

BUILDING CIVIL SOCIETY IN UZBEKISTAN AND THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THIS PROCESS



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ABSTRACT

Uzbekistan is currently undergoing a rather difficult time of transition. This renewal, this sense of freedom, invariably entails negative consequences as well. So, Uzbekistan definitely needs a radical change and the establishment of order. Kilter can be achieved, in my opinion, by establishing a true state based on the rule of law (constitutional state, Rechtsstaat) and, most importantly, civil society. Of course, civil society is inconceivable without a developed self-consciousness of the individual, the class and the people. All others are formed on the basis of an individual's self-awareness, which in turn is formed through education and upbringing. The discussion begins with a definition of civil society, its appearance, characteristics and the conditions for its emergence and existence. The article analyses and studies the current state of the education system in Uzbekistan, identifies shortcomings and gaps, and draws parallels between certain aspects of national education and education in foreign developed countries (such as the UK and the US). Possible mechanisms to remedy these shortcomings have been developed and specific measures (mediums) for the active modernisation of the system have been proposed. The role of appropriate and decent education in the formation of a developed civil society and a true rule of law state is also shown and described.

Key words: civil society, state, education, school, teacher, textbook, educational system, educational standard, self-consciousness.

АННОТАЦИЯ

На сегодняшний день Узбекистан переживает достаточно трудные переходные времена. Это обновление, это ощущение свободы, неизменно влечет за собой также и негативные последствия. Так, Узбекистане однозначно нуждается в кардинальной перемене и установлении порядка. Порядок может быть достигнут, по моему мнению, установлением истинного правового государства и, главное, гражданского общества. Безусловно, гражданское общество немислимо без развитого самосознания

личности, класса и народа. Все остальные формируются на основе самосознания индивида, а оно в свою очередь формируется в процессе образования и воспитания. Рассуждение начато с определения гражданского общества, его облика, характеристик и условий возникновения и существования. В статье разобрано и изучено настоящее положение системы образования в Узбекистане, выявлены недостатки и пробелы, проведена параллель между отдельными аспектами национального образования и образования зарубежных развитых государств (таких как Великобритания, США). Разработаны возможные механизмы для исправления этих недостатков и предложены конкретные меры для активной модернизации системы. Также показана и описана роль соответствующего достойного образования в становлении развитого гражданского общества и истинного правового государства.

Ключевые слова: гражданское общество, государство, образование, школа, учитель, учебник, образовательная система, образовательные стандарты, самосознание.

INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan is currently undergoing a rather difficult time of transition. The foundations and rules, the system and methods of governance, the social and personal perceptions of society, the state and the individual, implanted during the years of totalitarianism and which have persisted for three decades of independence, begin to stagger and with barely noticeable steps to lose ground. The command system and constant social passivity (depression) are no longer as strong. The notion of "freedom" is being transformed, albeit at a snail's pace, from an empty sound and sonorous watchword, a false and hypocritical slogan, into something that can be felt. Relatively free self-expression and expression of will, the possibility of choice, the chance for the right of independent and autonomous decision-making seem to be more or less realistic (possible) today.

But this renewal, this sense of freedom, invariably entails negative consequences as well. The destruction of former boundaries - that is, former frameworks and forms - is accompanied by a certain amount of chaos and disorder. We see examples of this turmoil every day and everywhere - from the activities of private bloggers to the speeches of public parties and state officials, from birthday parties to weddings, from the production of small goods to urban infrastructure and logistics. Furthermore, this confusion is present in cultural and spiritual life.

So, Uzbekistan definitely needs a radical change and the establishment of order. Kilter can be achieved, in my opinion, by establishing a true state based on the rule of law (constitutional state, Rechtsstaat) and, most importantly, civil society.

What is civil society? Civil society is a society in which there are unofficial structures in the form of various political parties, organisations, movements, committees, associations, societies, assemblies, etc., that operate within the framework of legal laws and regulations and have a significant influence on the official authorities.

Civil society is formed along with the capitalist mode of production. Why? Because it is under capitalism that a person gets the opportunity to act freely within the framework of existing legal laws and norms, to express his positions on certain issues, to create political parties, trade unions and organizations, various kinds of movements (youth, women's, sports, et al.), etc. In other words, capitalism presupposes the existence of not only formal structures and institutions, but also informal ones. Informal structures are autonomous, they function in accordance with the laws of the state. They can form public opinion. They are reckoned with by the official authorities. Such a society is called civil because all citizens of the state can express themselves, can openly express their attitude to certain actions of official authorities, can protest against certain decisions of state bodies. And often, under the influence of unofficial structures, official structures are forced to reconsider their decisions.

It cannot be overlooked that, in its classic form, civil society can only exist in democratic states.

Civil society has certain common attributes without which it cannot function. Let us list them: 1) the universal rule of law (constitutional state); 2) the possibility of the formation of informal social institutions, political movements and flows (trends, streams); 3) the domination of social ties over personal ones; 4) the personal element (personal beginning, personality); 5) freedom and responsibility.

Civil society in its modern sense cannot arise in a state in which the law is not universal. The universal character of law refers to a state of society in which all citizens, regardless of their social status, are subject to legal norms and laws and bear equal responsibility for non-compliance with these norms and laws.

Without the possibility of the formation of informal and independent social institutions, initiations, political parties, movements, trade union organizations, etc., it is impossible to talk about civil society. It can be said that the existence of such institutions is perhaps the main distinguishing feature of any civil society.

In a civil society, social ties dominate over personal ties. In civil society, individuals are bound together primarily by social ties rather than by ethnic or personal ties. In other words, the collective in civil society is social in nature. Therefore, members of the same collective show social solidarity when, for example, official authorities try to restrict their rights or infringe their economic interests. For example, if a company cuts wages, the union declares a strike and the entire collective stops working until its economic demands are met.

There is no civil society without a personal identity. A member of civil society is proactive and committed. He/she realises that his/her well-being depends on him/herself to a large extent. He is civilised, tries to know the laws of his state, fights for their implementation and at the same time opposes them if they are not in his interests. The enterprising person is aware of the dangers and difficulties that may await him. But who does not take risks, he does not achieve anything in life.

A civil society is inconceivable without freedom. In general, problems of freedom have always occupied an important place in philosophy. But they began to gain particular relevance during the formation of bourgeois social relations. Holbach, for example, argued that "freedom is the ability to do anything for your own happiness that does not harm the happiness of other members of society" [1]. Collins, on the other hand, understood freedom as "the ability of man to do as he wishes or prefers" [2].

In our literature, it is not uncommon to find the expression 'we are building civil society'. But civil society is not a house that is actually being built. It is a very complex organism, it is not built, but formed over many centuries. It is formed together with the formation of bourgeois social relations, with the development of productive forces, with the democratic principles of governance. Of course, civil society is inconceivable without a developed self-consciousness of the individual, the class and the people. By self-consciousness in the broad sense of the word we mean the subject's awareness of his interests and ideals, of his place and role in history. A person with high self-awareness understands that he is a human being, that he has a civic position, and therefore cannot accept social injustice. He is ready to stand up for himself, to defend his human dignity, take an active life position, to strive to change and improve the surrounding social reality. He is clearly aware that it is impossible not to struggle against the phenomena that hinder the development of society. The self-consciousness of the demos is understood as the people (i.e. public)'s awareness of their role and place in the historical process in general and in a given country in particular. In the first case, the notion of demos is taken in a broad sense, and in the

second, in a narrow sense. And class self-consciousness refers to a class's awareness of its place and role in both the historical process and society.

In support of this, it is necessary to cite an excerpt from the article of the Spanish national online publication "Diario Arbat", which says that "since becoming head of state, Shavkat Mirziyoyev has identified the formation of a strong civil society as one of his most important tasks"

This is evidenced by the Decree signed by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on March 4, 2021 "On Approval of the Concept for the Development of Civil Society in 2021-2025" with a detailed Roadmap for Specific Actions. The Decree contains provisions on supporting non-governmental non-profit organizations and other civil society institutions, on strengthening social partnership between civil society institutions and state bodies, on the implementation of effective public control, as well as on improving the legal framework governing this sphere.

Democracy in the new Uzbekistan now means not only the rule of the people with secured freedoms, rights and legitimate interests of citizens, but also the consistent implementation of their guarantees. This means establishing an effective system of public control by civil society institutions, primarily the media, Internet resources, bloggers and NGOs (non-governmental non-profit organizations). Only through cooperation between civil society institutions and government authorities it is possible to ensure a decent quality of life for people, rights and freedoms of citizens.

A landmark event in 2020 was the election of Uzbekistan as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council. This became possible by the reforms undertaken in the country to establish the rule of law and civil society.

The relationship between civil society institutions and State authorities under the classical model in Uzbekistan is carried out according to the following basic principles:

- Civil society approaches the state with its initiatives that require support;
- The state studies civic initiatives and supports and endorses them;
- The state provides material, moral and informational support to civil society institutions.

From all of the above, a clear conclusion can be drawn: our country is striving and relentlessly moving towards the lofty goals set, which gives hope of achieving them.

However, there is a factor of utmost importance in the development of the state and society, which in our country is almost in a deplorable status, and this must be

recognised. I am talking about education, cultural and scientific, and the upbringing of the younger generation.

Attention to the sphere of education becomes especially urgent worldwide in the age of globalisation and information technology, when the level of development of a country is determined not only by socio-economic, cultural indicators, assessment of strength and power, but also relies largely on its intellectual potential. After all, it is scientific and technological progress, the foundations of which are laid in the educational environment, that is the central link for sustainable development and prosperity of a country. The World Bank's Changing Welfare of Nations highlights that it is human capital, i.e. the sum of people's knowledge, talents, skills and abilities, that constitutes a country's main wealth. Thus, the welfare of developed countries is provided by human capital by 68%, while in developing countries - only by 41% [3].

In conditions when an educated, politically and socially active person with a high level of legal consciousness and culture is assigned the role of the central agent of all transformations, the issues of progressive development of the education system are becoming increasingly important. As the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev rightly noted in that regard: "success ... of reforms, our acquisition of a worthy { rightful } place among the modern developed countries of the world, first of all, are associated with the development of the spheres of science, education and upbringing in the country, our competitiveness in these areas".

The very first concepts, knowledge, skills and abilities a person receives in school. That is why it is a "school", because it is the foundation of the subsequent life, character, qualities, skills and abilities, life principles of a person. In this regard, I want to draw the reader's attention primarily to the state of school education, as it is fundamental.

As former Minister of National Education Sherzod Shermatov [5] and philosopher and historian Valery Khan [6] have rightly pointed out, an educational programme based on transmissive pedagogy, i.e. aiming to provide students with information, cannot be considered valid for the modern world with its huge and growing flow of information. In order to be successful in today's world, it is not enough to just know (the internet knows more anyway).

It is important for modern society to be able to seek, find and analyse information independently and make decisions based on the available information, i.e. to **think critically** (note that **critical thinking** [7] is not "criticising everything and

everyone", but the ability to analyse a problem from different perspectives and make informed judgments), and to be able to learn.

Those children going to school now will live in a very different world: according to research [8], 85% of the professions that will be relevant by 2030 have not yet been invented. This means that most of the knowledge we equip our children with will probably be irrelevant to the world they will live in.

It is no secret that, for many reasons (including the legal requirement [10] to use unified textbooks), teachers rarely go beyond the approaches and methods laid down in textbooks. And our textbooks (especially those on humanities subjects) suffer from the fact that they are geared to rote learning and rote memorisation.

For example, despite the fact that, according to the standards, by the end of schooling pupils should be able "to express their own attitude to the events and images in a literary work", all literature textbooks from Grades 5 to 11 follow the same pattern, borrowed from the textbooks of Soviet times, when it was important to achieve a unified understanding of the work based on the guidelines of the "party and government". They provide information about the life of the writer, give an excerpt from the work under study, and present the textbook authors' account of the plot and a kind of "analysis" of the work, which completely kills the pupils' desire to delve into and analyze it independently. Questions and assignments to the work are constructed in such a way that it is not necessary to read and understand it: it is sufficient to remember and retell the information provided by the authors of the textbook. The same can be said of history textbooks. A presentation of the material is given (not always in a language that the pupil can understand), followed by questions that require a retelling of the material.

With this approach, many of the goals laid down in the educational standards cannot be achieved.

It is important to be able to work with historical maps in order to understand the historical-geographical space. In the textbook, maps should not only be for illustration, there should be tasks oriented towards working with them. To develop the competence "can express attitudes towards the historical period under study and draw conclusions", as laid down in the standards, work with historical artefacts (extracts from documents, speeches, images of posters, placards, cultural and everyday objects) could be suggested.

This requirement was violated in the compilation of English language textbooks for lyceums and colleges, criticised [11] by Prime Minister Abdullah Aripov and nevertheless reprinted as textbooks for the 10th-11th grades of secondary

school. Imagine a student learning "Uzbek English" through the example of dialogues between Sevara and Laylo, who for some reason decided to talk about abstract topics in overly literary English. Would he be able to understand native speakers in a real language environment in real life situations? Probably not. Open any English textbook from leading editions such as Oxford, Cambridge or Macmillan and used as a basic textbook in most learning centres offering English courses (incidentally, these textbooks are clandestinely used as basic textbooks in many lyceums as well.) In these textbooks you will see and hear dialogues taken from real life situations, allowing you to get a feel for how native speakers use the language.

Speaking at a meeting of the International Press Club, Sherzod Shermatov, former Minister of National Education, suggested that problems occur where market mechanisms are disrupted. If you look at the situation from the point of view of "economics", this is a strong argument. The root of the problem with textbooks, in my view, lies precisely there.

There are certain groups of subject authors who, due to different circumstances, are given the right to write textbooks. Judging by the methodological quality of textbooks, knowledge of material design - the science of developing learning materials - is not high on the list of these circumstances, if at all. This group knows that whatever the quality of the textbook, it will be published with public money in the quantity required for schools and distributed through the textbook rental system. That means royalties are secured.

Will you put in the effort and do the work well if you know in advance that you will get the same money regardless of quality? The question is rhetorical. If you look at the experience of the UK, the USA, Russia and many other countries, there is a lot of variation and choice in these countries. Textbooks that conform to educational standards are published and made freely available, and teachers themselves choose which textbook they want to use. This creates healthy competition and an incentive for publishers to produce quality products: the same topic can be presented in different ways, and any sensible teacher who has a whole year to work with that textbook will try to choose the best one.

There should be choice, and there should be healthy, market competition. Then there will be no cases, as the former minister admitted [12], where schools actually use other textbooks and state-approved textbooks are only obtained for the commission.

But if there is choice in textbooks but none in teaching methodology, the result is unlikely to be comforting. Teachers should have the right of choice not only in the

choice of textbooks, but also in the planning of the learning process in general. When you get in a taxi, you tell the taxi driver the end point and leave the choice of route up to him. When you order a cake from a pastry chef, you voice your requirements for the final product and do not provide him with step-by-step instructions on how to bake that cake. So why is not the teacher trusted and supplied with a detailed plan of what to teach, how to teach it and for how long?

A teacher who knows his subject and his students better than the curriculum compiler should be more aware of how long it will take a particular class to master the topic and develop the competencies required in the standards. The teacher knows better in what sequence to organize teaching material and the methods to use in order to acquire it.

In order to achieve the goal, it may be necessary to have different sequencing and hourly distribution of topics, as well as teaching methods, in different parallel classes. If this is necessary to achieve quality, then so be it. After all, everyone is taught differently (as well as everyone teaches variously).

Yes, perhaps the level of many teachers does not allow us to rely on their methodological skills and their ability to plan the learning process themselves. A recent survey showed that teachers do not understand what 'competence' means, let alone the stages and methods of competence formation. Therefore, there is a brisk trade in competency-based lesson plans on social media and Telegram groups - the Commission is demanding such plans.

However, if you want to teach someone to swim, you need to gradually let him go free swimming. It is necessary to conduct trainings and train teachers in what they should have been taught at the university - and gradually let them go free swimming.

And for those who are still studying at pedagogical universities, it is necessary to radically revise the curricula, paying more attention to pedagogy, methodology, pedagogical psychology, planning and evaluation of the educational process.

Responding to the question, "Is methodology a science?" voiced by the vice-rector of one of the pedagogical universities, who objected to including such subjects in the curriculum, the author says: "Yes, the methodology is also a science, a serious science necessary for a teacher."

The Ministry should articulate the requirements for the final product: what knowledge, skills and competencies students should have mastered, say, by the end of Year 7 in the subject "History", and leave it to the teacher to choose the route to achieve this goal.

An independent review should reveal whether the teacher has been able to achieve the required objective. And for this, the third component of the educational process - the evaluation system - must work properly.

If for the teacher assessment is the end point, for the pupil it is the starting point. Many studies in different countries show that when educational standards declare one thing and the assessment system tests another, students are guided by what will be tested.

Therefore, the vast majority of high school students are guided by the tests of the State Testing Centre - these are the tests that are significant for the student, as the fateful decision for the student - admission to university or rejection - is made on the basis of these tests. The tests used by the State Testing Centre are unfortunately not aimed [13] at testing the competencies set out in the state educational standards.

RESULTS

The aforementioned conflict situations can be resolved by the following remedies:

- to announce clear requirements for the quality of textbooks, and the end goals of the subjects (the competencies that students should acquire at the end of their studies);

- recommending for use all textbooks (prepared by different authors) which meet the requirements set and support publishers (including private ones) in providing schools with the necessary number of textbooks (thereby supporting the regulation of textbook preparation and production through market mechanisms);

- adopting the experience of developed countries and their teaching methods;

- to achieve practical orientation in the studied disciplines and strive to teach children to think for themselves, analyse and draw conclusions independently (today, the Uzbek education is geared to rote memorisation of information, including humanities subjects that imply only memorising and retelling analyses (interpretations) of works and historical processes (events) given by the authors of the textbooks);

- use of a living language in foreign and second language teaching;

- allowing teachers to choose literature and teaching methods and to draw up teaching plan(s) independently, while also allowing different paces for different parallel classes (groups);

- organisation of training for teachers to develop their skills in independent planning;

- fundamental revision of the curriculum for students of pedagogical universities, developing a higher education curriculum with more emphasis on pedagogy, methodology, pedagogical (educational) psychology, planning and evaluation of the educational process.

In order to attract young people (schoolchildren in particular) to reading and to foster in them the desire (interest) for knowledge (study, science), the following remedies are expedient:

- wide dissemination of books by famous science popularisers;
- considering the coverage of the younger generation on the Internet, social networks and mass media, short video clips of appropriate content (promoting a scientific approach to life, life values) should be prepared and widely disseminated on social networks (when preparing these clips it is important to aim for appropriate quality, to try to make them as interesting, as useful and informative as possible, but at the same time unobtrusive);
- make films about children's and adolescents' lives, reflecting the objective (everyday) reality, and using the sample (pattern, example) of the film characters to show how one should behave, what to do in certain situations, thus forming in the younger generation appropriate values and a world view and instilling in them high human qualities (films must be quite realistic and convincing, since it is difficult to attract the attention of modern youth, and even more so to convince them of anything);
- regularly organize group discussions of a work (literary, artistic), film, event, which should take place in a pleasant and free atmosphere, as well as arrange meetings with figures of culture, science, art, business.

CONCLUSION

Returning to the fable discussed at the beginning of the article, if we want to "move the wagon" - to achieve quality in school education, we need to understand what we want to achieve (educational standards) and know the signs by which we will know that we are moving towards the goal (assessment system). And we need to leave it to the teacher, the head of the wagon, to decide which materials and methods will lead him or her and their students to the stated goal. In the meantime, we have standards which pull teachers and students in one direction, textbooks and methods in another, and tests in a third one.

Unless the three main components of the education process - curriculum, methodology and assessment - work smoothly together, the new standards [14] being

developed with UNICEF will suffer the fate of the current ones - however ideal they may be, they will remain a piece of paper, only needed for decoration in the form of quotations on banners in school corridors and for drafting questions for teacher certification.

Children who have been educated at school enter a larger world and have to navigate it and make choices. If we succeed in achieving high standards and the quality of general education, we will end up with young people who have a clear understanding of the world around them, are sufficiently literate, are able to analyse things autonomously, have a sensible view of the world and, in the end, are self-sufficient and ready to live independently. A society made up of such people simply cannot help but be organised, cannot help but develop and blossom.

Why do I link the education system so closely with the development of society, or more precisely, with the formation of civil society, and raise this question so acutely? Because civil society is a society of people of high social, cultural, moral, economic status, who create, together with the state, developed legal relations, i.e. it is a society of civilised and highly cultural people. But "only through education can man become human." (Immanuel Kant).

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