA experts, facilitating access to the more detailed information on the respective topics on the CAEP studies to be found in the CAEP website.

The activity aims at providing a **review and update of the current education policies in the CA countries with a clear focus on the thematic priorities identified both in the Riga and Astana Ministerial Meetings in 2015/2017** respectively, in order to summarise and share the findings from the CAEP 2 with education practitioners and experts both in the EU and CA countries for further discussion among policy makers, education practitioners and related stakeholders in HE and VET.

As a result, the review report will contribute to the following outcomes:

- experience, lessons learned, best/ good practices shared, mutual understanding/ learning enhanced;
- evidence-based policy approach improved;
- results of the stock-taking exercise within Central Asia disseminated.

2 Uzbekistan

2.1 Country brief

Population (2018, January 1st estimate): 32,653,900¹

Uzbekistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia that borders with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. It is Central Asia's most populated country and most of its population are ethnic Uzbeks. It has an area of 447,400 square kilometres mostly covered by deserts and mountains. Its capital city is Tashkent. The Uzbekistan's economy is in a gradual transition to the market economy. Uzbekistan is a major producer and exporter of services, food products, energy products, ferrous and nonferrous metals, machinery and automobiles², it has become the largest electricity producer in Central Asia.³ Uzbekistan has an estimated GDP per capita of USD 1,533.⁴ Since 2016, major reforms are taking place in the framework of Uzbekistan's *Development Strategy for 2017-2021*. These reforms concern all sectors of the economy and education is not an exception. Reforms are profound in their nature and assume total reconsideration of the governance principles, liberalisation of the economy, enhancement of healthcare and education quality and access and others.⁵

Education

There are currently 96 higher education institution in Uzbekistan out of which 24 are universities, 35 are institutes, 1 academy, 21 branches of HEI, 1 conservatory, 1 highest school, and 7 affiliations of foreign institutions.⁶ HEIs report to the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education (MHSSE), additionally specialised HEIs are coordinated by other sectoral ministries.⁷ As of 2017, there were seven representations of foreign HEIs in Uzbekistan - the Plekhanov Russian Academy of Economics, the Westminster International University in Tashkent, the branch of Lomonosov Moscow State University, the Management Development Institute of Singapore, the Gubkin Russian State University of Oil and Gas, the Polytechnic University of Turin, and the Inha University.⁸ All of them are located in Tashkent city. As of 2017, there was no registered private HEI in Uzbekistan.⁹

¹ The State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, report available from: <https://www.stat.uz/uploads/docs/demografiya-yan-dek-2017-uz-.pdf>, accessed on 14 March 2019

² The State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, report available from: <https://stat.uz/ru/press-tsentral-analiticheskie-stati/433-analiticheskie-materialy-ru/2044-statistika-vneshnej-torgovli>, accessed on 14 March 2019

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uzbekistan>

⁴ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=TJ-UZ-KG-TM-KZ>

⁵ <http://lex.uz/docs/3107042>

⁶ Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, available from <http://www.edu.uz/ru/otm/index>, accessed on 14 March 2019

⁷ <https://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-uzbekistan>

⁸ <https://www.azernews.az/region/125247.html>

⁹ Overview of the Higher Education System: Uzbekistan, 2017

In the light of reforms in the educational sector, the government has opened its educational market to foreign educational providers. In 2018, Webster university has launched a programme on the basis of Tashkent University of World Languages, NCUK has launched admission to its foundation programmes, Amity University has announced plans to open campus in Uzbekistan in 2019-2020. Moreover, five major universities of the Russian Federation, namely National Research Technological University 'Moscow Institute of Steel and Alloys', Bauman Moscow State Technical University, Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University, Moscow Architectural University, Russian Technological University, have announced intentions to open affiliated branches in Uzbekistan.

One of the considerable reforms in 2016 is the full modernisation of bachelor and master curricula, in consideration of the best practices of successful universities of the world. The modernisation considers new requirements for teaching staff and study programmes have been revised and updated taking into account changing labour market requirements.¹⁰ This reform is based on sustainability principles and programmes are being reconsidered on a yearly basis.

The number of vocational colleges has grown rapidly, from under 50 in 1998 to over 1,500 in 2014.¹¹ Until 2018, the secondary VET education was coordinated by the Centre for Secondary Specialised Vocational Education under the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education, after 2018 by the Centre for Professional Education under the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education. Both the government and international partners have made significant investments in infrastructure in recent years, particularly in the secondary specialised education sector, to enhance the quality of vocational training.¹²

Since 2016, the vocational education and training system has been going through major reforms. Together with the overall system, the transition between secondary and secondary specialised education has been reviewed in order to provide opportunities for students to choose between school/ lyceum/ college as opposed to lyceum/ college after completion of the first nine years of schooling starting from 2017/18 academic year. In 2018, a Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan *On Measures for Cardinal Improvement of the General Secondary, Secondary Specialised and Professional Education*¹³ has been adopted. There are two major changes provided for in the decree. The first one is that from the 2018/2019 school year, compulsory general secondary and specialised secondary education is carried out in general education schools, including boarding schools, specialised schools, and academic lyceums on the basis of continuous and 11 years cycle. The second one is that starting from the 2019/2020 school year, admission to vocational colleges will be carried out from among graduates of 11th grade of general education schools on a voluntary basis in order to obtain the relevant specialty (profession) with a term of study from six months to two years. In 2018, Centre of Vocational Education has been created to replace the Centre for Secondary Specialised Vocational Education in order to further enhance the quality of vocational education in the country and support the implementation of the decree.

Useful links:

Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education: <http://www.edu.uz/en/>

National Erasmus+ Office: <http://www.erasmusplus.uz/>

UN Country Profile: <http://data.un.org/en/iso/uz.html>

¹⁰ <https://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-uzbekistan>

¹¹ <https://www.caep-project.org/uzbekistan/>

¹² <https://www.caep-project.org/uzbekistan/>

¹³ <http://www.lex.uz/docs/3523198>

2.2 Overview of the current state of priorities

2.2.1 Qualification frameworks and standards

The existing structure of qualifications is well regulated in Uzbekistan and the system is centrally controlled by the relevant ministries. The system of qualifications has been considerably reconsidered after gaining independence by the Republic of Uzbekistan and current system is developed based on contemporary needs in country's development. The legislation in the area is aiding further development of the system both structurally and content-wise. A lot of emphasis is given to the employment of international experience for the development of the current system and ensuring continuity of education.¹⁴

In Uzbekistan, the direct management of the educational institutions is mainly carried out by two sectorial ministries - the Ministry of Public Education (MPE) and the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education (MHSSE). On September 30, 2017, the Ministry of Pre-School Education of Uzbekistan was formed to carry out single policy in pre-school education¹⁵. Requirements regarding the quality and content of education, necessary levels of students' training as well as qualification requirements are defined in the State Educational Standard (SES), which are regularly updated. It is a basis for preparation of other normative documents, regulating the educational process and evaluating the activities of educational institutions.

Most educational establishments in Uzbekistan that award exit qualifications are working based on the National Classifier code, i.e. all exit qualifications are assigned one of the codes, which is used to determine the qualifications and relevant SES that was used in order to provide education for this particular profession. The list of modules and number of study hours for each module (in accordance with SES) are defined in the teaching plans that are approved by the rector of the university and are further disseminated to the faculties. All individual module programmes are then developed based on the teaching plans and SES.

Although there is no National Qualification Framework (NQF) currently present in Uzbekistan, many systems that have been employed can serve as a basis for its development. While individual specialities and areas have their own set of standards and qualifications that are centrally regulated, the overall national framework for all levels would make it easier to compare education in Uzbekistan to its equivalents in other countries and make it easier to develop and modify the internal structure of qualifications. As identified in the Central Asia Education Platform study in 2016, another potential area of development could be for all SESs to be cross-comparable and developed based on a single framework at the national and international level.¹⁶ As most SESs are available in Uzbek language, an English and a Russian version would be helpful as well – English to allow international comparison and Russian to enable better regional integration.

2.2.2 Quality assurance and accreditation

In Uzbekistan, as already mentioned, there is no formal National Qualifications Framework in place. However, there are NQF-type instruments such as the State Educational Standards and National

¹⁴ National Qualifications Framework in Central Asia, 2016

¹⁵ Ministry of Pre School Education of Uzbekistan, official website, available from: <http://mdo.uz>

¹⁶ National Qualifications Framework in Central Asia, 2016

Classificators that provide a structure of defined and validated qualifications, awarded at defined levels. These specify how qualifications relate to each other and thus how a learner can progress between them. In higher education, level structures are similar to the Bologna framework. Currently, qualifications and curricula are adopting learning outcomes approaches; an example is the state educational standard for foreign languages.¹⁷

The State Inspection for Supervision of Quality in Education under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan is authorised to undertake attestation and state accreditation of all educational establishments in Uzbekistan regardless of their corporate subordination or type of ownership.¹⁸ Prior to 2017, this function was carried out by the State Testing Centre under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Rating of HEIs aiming to stimulate the improvement of their quality has been introduced by the resolution *On the Introduction of a System of Rating Assessment of Higher Educational Establishments of the Republic* (2012). A revised version of the rating system has been implemented in 2018 by the State Inspection for Supervision of Quality in Education and its results as well as methodology are available in public domain.¹⁹ The revised rating is based on Times Higher Education (THE), Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) and other renown rating systems.²⁰ In case of international universities, internal quality assessments are conducted by foreign partners. Although educational institutions are not seeking independent accreditation in Uzbekistan as it is not required by law, current reforms facilitate increased presence of foreign providers of education in the market, which in turn increases presence of independent accreditation in addition to state accreditation in the country.

Quality assurance is mainly concerned with educational standards and accreditation. Its elements are included in the legislation covering education - the law of the Republic of Uzbekistan *On Education* (1997), the *National Programme on Personnel Training* (1997), the Cabinet Ministers' Resolution *On Development and Introduction of Educational Standards to the System of Continuous Education* (1998) and resolution *On Approval of the State Higher Education Standards* (2015).

One element of quality assurance is strong employer input to curricula and qualifications, so that this provides some degree of labour market relevance to new qualifications. The ministries are careful to consult employers and also bring in foreign experts to advise on some aspects of qualification design. However, given limited progress of NQF plans, there are, unsurprisingly, no mechanisms to monitor the NQF's development and the country is not a member of any international network in quality assurance.²¹

2.2.3 Employment and labour market needs

Uzbekistan is not a member of the Bologna Process and has no particular mechanisms supporting its implementation developed yet. The law *On Education* 'determines the legal basis of training, education, professional training of citizens and is aimed at providing constitutional right of everyone on education.'²² An important legislation is the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

¹⁷ https://connections.etf.europa.eu/wikis/home?lang=en#!/wiki/Wf591e43b607e_4ccf_8d94_a3256a255147/page/Uzbekistan%20-%20NQF%20inventory

¹⁸ Overview of the Higher Education System: Uzbekistan, 2017

¹⁹ The State Inspection for Supervision of Quality in Education, rating of higher educational establishments, available from <<http://reyting.tdi.uz>>, accessed on 14 March 2019

²⁰ State Inspection for Supervision of Quality in Education under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, official website, <http://tdi.uz/uz/news/view/yurtimizdagi-oliy-talim-muassasalari-reytingi-infografika>

²¹ https://connections.etf.europa.eu/wikis/home?lang=en#!/wiki/Wf591e43b607e_4ccf_8d94_a3256a255147/page/Uzbekistan%20-%20NQF%20inventory

²² <http://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=846>

On Measures to Further Expand the Participation of Industries and Economic Sectors in Improving the Quality of Training of Specialists in Higher Education (2017) aiming to strengthen the cooperation among education, science and business in ensuring highly qualified experts for the needs of Uzbek economy. Similarly, a decree from January 2018, *On Measures for Improvement of the System of Secondary, Secondary Specialised and Vocational Education*, aims to improve the education sector based on experience of developed foreign states and to create conditions for training highly skilled specialists.

Overall economic development of the country is guided by successive governmental industrial modernisation policies aiming at expansion of the middle class, promotion of shared prosperity, and elimination of poverty through the creation of quality jobs. Uzbekistan has a very young and rapidly growing population. As a result of demographic trends, the country is experiencing a rapid increase in the working age population, significantly increasing the number of the population overall. The highest employment rates have been registered in construction, the housing and communal sector, domestic services, trade and public catering, transport and communication.²³

The reforms in educational sector are ongoing. Since 1998, Uzbekistan has extended compulsory education from 9 to 12 years. Within the compulsory upper secondary segment, the vast majority of students (93%) were directed into a VET stream. The remaining 7% attended lyceums with a more academic profile. As a result of this approach, the percentage of the total student population in upper secondary education is extremely high. Given the size of its VET system (which catered for over 1.4 million students in 2015), Uzbekistan has focused on supporting VET provision of comparable quality in terms of teaching and infrastructure in urban and rural settings, so that students can study close to their homes. In its Torino Process report, Uzbekistan also refers to an attempt to link VET provision in rural areas to rural development programmes and development plans for the agricultural and agri-food sector.²⁴ In 2017, the schooling system was reconsidered and currently Uzbekistan has 11 years of compulsory schooling. The option to stay at school until grade 11 or to transfer to a lyceum/college for two years of upper secondary education has been introduced and on the first launch resulted in majority of students making a decision to stay at schools. This has temporarily decreased pressure on the VET sector, but created a challenge for the schooling system coordinated by the Ministry of Public Education, which is also currently undergoing a major period of transformation.

Differences between rural and urban experiences are important in terms of ensuring that the benefits of vocational education are evenly distributed. The Government acknowledges that the quality of the workforce is important to meeting the occupation and qualification requirements of employers and, as a result, the engagement of business sector in the VET system is highly developed in Uzbekistan. Over the last few years, the business sector participated in implementation of programmes aimed at improving employability and employment of VET graduates, in elaboration of new professional standards for emerging VET sectors, and in development of small businesses and entrepreneurship in VET system.²⁵ This is further enhanced by the current reforms as VET educational establishments are to be transferred to relevant sectoral ministries, departments, business associations, commercial banks and large enterprises, which even further increases their link with the employers.

²³ https://connections.etf.europa.eu/wikis/home?lang=en#!/wiki/Wf591e43b607e_4ccf_8d94_a3256a255147/page/Uzbekistan%20-%20NQF%20inventory

²⁴ Torino Process 2016-17: Central Asia, 2017

²⁵ Executive Summary of the Torino Process 2016-17: Uzbekistan report, 2017

2.2.4 Innovative teaching methods

The right to education for all country's citizens is grounded in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The law *On Education 'determines the legal basis of training, education, professional training of citizens and is aimed at providing constitutional right of everyone on education'*.²⁶ Over the last years, Uzbekistan has been experiencing a number of reforms and the field of education is not an exception. The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan *On Measures for the Further Development of the Higher Education System* of April 20, 2017 focuses on the improvement of the education - a fundamental revision of the content of training of personnel at the level of international standards. At the same time, the *Programme for the Comprehensive Development of the Higher Education System for the Period 2017-2021* has been approved. It considers measures to strengthen and modernise the technical base of higher education institutions, equipping them with modern educational and scientific laboratories and modern information and communication technologies.²⁷

Modern higher education in Uzbekistan uses a wide range of interactive teaching methods and innovation technologies such as computer simulations, business games, case studies and others. The State Educational Standards recommend various teaching methods and techniques in the education process - interactive education methods, problem solving technique, game-based techniques, pedagogical strategies for the development of critical thinking, learner-centred education technologies, education technologies based on the effective organisation and management of the education process, differential training, individualisation of education, programmed learning technologies, integrated teaching methods and others. Teachers have the right to choose their teaching methodology and technique. The list of the main training materials for the compulsory disciplines is recommended by a programme, developed by the leading HEIs together with other HEIs and approved by MHSSE.²⁸

The government also supports the system of retraining and enhancement of knowledge, skills and competences to accommodate for personal and profession development of citizens. In many areas such as health, education and state service, the workers are required to attend professional development events. At the same time, professional development activities are also organised for unemployed citizens at the state level. These initiatives are supported by the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers *On Measures for Creation of Professional Training Centres for Unemployed Citizens on the Territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan*.²⁹ Moreover, professional development abroad is also supported by the government through the '*El-yurt umidi*' *Foundation for Training Specialists Abroad and the Dialogue with Compatriots*.³⁰ These measures are financed through various channels including State Budget of the Republic of Uzbekistan, tuition fees of students, charitable donations of individuals and legal entities, grants from international financial institutions and foreign organisations, State Employment Promotion Fund, as well as other sources not prohibited by law.

Some universities run their own professional development programmes, which are available to public as well as staff. For example, Westminster International University in Tashkent (WIUT) is running a special course in teaching and learning for the past 12 years aimed at pedagogical skills

²⁶ <http://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=846>

²⁷ http://mdis.uz/educating_for_innovation_and_innovation_in_education

²⁸ Overview of the Higher Education System: Uzbekistan, 2017

²⁹ https://nrm.uz/contentf?doc=497580_postanovlenie_kabinetaminstrov_respubliki_uzbekistan_ot_10_04_2017_g_n_199_o_merah_po_sozdaniyu_centrov_professionalnogo_obucheniya_bezrabotnyh_grajdan_na_territoriyah_respubliki_uzbekistan&products=1_vse_zak_onodatelstvo_uzbekistana

³⁰ https://nrm.uz/contentf?doc=557610_ukaz_prezidenta_respubliki_uzbekistan_ot_25_09_2018_g_n_up-5545_ob_organizacii_deyatelnosti_fonda_el-yurt_umidi_po_podgotovke_specialistov_za_rubejom_i_dialogu_s_sootechestvennikami_pri_kabinete_ministrov_respubliki_uzbekistan&products=1_

development and exposure to diversity of teaching, learning and assessment methods. Moreover, WIUT is running short executive courses such as 'Assessment Matters' where participants are exposed to the learning outcomes-based approach, assessment principles and techniques. The university delivers programmes validated by the University of Westminster in the UK and shares best practices of European system of education with wider community in Uzbekistan.

2.2.5 Contribution of education to prevent violent radicalisation of youth

On June 11-12, 2018, the Government of Uzbekistan along with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) organised an international conference on *Role of Youth in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism* that took place in Tashkent and Samarkand. 164 experts from 22 countries and international organisations such as United Nations (UN), OSCE, European Union (EU), and about 50 members from the Youth Union of Uzbekistan participated in the conference to discuss a common understanding on the issue of preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalisation that leads to terrorism.³¹ The key objective of the conference was to look at best practices and develop a holistic approach to preventing and countering the spread of violent extremism and terrorism among the youth. Experts like S. Frederick Starr and Savante E. Cornell have argued that Uzbekistan can be viewed as a new model for reform in the Muslim world. According to them, 'Uzbekistan is laying the foundation of an important and unprecedented new direction and model for the Muslim World.'³² This approach evolved over the last two decades and is now focusing on the youth and raising awareness among them. More than 62% of the population comprises of young people under the age of 30 in Uzbekistan, hence the greater stress on various youth programmes.³³

The Youth Council in Uzbekistan is central to the cause of youth development. More than 10 million youth are part of this union. In addition to this, Uzbek Government has intensified its effort particularly in relation to the migrant youth by providing them with education and options of employment. At the same time, the Uzbek government has also given help to some 9,000 children of extremists who were involved in acts of terrorism.³⁴ The Uzbek Government also pays special attention to promoting art, culture, and sports in its various programmes for the youth. For example, under its state programme for further improvement of children's music and art schools for 2016-2020, 278 music and art schools have been built. These are equipped with modern training equipment and musical instruments.³⁵

All the above-mentioned efforts and initiatives are being supported and reinforced by Uzbekistan's active measures in relation to inclusive education of children and young people. As a result, progress has been made in the effective integration of children with disabilities into mainstream education. As of 2017, 5,000 teenagers with disabilities (including hearing impairment, visual impairment, musculoskeletal disorders and common diseases, and mild or moderate learning disabilities) were studying at vocational colleges and academic lyceum in Uzbekistan.³⁶ The annual Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers *On Admission to Secondary Specialised, Vocational Educational Institutions in the Republic of Uzbekistan* pays special attention to the creation of conditions and guarantees for the right

³¹ <https://idsa.in/idsacomments/preventing-and-countering-violent-extremism-uzbek-model-msroy-270618>

³² Uzbekistan: A New Model for Reform in the Muslim World, 2018

³³ <https://idsa.in/idsacomments/preventing-and-countering-violent-extremism-uzbek-model-msroy-270618>

³⁴ <https://idsa.in/idsacomments/preventing-and-countering-violent-extremism-uzbek-model-msroy-270618>

³⁵ <https://idsa.in/idsacomments/preventing-and-countering-violent-extremism-uzbek-model-msroy-270618>

³⁶ Torino Process 2016-17: Uzbekistan: Executive Summary, 2017

to choose an educational institution for children with special educational needs. An important aspect of the Uzbek VET system, which is unparalleled in international educational practice, is that young people with disabilities (based on the nature and complexity of their condition) who have graduated from academic lyceums and vocational colleges on the basis of integrated education, and adolescents (based on the nature and complexity of their condition) who have completed 12-year compulsory education under general terms have equal rights. In other words, after graduating, students have a sufficient level of knowledge to enter higher educational institutions and continue in their selected specialism.³⁷

2.2.6 Contribution of education in addressing gender inequalities

Gender equality in education in Uzbekistan is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. According to the law *On Education*, adopted in 1997, men and women have equal rights to education and choice of profession regardless of sex, language, age, race, ethnicity, convictions, attitude to religion, social origin, types of actions, public standing, place of residence and length of residence in the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan.³⁸ There is no evidence of gender inequality in the system of continuous education in Uzbekistan as the state focuses on the coverage of girls' training at academic lyceums and vocational colleges. As a result, the enrolment of girls has increased in professions such as knitted-garment technologist, seamstress, cook, fashion designer, hair stylist and master of decorative art.³⁹

Gender equality is almost balanced at vocational colleges (49.1% of the pupils are girls and 50.9% are boys). However, at the same time, there are significant disparities in vocational colleges in terms of the distribution of students by areas of specialisation. Girls are in the majority in professions such as education (76.3% girls, 23.7% boys), and healthcare, physical education and sport (75.6% and 24.4%, respectively), while boys are in the majority in professions in the field of transport and communications (71.3% boys, 28.7% girls), manufacturing and construction facilities, and agriculture (60.4% and 39.6%, respectively).⁴⁰ Labour statistics confirm a similar trend. In the labour market, women are heavily concentrated in health, wellness, social welfare and education (81.6%), culture, arts, science (72.1%). Men are highly concentrated in construction (92%), transport, and communication (88.7%).⁴¹

In 2014, the State Committee on Statistics of the Republic of Uzbekistan in cooperation with the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan established a separate web-page dedicated to gender statistics. Nevertheless, obtaining access to reliable gender statistics in Uzbekistan is a major challenge. Current publicly available gender statistics lack globally identified indicators.⁴² This concern is also relevant to the education sector, where available gender statistics also lacks globally identified indicators. Statistics on enrolment to VET and HE institutions found in public access, demonstrates a persistent gender gap. Despite small increase in enrolment of girls to HE since 2012 (by 2%), the enrolment of boys to HE is two times higher than that of girls.⁴³ Despite formal equality in access to education in Uzbekistan, there are several obstacles for girls to access VET and HE. Similarly to other Central Asia

³⁷ Torino Process 2016-17: Uzbekistan: Executive Summary, 2017

³⁸ Torino Process 2016-17: Uzbekistan: Executive Summary, 2017

³⁹ Torino Process 2016-17: Uzbekistan: Executive Summary, 2017

⁴⁰ Torino Process 2016-17: Uzbekistan: Executive Summary, 2017

⁴¹ <https://gender.stat.uz/en/>

⁴² Uzbekistan Country Gender Assessment: Update, 2018

⁴³ Gender Equality in Higher Education and Vocational educational and Training in Central Asia, 2019

countries, one of the major obstacles are entrenched gender stereotypes about roles of women and men in society. The location of higher educational institutions (mainly in Tashkent, Samarkand, Republic of Karakalpakstan) and costs associated with accommodation and travel as well as costs of studies for HE are decisive for making choices of continuation of education by girls and boys in families. Families, especially the low-income ones, tend to prioritise boys over girls in investing to education. Besides, age of enrolment to HE coincides with the traditionally appropriate marriage age for girls which tends to be prioritised.⁴⁴

Like other Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan maintains a list of works with unfavourable working conditions on which use of women's labour is fully or partially prohibited⁴⁵; however, unlike other Central Asian countries, the government has publicly announced that the list will cease to exist after May 1, 2019⁴⁶. Another example of shifting approaches is that Uzbekistan has had a Women Committee, which addresses some issues of gender inequality since 1991, and in 2019, it was proposed to create the Men Committee⁴⁷ in the Republic, which indicates the change in perception of gender equality in the society. Moreover, the *Development Strategy for 2017-2021*, under its clause 4.2 states that one of its goals is '*improvement of the system of social protection of the population and health care, increasing the socio-political activity of women*'. These steps indicate that Uzbekistan is taking concrete steps to ensure eradication of gender inequality.

2.2.7 Effective financing of education systems and education institutions

Higher Education

In Uzbekistan, the annual public expenditure on education accounts for 10-12% of GDP. More than 70% of public expenditure on education is allocated to general secondary and specialised secondary as well as vocational education.⁴⁸ A new funding system for public-funded institutions, which was introduced in 1999, has improved their capacity for a more flexible and efficient use of extra-budgetary resources, self-financing and the attraction of private and foreign investment. Higher education institutions are funded from the central budget. The share of private funding (i.e. tuition fees) reaches 60% of the total funding of current expenditures of HEIs.⁴⁹ A new per-capita financing procedure of normative planning and budgeting of HEIs was introduced from September 1, 2010. The budget for each HEI is calculated taking into consideration the basic normative expenditure for training of one student on state grant. Routine expenditures of HEIs mainly include staff costs, student stipends, social payments and taxes, as well as expenditures for routine repairs and renovations and consumables.⁵⁰

In 2017, Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan *On Measures for Further Development of Higher Education System*⁵¹ was approved and provided for the financing of its implementation. The decree has approved the *Programme for the Integrated Development of the Higher Education System for the period 2017-2021*. The funds are provided for works on construction, reconstruction, overhaul and equipment of educational and scientific laboratory buildings, sports facilities, social and engineering infrastructure, taking into account their technical condition, as well as the material and technical security of each higher educational institution. The decree also stipulates that the State

⁴⁴ Uzbekistan Country Gender Assessment: Update, 2018

⁴⁵ <http://lex.uz/docs/514958#523439>

⁴⁶ <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2019/03/07/women/>

⁴⁷ <https://upl.uz/policy/10446-news.html>

⁴⁸ Overview of the Higher Education System: Uzbekistan, 2017

⁴⁹ Overview of the Higher Education System: Uzbekistan, 2017

⁵⁰ Overview of the Higher Education System: Uzbekistan, 2017

⁵¹ <http://www.lex.uz/docs/3523198>

Investment Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, together with interested ministries and departments, should carry out systematic work with international financial institutions and foreign donors to attract concessional foreign loans and grants for the implementation of the programme. Finally, it indicates that the main source of funding for the implementation of the programme would be the Foundation on Development of the Material and Technical Base of Educational and Medical Institutions under the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Uzbekistan as well as resources of state corporations who oversee some specific educational institutions.

Over 90% of extra-budgetary funds come from student tuition fees. Other sources of income of HEIs are educational services, entrepreneurial, consulting, expert, publishing, research and other activities in accordance with the University Charter.⁵² These funds may be used mainly for further improvements of infrastructures and facilities. Enterprises, institutions and individuals offer education grants for students to cover tuition fees in order to meet the demand for particular specialists or in order to obtain corresponding higher education. International HEIs operating in Uzbekistan are almost fully financially independent, because they are largely financed from tuition fees paid by students. For instance, Turin Polytechnic University operates under Uzavtoprom Association and its expenditures are covered largely from internal funds of the Association and partially from tuition fees.⁵³

The role of tuition fees is not underestimated and recent reforms allow for universities to establish the fees at the sustainability level. One example of accumulating funds from fees is introduction of so-called 'super contract'. Due to the fact that places in higher education are limited based on the quota, applicants who have achieved the minimum admission requirements but could not score enough points to take the place as per quota are given a chance to study provided that their tuition fees are higher. This allows universities to accumulate additional funds to be directed for development, research and improvement of their material-technical base as well as provide opportunity for youth to obtain education. This example is a part of a wider change, which aims at moving away from centrally planned quota to university planned quota. From 2019/20 academic year, it is planned that the universities would be able to establish their own admission quotas based on the labour market needs and their capabilities to deliver quality education. This in turn would contribute to the government aim to increase the coverage of population with higher education.

Currently, Uzbekistan has many examples of self-sustainable educational establishments at pre-school and school level, and some examples of self-sustainable universities. Current reforms potentially would lead to increased number of institutions in VET and HE systems that would be able to sustain themselves with a decreased reliance on the state budget.

Vocational Education and Training

In terms of financing generally, Uzbekistan's education system outperforms peer countries in the lower middle-income group. Public spending on education is high in Uzbekistan and closer to those found in higher income countries. In 2010, total education expenditures reached 33.8% of the public budget and 8.3% of GDP.⁵⁴ Around 24% of the education budget is being used for financing of the secondary specialised professional education.⁵⁵ Since 2010, per-capita financing has been gradually introduced in the financing model of secondary specialised professional education in Uzbekistan. There are also some existing examples of specific industry support for vocational education in some

⁵² Overview of the Higher Education System: Uzbekistan, 2017

⁵³ Overview of the Higher Education System: Uzbekistan, 2017

⁵⁴ Data of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Quoted from Torino Process: Uzbekistan, 2012

⁵⁵ Calculated based on the Ministry of Finance's data (including recurrent and capital expenditures). Quoted from Torino Process: Uzbekistan, 2012

sectors, for example automotive industry where General Motors provided financing for some schools or the petrochemicals/ gas sector where industry supports vocational training for workers in the industry.

Vocational Education and Training system also undergoes major reforms in Uzbekistan. In 2018, a Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan *On Measures for Cardinal Improvement of the General Secondary, Secondary Specialised and Professional Education*⁵⁶. According to the decree, vocational colleges were transferred to sectoral subordination to relevant ministries, departments, business associations, commercial banks and large enterprises, taking into account existing real personnel needs in accordance with the target parameters of regional socio-economic development programmes and the labour market forecast. This transition has a major impact on financing of professional colleges. It stipulates that the maintenance of vocational colleges at the expense of the State Budget of the Republic of Uzbekistan is carried out until the completion of the training of students admitted to study in vocational colleges until the 2017/2018 academic year (inclusive). Organisations that have taken responsibilities for vocational colleges have received a number of privileges in the form of tax exemptions and compulsory payments. The funding of professional colleges under the ministries and state departments is drawn from funds received for training on a fee-contract basis; budgetary and extra-budgetary funds of ministries and departments, provided annually in their estimates of expenditures for these purposes; funds from other sources not prohibited by law. While professional colleges transferred to business associations, commercial banks and large enterprises should draw funds not only from fees and other sources but also from own funds as they have no budgetary allocations. At the same time, the government also provides for admission of students from low-income families to professional (multidisciplinary) colleges, regardless of jurisdiction, free of charge.

In terms of governance, the latest changes have reduced the financial pressure on the government. As under previous regulations expenditure was high, partnerships with the business community should provide boost to further development of a continuing vocational sector. This could further be developed on regional basis, or through an industry-sectoral approach, or through a national process.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ <http://www.lex.uz/docs/3523198>

⁵⁷ Torino Process: Uzbekistan, 2012