

**SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IN UZBEKISTAN: FUNCTIONS, STRUCTURE, AND
COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP****Ma'mura Tadjibayeva**

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Abstract: The article examines the structure, functions, and development of school management in Uzbekistan's general secondary education system. Based on qualitative document analysis and comparative education methods, it reviews reforms from 1997–2023, focusing on management functions (planning, organizing, leadership/motivation, and control), governance structures, and the role of digitalization. Comparative insights from Finland, Estonia, South Korea, and Singapore highlight lessons for enhancing school autonomy, accountability, and leadership training. The findings indicate that Uzbekistan is gradually moving from a centralized model toward data-driven management and limited autonomy.

Keywords: school management, Uzbekistan, leadership, autonomy, education reform, EMIS, comparative education.

Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются структура, функции и развитие управления общеобразовательными школами Узбекистана. На основе качественного анализа документов и методов сравнительной педагогики исследуются реформы 1997–2023 гг., включая функции управления (планирование, организация, руководство/мотивация и контроль), эволюцию управленческих структур и роль цифровизации. Сравнительный анализ опыта Финляндии, Эстонии, Южной Кореи и Сингапура позволяет выявить уроки для повышения автономии школ, подотчётности и подготовки лидеров. Результаты показывают, что система Узбекистана постепенно переходит от централизованной модели к управлению на основе данных и ограниченной автономии.

Ключевые слова: школьное управление, Узбекистан, лидерство, автономия, реформа образования, EMIS, сравнительное образование.

Introduction

School management is a core element of educational effectiveness, as decisions made by school leaders directly shape teaching quality and student outcomes. In Uzbekistan, school management has evolved considerably since independence. The 1997 Law on Education and the National Program for Training Specialists introduced the 9+3 model (9 years of general education followed by 3 years of vocational or academic specialization). In 2017, reforms under the Action Strategy (PF-4947) marked a shift toward modernization, teacher professionalization, and digitalization.

The duality of leadership and management is central: as Cuban (1988) argued, leadership inspires others toward higher goals, while management ensures stability and efficiency. For

Uzbek schools, the challenge is to balance organizational discipline with motivational leadership that fosters innovation.

Research questions:

1. What are the main functions and levels of school management in Uzbekistan?
2. How have reforms since 2017 transformed management practices?
3. What comparative lessons can be drawn from high-performing systems such as Finland, Estonia, South Korea, and Singapore?
4. What strategies can enhance school autonomy, accountability, and leadership in Uzbekistan?

2. Methods

This study applies qualitative document analysis of Uzbek legislation, presidential decrees, and ministerial reports (1997–2023), alongside comparative education methodology. Sources include OECD, World Bank, UNESCO, and scholarly works (e.g., Dimmock, 1999; Cuban, 1988; Sahlberg, 2011).

- Content analysis identified key reforms in governance, teacher policy, financing, and digitalization.
- Comparative benchmarking contrasted Uzbekistan's model with Finland, Estonia, South Korea, and Singapore.
- Descriptive statistics from national education databases were reviewed to illustrate trends in enrollment, teacher workforce, and infrastructure.

Limitations: reliance on secondary sources and aggregate data; regional disparities and micro-level case studies are not fully captured.

3. Results

3.1 Management functions

School management in Uzbekistan reflects four universal functions:

- Planning – development of curricula, annual plans, timetables, and resource allocation.
- Organizing – structuring roles, equipping classrooms, and coordinating teaching processes.
- Leadership and motivation – inspiring teachers and students, reducing bureaucratic burdens, and enhancing teacher status. For instance, recent reforms prohibited mandatory subscriptions and non-teaching tasks for teachers.
- Monitoring – evaluating student outcomes, supervising lesson quality, and conducting internal reviews as a tool for improvement, not punishment.

3.2 Governance structure

Management is multi-level:

- Macro level: Ministry of Preschool and School Education develops policy.
- Meso level: regional and district education departments provide oversight and support.
- Micro level: the school principal, deputies, pedagogical council, parent committees, and boards of trustees.

3.3 Reforms since 2017

- Return to 11-year schooling: reinstated in 2017, aligning with international practice.
- Infrastructure expansion: between 2017 and 2023, ~660 new schools were built, and more than 5,000 underwent major renovation. Enrollment rose from 4.8 million (2016) to 6.4 million (2023).
- Teacher policy: workforce expanded to ~527,000; salaries increased significantly; professional certification and leadership courses for principals introduced.
- Digitalization: introduction of EMIS, electronic journals, and a digital “school passport.”
- International assessments: participation in PISA 2022 (average math score 364) and TIMSS 2019 highlighted strengths and weaknesses in student learning.
- Equity initiatives: free hot meals for grades 1–4, free textbooks, and growth of private schools (194 institutions by 2023).

3.4 Comparative benchmarks

- **Finland:** decentralized, high trust in teachers, minimal standardized testing.
- **Estonia:** 76% of decisions made at school level; strong community involvement; one of the highest-performing OECD systems.
- **South Korea:** centralized standards, heavy investment (20% of budget), high teacher status, but risks of student stress.
- **Singapore:** centralized but with differentiated programs; structured leadership preparation through the Leaders in Education initiative; strong mentoring system.

4. Discussion

Uzbekistan has made significant progress in modernizing its education management system. The reintroduction of 11-year schooling, teacher incentives, and digital monitoring reflect a shift toward quality-oriented governance.

However, challenges remain:

- **Centralization vs. autonomy:** Uzbekistan still operates under a predominantly centralized model. International experience suggests granting schools limited curricular flexibility (10–15%) while ensuring accountability.
- **Leadership capacity:** Principals require continuous training in leadership, coaching, and change management. The Singapore model illustrates the value of structured leadership pipelines.

- **Evidence-based decision-making:** EMIS provides an opportunity for data-driven management, but requires improved data literacy among administrators.
- **Equity and inclusion:** Finland and Estonia's focus on equity highlight the need to narrow urban–rural disparities in Uzbekistan.

5. Conclusion

1. Uzbekistan's school management is based on four key functions: planning, organizing, leadership/motivation, and monitoring.
2. Reforms since 2017 have transformed governance, expanded access, improved teacher status, and introduced digital tools.
3. Participation in international assessments (PISA, TIMSS) marks a shift toward global benchmarking.
4. Comparative lessons emphasize the importance of autonomy, equity, and leadership development.
5. Sustainable progress requires balancing central oversight with school-level initiative, supported by strong leadership and evidence-based governance.

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