

E-LEARNING TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE EDUCATION OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: The current article offers an overview to the most important problems and opportunities in the development of modern education based on the use of new information and communication technologies and innovative pedagogical methods.

The article analyzes current trends in e-learning, such as the use of online courses, interactive e-learning methods, study the specific challenges and opportunities of e-learning presents in Uzbekistan, including the internet access, digital literacy rate and cultural factors. The research also highlights the challenges of remote learning, explore how e-learning can contribute to educational equity in the country and how to ensure quality education online.

Key words: e-learning, education, digitalization, learning technologies, online platforms, ICT (Information Communication Technologies), distance learning, mobile learning.

Introduction: In today's developing world Technology has significantly changed the educational system. The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) brings forward countless opportunities and benefits to quality of nowadays education. Particularly, E-Learning is one of these benefits. It is the use of ICT to learn from anywhere and anytime. The online learning process makes the education more efficient, flexible, accessible and cost effective for learners as well as teachers. In the age of information technology, we can study with video lectures and animations, take online tutorials, training programs and study materials in virtual classrooms.

During the speech at the "World Education Forum 2012", the UNESCO Director Irina Bokova emphasized that technologies can be a powerful tool for education, but only if they properly integrated into the educational process. Bokova highlighted the importance of ensuring that these technologies are not just implemented in educational institutions but are also accompanied by new models of learning that meet contemporary demands¹.

According to Article 16 the Law of the "Education" of the Republic of Uzbekistan, distance education is aimed at students obtaining the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities in accordance with curricula and training programs at a distance using information and communication technologies and the worldwide information network Internet².

As we know, today the use of online platforms, virtual classrooms, digital libraries and multimedia resources have become the norm and a preferred choice for many students from around the world. Uzbekistan has been making several reforms to modernize the system and improve access to education, including the development of distance learning, especially for students in remote areas, to promote lifelong learning, integrating new technologies in lessons from primary to higher education

¹ Information and Communication Technologies in Education: Monograph / Edited by Badarch Dendev – M.: UNESCO IITE, 2013. – p. 9

² <https://lex.uz/docs/5013007>

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in recent years. In the Concept for the development of the higher education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030, approved by the Decree of the president of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 8, 2019 No. UP-5847, determines that in order to apply digital technologies and modern methods into the educational process, measures are being taken, such as individualization of educational processes based on digital technologies, development of distance educational services³. Below are some key reforms and developments in e-learning:

- **Expansion of Online Courses and Platforms:**

Online education platforms and courses are increasing day by day in Uzbekistan. These platforms host e-books, e-learning courses, multimedia educational materials.

The Agency of Yours Affairs in Uzbekistan has initiated several programs and project works providing opportunities for the younger population to increase digital literacy among young people and prepare them for the demands of the modern workforce.

Here are some key e-learning projects for youth in Uzbekistan:

1. "Ibrat Academy" project: a language learning project teaches foreign languages to the Uzbek audience and promotes the Uzbek language to international ones by inspiring young people to gain knowledge in creative ways. There are more than 667 thousand subscribers in the project's You Tube platform. Over 2,600 videos have been uploaded on this platform teaching 22 foreign languages and simplifying learning process. They have been viewed nearly 41 million times. Today about 1,500,000 youth are learning languages in the mobile application Ibrat Academy. Of them, nearly 210 thousand have received language certificates⁴.

2. The "Girls' Academy" project: aims to train young girls and women in modern professions, enhance their participation in social and political life and improve the status of women in society. The project is supported by the government and various organizations. It focuses on enhancing the skills and knowledge of girls, helping them achieve their full potential in various fields, including leadership, education, and career development⁵.

3. The "Mutolaa" ("Reading") project: the goal of the project is to promote reading culture and improve literacy among young people and fostering intellectual development through literature using modern technologies and also provide free access to the best examples of Uzbek and world literature in electronic, audio, and video formats for the population, including young people. As a part of the project, over 3,200 books (including fictions, stories, fairy tales and popular scientific researches) have been converted into audio and electronic formats and uploaded to a mobile application. This project has become popular among the population, especially among young people. Nowadays, more than 1.1 million readers (with a total of 2,609,000 books being read) have been using this mobile app⁶.

4. The Ustoz AI project: is a project that integrates artificial intelligence (AI) into the education sector. This project aims to train 250,000 young people in 30 modern professions, including marketing, advertising, e-commerce, IT design, and other fields. This task was assigned as part of the initiative to equip youth with the skills required for today's job market. The "Ustoz AI" project was established by the **Youth Affairs Agency** and the **Support Center for Youth Entrepreneurship of Uzbekistan** to offer free online video tutorials teaching over 40 high-demand and modern

³ <https://lex.uz/docs/4545887>

⁴ <https://ibratfarzandlari.uz>

⁵ https://www.youtube.com/@qizlar_akademiyasi

⁶ <https://mutolaa.com>

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professions such as "Graphic Designer", "Video Editor", "Marketing Specialist", "Human Resources Expert" and "Sales and Logistics Operator". Moreover, the project aims to **diversify external labor migration** by 10-30% during the project period, encouraging youth to gain skills that will enable them to contribute to both local and international labor markets.

As part of the "Ustoz AI" project, a total of **115,450 young people** across the Republic have been trained for free in **modern professions** up to this day. Specifically:

- **16,160** young people attended **video editing** courses.
- **4,616** young people took **HR** courses.
- **4,618** young people participated in **PR** courses.
- **26,554** young people enrolled in **mobile photography** courses.
- **11,545** young people joined the **No Code** course.
- **4,619** young people studied **biology**.
- **17,318** young people took **targeting** courses.
- **11,545** young people attended **mathematics** courses.
- **6,929** young people participated in **architecture** courses.
- **11,546** young people trained in **history** courses⁷.

This project is making significantly progress offering free and accessible education in various modern and in-demand professions to prepare youth for future challenges and opportunities in the workforce.

- **Collaborating with global platforms:** Uzbekistan has been collaborating with international e-learning platforms such as Coursera, Khan Academy, edX, Duolingo, Skillshare, Udemy to provide free and paid courses to the public. The partnerships with international platforms are crucial to improving access to high-quality learning resources in Uzbekistan.

- **Infrastructure Advancements:** There have been hold several efforts to improve internet access in Uzbekistan, especially in rural areas to support e-learning in recent years. Providing affordable internet access and expand broadband services are a part of the important strategies. The government has also equipped with modern digital technologies introducing "smart classrooms" in some schools to enable interactive learning. These classrooms feature computers, internet access, projectors and interactive whiteboards.

- **Teacher Training and Professional Programs:** The Uzbek government and some educational institutions within international organizations have been working together to provide teachers with digital training resources and professional development opportunities. The recent reforms show that there has been a strong emphasis on training teachers to use digital tools and platforms in education effectively. Specialized programs, workshops and online courses are available for educators to develop the skills needed for e-learning. You can find several certification programs for e-learning professionals to ensure high-quality digital education delivery as these certifications help them and trainers use technology efficiently.

- **Educational Reforms Law in distance learning:**

By the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated June 15, 2022, No. PP-279 "On the Organization of Admissions to State Higher Educational Institutions" it was decided to introduce

⁷ <https://www.ustoz.ai>

a form of distance learning for bachelor's degree programs in state higher educational institutions starting from the 2022/2023 academic year⁸.

By the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated June 15, 2022, No. F-60, it was determined that 3410 students would be trained in the form of distance learning within the framework of the state order for admission to state higher educational institutions for the 2022/2023 academic year⁹.

• **E-learning in Higher Education:** Distance learning has been significantly expanded in Uzbekistan in recent years. Many universities and institutions have adopted e-learning systems and offer online degree programs. They are integrating video lectures, webinars, online discussions and digital assignments. At the same time some universities offer blended learning models, combining traditional instructions with online content and virtual learning sessions. They are embracing **hybrid education models**. Below are some universities in Uzbekistan that have adopted blended learning:

1. Tashkent State University of Economics (TSUE)
2. National University of Uzbekistan (NUUZ)
3. **Tashkent University of Information Technologies (TUIT)**
4. Uzbekistan State World Languages University (USWLU)
5. Samarkand State University (SamSU)

The growth of **distance learning** in Uzbekistan has brought numerous opportunities to higher education. However, several **challenges** still continue to impede the complete implementation and effectiveness of e-learning in the country. These challenges include both **technological limitations** and **cultural resistance** such as **internet connectivity**, **digital access**, digital literacy in **teacher training** and **content quality**. Overcoming these barriers requires targeted investments in technology, infrastructure, professional development to ensure e-learning that becoming an effective and sustainable part of Uzbekistan's education system. Here are some of the key challenges of **e-learning in Uzbekistan**:

Limited internet access, lack of reliable and high-speed internet are one of the biggest challenges facing e-learning in Uzbekistan especially in rural and remote areas. The difficulties with accessing stable internet connections prevent students to participate in online courses or access educational resources.

Availability of digital devices: Many students especially from low-income families, do not have access to the necessary digital devices (such as computers, laptops or even smartphones) to get online classes.

Low digital literacy: A significant portion of population, students and even educators have lack of the digital literacy skills and are not familiar with basic computer operations, internet and using educational technology tools.

Cultural Resistance to E-Learning: Many teachers and students still prefer traditional learning models to distance learning in Uzbekistan. They perceive that face to face learning as more effective and reliable compared to online education. The change of this cultural resistance can slow the acceptance and adoption of e-learning.

⁸ <https://lex.uz/docs/6070845>

⁹ <https://lex.uz/docs/6069606>

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Limited contents with Uzbek languages also make some barriers to getting online lessons. A significant part of online educational content is in **foreign languages**, particularly English or Russian, while students' majority is more comfortable with the **Uzbek language**.

In conclusion, there are certain online platforms that provide online courses and the number of citizens that wish to develop their digital culture is increasing year by year. As we mentioned above, government support, mobile learning, interactive learning platforms, corporate e-learning are the main trends of the distance learning in Uzbekistan's education. With the support of government, advancements in mobile learning and cooperation with international universities, Uzbekistan is on the path to modernizing its educational system. However, challenges such as the limits in accessing stable internet connections, varying levels of digital literacy, the need for qualified personnel and the lack of digital devices remain obstacles to overcome. By highlighting these issues, Uzbekistan has the potential to distance learning sector creating a globally competitive education system that encourages lifelong learning and workforce development.

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