

EDUCATION

**ABOUT SOME MEASURES TO BE TAKEN TO IMPROVE
PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE EDUCATION IN AZERBAIJAN
(ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACH)**

In this article the authors share their opinions about some necessary measures to be taken to strengthen pre-service and in-service training services in Azerbaijan.

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After gaining independence, Azerbaijan began to implement huge changes in a variety of fields. One of these fields, education, has undergone several changes. These reforms encompass adoption of new education law and new educational programs, including curricula and assessment standards.

Since the beginning of the 90's, discussions were held on the reforms in education system, but reforms were not implemented systematically due to the absence of a strong concept of reform or an implementation mechanism. After approval of "Reform Program of Azerbaijan Republic on education sphere" by Heydar Aliyev in 1999, the reforms started to be implemented purposefully in the whole education system, including on the level of higher education. According to the same program, structural changes were made in the whole educational sphere, networks of establishments were optimized and new specialties were added to the specialist preparation structure.

Later, the "Law of Azerbaijan Republic on Education" was approved by the Decree No. 156, dated September 5, 2009, by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. For the purpose of implementing of this Decree, Order No. 247 dated September 17, 2009 of the Cabinet of Ministers' "Actions plan" was approved by the Order No. 1084, dated September 25, 2009, of The Ministry of Education. According to the same plan, work has been done to coordinate the requirements of the Law of Azerbaijan Republic "On Education," the legislative basis for higher education.

The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan has also recently issued the challenging Decree "On approval of the National Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan."

All these measures are also focusing on improving the pre-service and in-service education system in Azerbaijan. For example, Articles 1.2.5-1.2.7 envisage revising textbooks used in Azerbaijani schools and bringing them up to higher standards.

As we have a very centralized education system, all the issues including teaching requirements and standards are determined by the Ministry of Education. This in some cases prevents our education from developing. As Professor Hamlet Isaxanli, the Founder of Khazar University states, there should be some kind of flexibility of teaching standards and freedom in the choice of textbooks allowed.

Since many university graduates in our country lack necessary professional skills, special attention

should be paid to **boosting internships**. Internship programs can provide a great opportunity for prospective employees to gain experience in their fields.

Although a substantial number of new textbooks have been published, there are very few books that provide guidelines for teachers on how to use newly published textbooks. In order to eliminate this gap, **comprehensive methods and methodology must be written**.

In our opinion, one of the best practices to generate progress in the fields of in- and pre-service education is to **thoroughly study the experience of the countries that have advanced in their education system**. Thus, visiting these countries and making systematic observations, as well as inviting experts of those countries to Azerbaijan, are of great and practical importance.

Furthermore, the latest **modern equipment is needed in all facets of the education system** to meet international standards. Financial resources should be made available to fulfill the above-mentioned need and from this view, private organizations should more rigorously be involved in allocating some funding required to enhance the level of our education system.

Another key point is **lack of a wide range of educational research** available. Issues regarding in-service and pre-service are no exception. A deep study should be made on different levels including teacher-teacher, teacher-learner, and teacher-manager roles.

We also need a large number of professional people in the field on all levels of education. **Training teachers and education administrators must be a priority**, as the level of any country's education system largely depends on teachers, administrators and educators. Training those people both in the country and abroad may soon yield the desired results.

With the advent of the 21st century, life skills and lifelong learning have become significant factors in education. **Teaching programs should be revised**, placing special emphasis on life skills. What's more, government should encourage educational bodies to establish lifelong institutions.

Last but not least, **educational administration should be decentralized**; autonomy of educational institutions should be gained and financial support should be provided.