

DIGITALIZATION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM: ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENTS IN COMBATING CORRUPTION

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Abstract: This article analyzes the role of digitalization in the higher education system in preventing corruption.

Keywords: corruption, digitalization, transparency, legality, accountability, bureaucracy, corruption risk management, higher education, awareness, efficiency, transparency, personal responsibility.

Introduction: The higher education system is a cornerstone of society and a crucial pillar of development. When this system ensures justice, honesty, and transparency, science and education will thrive, becoming a foundation for the country's progress. An education system free from corruption and based on the principles of integrity becomes one of the key factors in shaping a strong state, a robust economy, and a strong society. The decisions being made today and the initiatives being implemented will lay a solid foundation for future development.

In Uzbekistan, open data is receiving significant attention as an essential tool for government transparency and a factor contributing to the development of the digital economy. In this regard, a strict list of socially significant data that must be publicly disclosed by government agencies and organizations has been approved, with clearly defined resources for information publication, update timelines, and responsible performers. Under the new decree, the list of socially significant data to be publicly disclosed has been further expanded. The country is addressing a number of urgent issues that have been troubling the population.

It is necessary to highlight the achievements gained as a result of the measures implemented in our country. According to the results, a number of positive outcomes have been achieved in the higher education system, including the establishment of seven new higher education institutions in 2023, bringing the total number to 211. Currently, the enrollment rate for higher education among youth has increased from 9% to 42%. Additionally, two universities have ranked in the QS "Subject Rankings" in four fields, 14 universities are listed in the "QS Asia University Rankings 2024" as "TOP-1000", and three universities have been included in the "QS Sustainability Rankings - 2024" as "TOP-1000". These achievements are the result of reforms in the higher education system. **This article focuses on the role of digitalization in the higher education system in preventing corruption and analyzes the current level of achievement in the higher education sector.**

Literature Review and Analysis: The United Nations Convention Against Corruption, in Chapter 2, Article 6, d-section, entitled "**Measures to Prevent Corruption**",

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states that public officials should assist in implementing educational and training programs to help them meet the requirements of performing public duties correctly, conscientiously, and appropriately, and to deepen their understanding of the risks associated with corruption and their duties. These programs may be based on codes of conduct or ethical standards in practical fields.

Thus, the goal is to increase the corruption literacy of all participants in higher education and ensure that they undergo special training to better understand the risks related to corruption and their responsibilities in carrying out their duties. In the short period of time, the quality of state services has improved, excessive procedures have been reduced, and the number of state services provided electronically has increased. Through digitalization, 369 projects related to the digitization of the activities of state and economic management bodies were implemented to minimize human involvement as much as possible. Preventive mechanisms aimed at preventing corrupt practices in state bodies and organizations were established. Notably, the introduction of separate rating systems for monitoring the activities of state agencies and organizations in the fight against corruption — ranking the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts and the Open Data Index — significantly increased the practical impact of reforms.

It has become evident that traditional methods of combating corruption no longer yield sufficient results. Therefore, in public and state governance, we are striving to implement modern, effective, and, when necessary, drastic measures to prevent corruption and create an uncompromising environment against this vice.

Certainly, there is still a need to further improve the education system. On March 5, 2025, at an expanded meeting of the National Anti-Corruption Council chaired by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, particular attention was paid to this issue. The President highlighted that in today's conditions, as reforms reach a decisive stage, it is necessary to assess the ongoing efforts to create a corruption-free environment in the country and to clearly define future priorities.

Managing corruption risks in the higher education system is key to achieving its operational effectiveness. To do this: The new version of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2023) [2]; The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Combating Corruption" (2017) [3];

The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "Additional Measures to Improve the System of Combating Corruption in the Republic of Uzbekistan" (2020) [4];

"Creating an uncompromising environment against corruption, sharply reducing corrupt factors in state and public administration." "Measures to expand public participation" (2021) [5] "Further improvement of the anti-corruption system" "Decrees on Improving and Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Public Oversight System over the Activities of Government Bodies and Organizations" (2023) [6]. The "Additional Measures for Effective Organization of Anti-Corruption Activities" (2021) [7] and the "Measures to Improve Mechanisms for Eliminating Corruption Risks in the Public Administration Sector and Expanding Public Participation in This Area" (2022) [8] will need to be adopted.

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Furthermore, it is necessary to deeply study the content and essence of other relevant normative-legal documents. This is because, without thoroughly studying the official normative documents related to anti-corruption and corruption prevention, it is impossible to create an uncompromising environment against such a dreadful vice.

The initial scientific definition of the concept of "corruption" in the field of education was provided by Stephen Heineman, who stated that "corruption is the abuse of power for personal and material gain" [9]. He considered education one of the most important state assets and emphasized that corruption in this field encompasses both material interests and personal (non-material) interests.

Frank Anekyariko and James B. Jacobs defined corruption in the field of education as the abuse of power for material gain [10].

D.A. Povny, in his research, identifies the following as factors contributing to corruption in higher education: the fragmentation and inconsistency of legislation in the education sector, the decline in the quality and prestige of local education, and the emergence of a limited model of behavior (legal infantilism and legal nihilism) in students' consciousness [11].

In the newly amended Constitution, it is established that Uzbekistan is a legal state. Based on this article, scholars emphasize that the new Constitution of Uzbekistan states: "A state based on the supremacy of the Constitution and laws. In such a state, officials cannot seize power as they wish or make decisions as they see fit. All state bodies act solely within the powers established by law" [12]. Based on the research we have conducted, it can be stated that the eradication of corruption must begin with education. Once, entering higher education institutions was an unattainable dream for many. In most cases, it was not the most knowledgeable students, but those with connections or "backers" who would gain admission. The "operations" on August 1st for university entrance exams are still remembered by many. The system of achieving high scores in entrance exams was so deeply entrenched in a "closed scheme" that no one ever believed it would disappear.

However, the firmness and strong political will of our President, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, became the driving force behind the dismantling of this "big black market." Today, entering higher education is no longer an unattainable dream; it has become a real opportunity based on merit and knowledge. Previously, many thought that one could only enter through money and connections. But in recent years, the transparency, fairness, and anti-corruption measures introduced in the admission process have helped change this perception.

Now, the entrance exams are held under special surveillance cameras. The entry of outsiders into the exam rooms is restricted. Each applicant's results are automatically calculated. Most importantly, equal opportunities are provided for everyone, and a conducive environment has been created where talented youth can showcase their abilities. The fact that today's youth believe they can enter higher education based on their knowledge and effort is the greatest achievement of these reforms.

The digitalization of the education sector, the transparency of exams, and the prioritization of fairness have reshaped the system. There is no longer room for

"connections" or "influence." There is no longer a need to think about "connections." The "first test, then selection" system, implemented last year, has further expanded access to education. Now, applicants first take the test, and then the selection process follows. Students submit their applications and earn points based on their knowledge, and then choose a university that suits them based on those results. This system not only provides applicants with a wide range of options but also helps ensure fairness. Every student who scores high enough has the opportunity to receive a state grant on an equal basis. Additionally, those who score lower can opt for education on a paid contract basis.

Corruption is a significant obstacle to social and economic development. Corruption harms society like a social pandemic. Now, our country is determined to completely eradicate this scourge. From now on, while providing education to our children, we must ensure that they are free from even the smallest forms of corruption. First and foremost, students must be taught to not turn a blind eye to cheating during exams and to be uncompromising against such practices. They must be nurtured in an environment that promotes integrity and fairness.

Foreign experience shows that combating corruption in education is not only about legal measures but also about changing the mindset of society. Exams should be conducted based on clear rules, and academic honesty must be strictly demanded from students. If we instill immunity to corruption in our youth and make integrity a part of our national culture, and if we educate them to reject any form of deceit or illegal practices in the learning process, justice and transparency will become the dominant values in our society.

It is important to remember that the fight against corruption in the education system should not be limited to punitive measures. For example, countries like Singapore and Canada have widely promoted academic honesty at both school and university levels. These systems create a fair competition environment for students, and the evaluation of their knowledge is done impartially. Moreover, special programs have been developed to ensure that students fully understand their rights and responsibilities.

In the UK and the USA, special platforms have been created to ensure open communication between students and teachers. Through these systems, students can anonymously report any unfairness in the examination process or assessments. Such approaches help to shape the education system based on real knowledge, without any interference.

We too must cultivate an uncompromising attitude towards corruption in the minds of our youth, and for knowledge and competence to become true values, we must continue implementing reforms in the education system. In this process, it is crucial that not only the government but also parents, teachers, and every member of society feels responsible. of

society feel their responsibility. Only then can we create an education system based on fairness and transparency, free from corruption.

Digitalization processes are being widely implemented in the higher education system. This not only creates convenience for applicants, students, and professors but also serves to ensure transparency in the education process. The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation, along with its system, has developed 36 information systems. These systems have enabled the complete digitalization of the admission process to universities, lyceums, vocational education, and higher education institutions. Through information platforms such as **my.edu.uz** and **my.uzbmb.uz**, applicants now have the opportunity to submit their documents online. This has led to time and cost savings and reduced bureaucratic barriers.

Moreover, in order to manage the education process effectively, the Higher Education Management Information System (**HEMIS**) has been introduced. This system has helped digitize 35 types of statistical data. Group journals, enrollment records, class and exam schedules, diploma and academic information, as well as data on students and professors, are stored on a single platform. From this... In addition, the EduBilling information system has been launched within **HEMIS** for monitoring purposes. Through this system, contracts are now only available in electronic form. As a result, preparation time has been reduced by 70%, and bureaucratic processes have decreased by 90%. The system of knowledge control and assessment in higher education institutions is conducted using the Blind assessment method. This method ensures transparency and fairness in the assessment process by encoding the students' completed work. The possibility to verify diploma information through a unified database (**diplom.edu.uz**) has been created. Over 84% of more than 1.5 million diplomas issued between 1991 and 2020 have been digitized.

Online payment systems have been introduced for students and their parents. Payments for contracts, scholarship information, and rental agreements have been fully digitized through **Click**, **Payme**, and **Zoomrad**. The distribution of dormitory places has been made transparent and automated, and an electronic tracking system for student accommodation has been implemented. In addition, the process of assigning and paying scholarships has been fully digitized, eliminating human interference. Bureaucratic processes have been significantly reduced through the verification of electronic contracts. A system has been automated to inform students about dormitory vacancies in a timely manner, and the allocation of dormitories is now done transparently and online. The processes related to student accommodation are monitored through electronic tracking.

Such digitization efforts in the education system are helping reduce corruption, eliminate bureaucratic barriers, and further enhance transparency and openness in educational processes. Through electronic document circulation, online monitoring, and an

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automated assessment system, equal opportunities are being created for students, and the education system is developing in line with international standards.

To improve the convenience for students and teachers in higher education institutions, "Registrar Offices" have been established. This innovative approach, based on the "One-Stop Shop" principle, has been set up to provide more than 30 types of services. Now, students have the opportunity to resolve various administrative matters related to their academic process easily and quickly through a single office.

The main goal of the new system is to reduce bureaucratic barriers and increase the efficiency of services without human interference. Therefore, in the future, it is planned to gradually increase the number of automated services through "Registrar Offices". This will help save students' time, ensure transparency in processes, and make the education system more efficient.

In the current period, where digitization processes are being rapidly implemented, such initiatives are crucial steps towards aligning the education system with international standards and creating a convenient environment for students.

Along with the achievements in the higher education system, there are also shortcomings. We aim to implement a number of measures to address them. In particular, regularly analyzing the knowledge level of students admitted on a fee-paying basis and strictly monitoring examination results will increase their responsibility towards the educational process. This approach not only helps improve knowledge levels but also ensures fairness in education. At the same time, the rotation of university leaders and staff plays a significant role in shaping new ideas and approaches in the system, improving management efficiency.

Digitizing the recruitment process for professors and teachers and ensuring the transparency and openness of selection processes will provide equal opportunities for every candidate. It is crucial for specialists with scientific potential to hold appropriate positions for the development of the education system. Additionally, by introducing a digitized anti-corruption ranking system among higher education institutions, it will be possible to identify which universities prioritize transparency and justice. This will... Encouraging all higher education institutions to carry out reforms in the system more effectively is crucial.

It is important to conduct professional (creative) examination processes in a fully open and transparent manner, providing all citizens with the opportunity to monitor them online. This creates equal conditions for students and ensures that the knowledge of each participant is fairly assessed. At the same time, the rotation of university leaders and staff,

as well as professors teachers' existing positions and their professional development play a vital role in enhancing the overall quality and transparency of the education system.

The digitization of the document submission process for vacant positions ensures the formation of a fair selection system. According to the Decree No. PQ-81 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, dated May 11, 2022, on the implementation of a rating system for assessing the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts, the ministry reported an "unsatisfactory" result with 47 points in 2021 and 50 points in 2023 in the corruption effectiveness rating. Additionally, the Presidential Decree on June 14, 2022, "On measures to enhance and implement a system for evaluating the level of transparency in the activities of state bodies and organizations" was mentioned PF-154 Decree introduced the Transparency Index, where the Ministry scored 74.8 points in 2022, placing it in the "green" category. However, the results in 2023 dropped to 67.4 points, moving the Ministry to the "yellow" category.

This is an unfortunate situation, which necessitates strengthening public oversight in the implementation of measures aimed at increasing students' and educational staff's legal awareness and legal culture, as well as developing an intolerance towards corruption. Regularly organizing events, implementing educational projects, and enhancing anti-corruption campaigns will help raise the overall culture of the education system. Additionally, implementing "Open Door Day" events at the faculty level, where students, parents, media representatives, and members of the public can participate, will reinforce public trust in the anti-corruption efforts.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

1. Corruption in higher education contributes to the formation of corrupt practices among future professionals. Therefore, it is necessary to establish "integrity verification" procedures for employees within the higher education system. It is also important to create an electronic registry of employees who have passed the integrity check and provide open access to this registry.

2. Improving the system for identifying the causes of corruption-related crimes in the higher education system and maintaining crime statistics. It is crucial to collaborate with the Ministry of Internal Affairs in developing software aimed at recording corruption-related crimes within the higher education system. The following should be taken into account:

- Keeping a record of corruption-related crimes and the damage caused by them;
- Identifying the causes of corruption-related crimes;

- Maintaining a list of individuals who have committed corruption-related crimes and restricting their entry into the higher education service;

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- The internal control structure in the area of service of higher education employees should study the factors that led to the commission of the crime and establish specific measures to address them.

3. To effectively combat corruption within the higher education system, the following actions are recommended:

- Develop and implement specialized psychological tests to identify potential employees' inclination towards corruption or, more simply, financial greed, which should be conducted by professionals when recruiting new staff at higher education institutions;

- Organize training sessions based on video clips presenting practical examples specifically for staff who directly interact with students and youth (tutors, deans, vice-rectors, etc.), focusing on their duties and responsibilities.– The statistical analysis of employees who have committed crimes such as bribery or greed, resulting in criminal liability, should be conducted in the higher education system. This analysis will help identify employees working in this service area. - Conducting regular social surveys in accordance with established procedures and taking relevant measures based on the results;

- Increasing the volume of developing impactful films and video clips that portray real-life situations of mobile court sessions involving employees of the higher education system who have committed corruption-related crimes, and using them in effective educational work with employees, reflecting distressing situations such as the inevitability of punishment for corruption crimes;

- Establishing a system of support, encouragement, and protection for employees who provide information exposing corruption facts;

- Regularly promoting honest service;

- Establishing a practice of regularly displaying photographs of those convicted of corruption crimes on websites and in the media after the court's verdict becomes final;

- Identifying areas and directions within the structure of the higher education system prone to corruption and increasing the effectiveness of preventive measures against them;

- Strengthening the focus on improving employees' anti-corruption literacy.- Organizing the educational course "Prevention of Corruption and Shaping Anti-Corruption Behavior in Employees" in all higher education institutions;

- Regularly monitoring the behavior of higher education institution (HEI) employees in their residential areas;

- Intensifying anti-corruption education and training efforts in HEIs and ensuring their effectiveness.

4. Test exams are now conducted under special surveillance cameras. Entry of unauthorized individuals into the examination halls is restricted. The results of each applicant are automatically calculated. Most importantly, equal opportunities are provided for everyone, and knowledgeable youth can demonstrate their potential. environment has

been created where young people today believe they can enter higher education institutions through their knowledge and hard work. This is the greatest achievement of anti-corruption reforms.

5. The higher education sector has been digitized, exams have become more transparent, and justice-based criteria have become a priority. There is no longer any need to think about "connections" or "finding a way." The "test first, selection later" system introduced in 2024 further expanded educational opportunities.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation, along with its system, has developed 36 information systems. These systems have allowed for the complete digitization of the admission process for universities, lyceums, vocational education, and postgraduate education. In particular, through information platforms such as **my.edu.uz** and **my.uzbmb.uz**, applicants can now submit their documents online. This has led to time and cost savings, as well as a reduction in bureaucratic barriers.

Additionally, to effectively manage the educational process, the Higher Education Management Information System (**HEMIS**) has been implemented. This system has helped digitize 35 types of statistical data. Currently, group journals, enrollment records, class and exam schedules, diplomas and academic records, as well as information about students and professors are stored on a single platform. Furthermore, HEMIS has been enhanced, and a mechanism for appealing attendance and exam results has been introduced for students. All of this serves to significantly improve the efficiency of the higher education system and curb corruption.

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