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Principles and general objectives of education

As the basis for spiritual, social, economic and cultural advancement of society, education constitutes a priority sector for the country's development. The main objective of education is the all-round development of a person based on national and general values. The education system is based on the principles of humanism, democracy, national self-consciousness, and mutual respect between people and nations. The main objective of the State educational policy is the establishment of a genuine national system of education, which meets the international standards and provides every citizen with the right to free and quality education in accordance with his/her needs and abilities.

According to the Law on Education of 1993, the main principles of education in Turkmenistan are:

- free access to any form and type of educational services provided by the State;
- equal rights for every individual's complete realization of his/her capabilities and talents;
- educational services provided free of charge in State educational establishments;
- priority given to shared human values;
- integral link with the national history, culture and traditions;
- secular character of education in State educational establishments;
- independence of State educational establishments from political parties and other public and religious organizations;
- integration with the science and industry sectors, and coordination with education systems in other countries;
- continuity, flexibility and diversification of the national education system.

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Law on Education in Turkmenistan** was approved by the President of the Republic on 15 October 1993. This law establishes the general principles of education, and defines the organization and management of the education system in the country.

According to the Law, educational services can be provided both by the State and the private sector, but non-state establishments must have the corresponding licence. Governmental and local authorities, organizations, associations, enterprises, citizens, as well as foreign organizations, can establish educational institutions. However, the educational process must be organized according to guidelines approved by the Cabinet of Ministers which determine the minimum level of competencies and requirements at all educational stages.



The Law also specifies the rights and obligations of various participants in the educational process. It should be mentioned that pupils also have several rights, including: choice of establishment type; access to nutrition and medical service; free transport, textbooks, pedagogical materials; and access to student grants. Article 13 of the 1993 Law specifies that the nine-year general education programme is compulsory and provided free in State educational establishments. A **new Education Law** came into effect in August 2009. Under this Law, public education remains free of charge and compulsory through secondary school. Six levels of education are defined, namely preschool, elementary, secondary, vocational studies, university, and postgraduate or professional studies. The law re-established degrees for higher and professional education through evening and correspondence courses.

Article 13 of the **Law on Guarantees of the Rights of the Child** of 2002 stipulates that the child has the right to education which would be conducive to his/her general cultural development, intellectual development, development of his/her capacities and formation of beliefs, and moral and social responsibilities.

As stipulated in Article 35 of the **Constitution** (1992), every citizen shall have the right to education. General secondary education shall be compulsory; every person shall be entitled to receive it free of charge in State educational institutions. Organizations and citizens may create private educational institutions on the basis of and in the manner defined by law. The State shall assure access to professional, secondary special, and higher education to all persons, according to their abilities.

In accordance with the President's **Resolution on Improvement of the Education System No. PP-4610** of 15 February 2007, and **Resolution on Improvement of Work of the Educational Institutions No. 8465** of 4 March 2007, the duration of free and compulsory education was extended again from nine to ten years, and the two-year compulsory work placement after graduation from secondary education that was previously introduced has been abolished. The duration of higher education programmes is now typically five years (six years in the case of medical and some arts institutes). In June 2007 the President adopted a decree on the reestablishment of the Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan and the establishment of the Highest Attestation Commission in the Supreme Council for Science and Technology under the President for the appellation of scientific degrees.

Administration and management of the education system

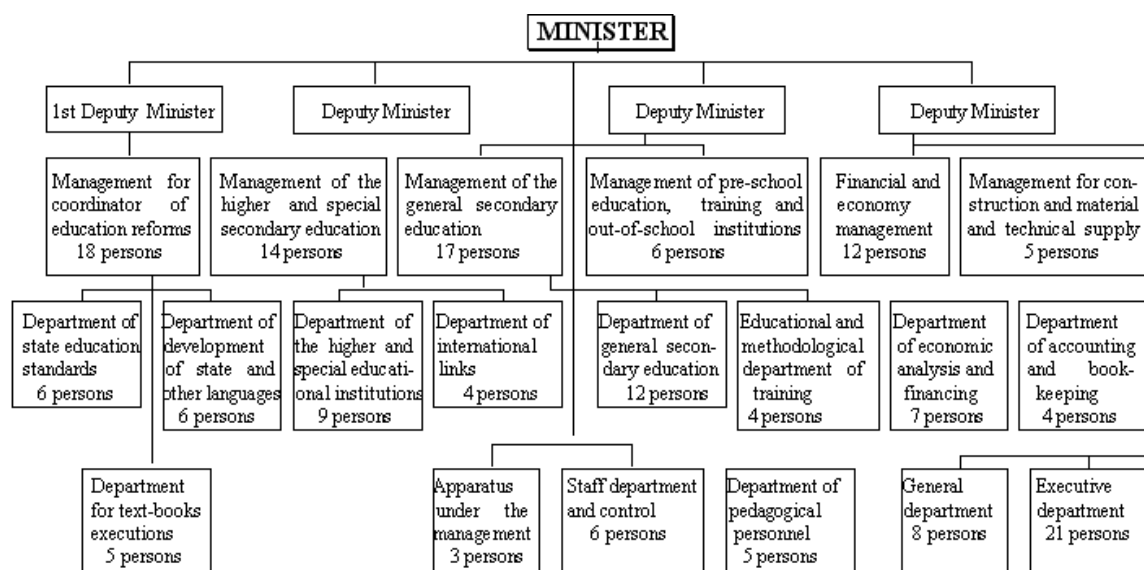
Turkmen constitute 70% of the country's population. Other major ethnic groups are: Russian, Uzbek, Kazakh, Tatar, Ukrainian, and Armenian. Ashgabat is the capital city; while the five administrative and economic provinces (*velayats*)—Ahal, Balkan, Dashoguz, Lebap and Mary—incorporate some twenty towns and forty-six districts (*etraps*). The People's Council (*Halk Maslahaty*) is the highest representative body and the Parliament (*Mejlis*) is the main legislative body in the country.

The President of the Republic is the head of the executive power, as well as the Cabinet of Ministers. In the Cabinet of Ministers structure, a Vice-Chairman assumes overall responsibility for the department of science and education activities; while a department head coordinates the activities of: the **Ministry of Education**; the

State Association for Vocational Training and Education (responsible for the system until mid-1997, when the system was transferred under the Ministry of Education); local bodies of executive authorities (*velayats*, *etraps* and cities); ministries and departments with educational institutions networks (the ministries of Defense, Culture, Health and Medical Industry). The Law on Education (Section 6) elaborates the division of powers and authorities of these various bodies involved in the delivery of State education. The **National Institute of Education**, under the Ministry of Education, deals with pedagogical research and in-service teacher training.

The Ministry of Education organizational structures by the mid-1990s is shown in the figure below:

Structure of the Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan (1996)



The Minister of Education is assisted by four Deputy Ministers. The largest and most significant subdivisions of the above-mentioned bodies have the status of management organs and, in several cases, include several departments. On the whole, the organizational structure corresponds to the functional tasks and main trends of the current educational policy.

In 1996, a new sub-division for the coordination of education reforms was established in order to: monitor the reform process country-wide; analyze the positive and negative consequences of same; develop and implement proposals to address emerging problems. As mentioned, the ministries of Defense, Health and Medical Industry and Culture also have departments of science and educational institutions in their subdivisions.

In each *velayat*, as well as in Ashgabat city, the Ministry of Education is represented by the *velayat* administrative head or chief executive who has authority over the *velayat*'s management of education. The education departments of the various *etraps* (districts) and cities handle the management of their respective schools, preschools and out-of-school institution activities.

The heads of the general management and education departments are accountable to the Ministry of Education for the content of education; scientific and methodical supply for the system; and improvement of personnel professional skills.

Structure and organization of the education system

Turkmenistan: structure of the education system (1996)

23	Post-graduate training				
22					
21					
20			level 2		
19	Higher education institutions	Specialized secondary educational institutions	Vocational institutions		
18					
17					
16					
15	Second stage (<i>Bilim</i>)				
14					
13					
12					level 1
11					
10					General secondary education schools
9					
8	First stage (<i>Sovat</i>)				
7					
6	Kindergartens				
5					level 0
4					
3	Crèches				
2					
1					
0					
Age					

Pre-school education

Preschool education is provided by three types of institutions: crèches, for children up to 3 years old; kindergartens, for children aged 3-6 years; and combined kindergartens (crèche and kindergarten). Preschool education is not compulsory.

Primary education

The compulsory general secondary education programme consists of two stages: *Sovat* (“reading and writing”) covering grades 1 to 3 (grades 1 to 4 in schools teaching in the Russian, Uzbek and Kazakh languages); and *Bilim* (“knowledge”) covering grades 4 to 9 (grades 5 to 10 in schools teaching in the Russian, Uzbek and Kazakh languages). The admission age is 7. Starting from the 2007/08 academic year, the duration of compulsory general secondary education was extended again from nine to ten years, divided into primary (grades 1-3) and secondary education (grades 4-10).



Students completing grade 9 in 2006/07 continued their secondary education in grade 10 in 2007/08.

Secondary education

Upon completion of the general secondary education programme, students sit the state examinations and if successful receive the school-leaving certificate. Colleges and technical lyceums offer two-year programmes to secondary school leavers, preparing them for the university and/or training them at the technician level. Post-secondary vocational and technical education is offered at: training vocational centres (one to six months of study, leading to a certificate of qualification according to the profession); vocational colleges (six to ten months of study, leading to a diploma); and vocational lyceums (one and a half years of study, leading to a diploma). Specialized secondary education at the post-secondary level is offered by colleges (medical, pedagogical, musical and artistic) and technical schools. The duration of courses ranges from two to four years. Upon completion of the course, students passing the state examinations are awarded a Diploma of Specialized Secondary Education.

Higher education

Higher education institutions offer programmes in a variety of fields. Admission to higher education is based on the results of the entrance exams and the most successful students are admitted on the basis of competition. The duration of programmes ranges from five to six years (six years in the case of medicine and some art institutes) leading to the Higher Education Diploma. Postgraduate programmes leading to the degree of Candidate of Science generally last three years and involve the preparation and defense of a thesis. Doctoral programmes leading to the degree of Doctor of Science involve an additional three years of study and supervised research. Under the former administration, the duration of university studies had been shortened and a two-year compulsory work placement after graduation from secondary education had been introduced.

The school year consists of thirty-five working weeks.

The educational process

Pre-primary education

Preschool education is divided into two stages. The first stage caters children up to 3 years old. These children are taken care of in groups by personnel with a medical education (as a rule, secondary medical personnel). The second stage is for children aged 3-6. At this level, preschool institutions begin a systematic education and training process. The group structure at the preschool institutions is organized as follows: up to 3 years: crèche groups; 3 years old: junior group; 4 years old: medium group; 5 years old: senior group; 6 years old: preparatory group.

The educational content is determined by the State Programme for Training and Teaching at the Preschool Institution. The programme was developed and approved in 1995 by the Ministry of Education. Preschool education includes the

following components: surrounding world; language improvement; mathematics; manual skills; fine arts; physical training; singing and music; fiction.

In the senior and preparatory groups (excluding the above mentioned subjects), teaching of reading and writing is introduced, as well as learning of three languages—Turkmen (native), Russian (native) and foreign. Languages are taught by teachers having a special education in the specific subject language, for sixteen hours per week. In the senior and preparatory groups, the teaching of each of the languages mentioned requires seventy hours annually (two lessons per week). Special programmes for the language subjects have been developed.

According to the Ministry of Education, in 2003 there were 944 preschool establishments (of which 276 in rural areas) enrolling about 129,000 children (of whom 16,500 in rural areas), representing a coverage rate of 24% (5% in rural areas).

General secondary education (primary and secondary education)

The part, place and objective of general secondary education in the country are predetermined by the Law on Education. General secondary education is the main element, which provides citizens with: the principles of scientific knowledge; development of their creative capabilities; cultural attainment; and physical training.

The main objective of primary education is children's learning of principles of grammar, reading and cultural discourse. The weekly lesson timetables of general secondary education in 1996, according to the different stages and languages of instruction, are shown in the tables below:

First stage (*Sovaz*) of general secondary education in the Turkmen language: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade		
	I	II	III
Turkmen language and literature	10	9	9
Russian language	2	2	2
Natural history	–	1	1
Mathematics	6	6	6
Art education	1	1	1
Music	1	1	1
Physical training	2	2	2
Practical training	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	24	24	24

Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

**Second stage (*Bilim*) of general secondary education in the Turkmen language:
weekly lesson timetable**

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade					
	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
Turkmen language	6	6	4	3	2	1
Turkmen literature	3	3	3	3	3	4
Russian language	3	3	3	3	3	2
History	–	2	2	–	2	2
History of Turkmenistan	2	–	–	3	2	2
Natural history	1	–	–	–	–	–
The policy of independence	–	–	–	–	–	1
Constitution of Turkmenistan	–	–	–	–	1	–
Mathematics	7	7	7	6	6	5
Computer studies	–	–	–	–	1	2
Technical drawing	–	–	1	1	–	–
Geography, geography of Turkmenistan	–	2	3	2	2	1
Biology	–	2	2	2	2	1
Chemistry	–	–	–	3	3	3
Physics, astronomy	–	–	3	3	3	5
Art education	1	1	–	–	–	–
Music	1	1	–	–	–	–
Physical training	2	2	2	2	2	2
Handicraft	–	–	–	6	6	6
Practical training	2	2	2	–	–	–
Total weekly periods	28	31	32	37	38	37

Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

**First stage (*Sovat*) of general secondary education in the Russian language:
weekly lesson timetable**

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade			
	I	II	III	IV
Russian language	10	10	10	7
Russian literature	–	–	–	4
Turkmen language and literature	2	4	4	5
History of Turkmenistan	–	–	–	2
Natural History	–	1	1	1
Mathematics	6	6	6	6
Art	1	1	1	1
Music	1	1	1	1
Physical training	2	2	2	2
Practical training	2	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	24	27	27	31

Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

Second stage (*Bilim*) of general secondary education in the Russian language: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade					
	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Russian language	6	4	3	2	1	1
Russian literature	3	2	2	2	4	3
Turkmen language and literature	5	5	5	5	4-5	5-4
History of Turkmenistan	-	-	-	3	2	2
History	2	2	2	-	2	2
Constitution of Turkmenistan	-	-	-	1	-	-
The policy of independence	-	-	-	-	1	-
Geography, geography of Turkmenistan	2	3	2	2	2-1	-
Mathematics	6	6	6	6	4-5	4
Computer studies	-	-	-	-	1	2
Physics, astronomy	-	2	2	3	4-3	5
Biology	2	2	2	2	1	1-2
Chemistry	-	-	3	3	2	2
Technical drawing	-	1	1	-	-	-
Art education	1	1	-	-	-	-
Music	1	1	1	-	-	-
Physical training	2	2	2	2	2	2
Practical training	2	2	2	-	-	-
Handicraft	-	-	-	6	6	6
Total weekly periods	32	33	33	37	36	35

Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

First stage (*Sovat*) of general secondary education in the Kazakh and Uzbek languages: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade			
	I	II	III	IV
Mother language and literature	7	7	7	7
Turkmen language and literature	7	7	7	7
Russian language and literature	-	2	2	3
History of Turkmenistan	-	-	-	2
Natural history	-	1	1	1
Mathematics	6	6	6	6
Art education	1	1	1	1
Music	1	1	1	1
Physical training	2	2	2	2
Practical training	2	2	2	2
Total weekly periods	26	29	29	32

Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

Second stage (*Bilim*) of general secondary education in the Kazakh and Uzbek languages: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade					
	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Mother language and literature	6	5	4	4	4	4
Russian language and literature	3	3	3	2	2	2
Turkmen language and literature	7	5	5	4	5	5
History, history of Turkmenistan	2	2	2	4	4	4
Constitution of Turkmenistan	–	–	–	1	–	–
The policy of independence	–	–	–	–	1	–
Geography, geography of Turkmenistan	2	3	2	2	2	–
Mathematics	6	6	6	5	4	4
Computer studies	–	–	–	–	1	2
Physics, astronomy	–	2	2	3	3	5
Biology	2	2	2	2	1	2
Chemistry	–	–	3	3	2	2
Technical drawing	–	1	1	–	–	–
Art education	1	1	–	–	–	–
Music	1	1	1	–	–	–
Physical training	2	2	2	2	2	2
Practical training	2	2	2	–	–	–
Handicraft	–	–	–	6	6	6
Total weekly periods	34	35	35	38	37	38

(Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes).

Teachers evaluate students' achievement by reviewing their written work and through oral questioning. Based on their performance, a determination is made concerning the degree of subject mastery and achievement of the set of objectives.

Teachers also organize Olympiads (competitions) as well as written and oral examinations—all of which help in determining the students' progress. By analyzing the results, conclusions can be reached concerning the degree of a student's subject mastery and assessment can be made of the student's ability level.

According to the Ministry of Education, in 2003 there were 1,705 general secondary schools, 116 professional schools and 15 secondary vocational training schools in the country. The total enrolment in general secondary was about 1,018,600 students; some 28,300 students were enrolled in professional schools, and about 4,000 students were enrolled in vocational schools. The total number of teachers was about 65,100 (of whom 62.7% were female teachers), with some 14,300 teachers in grades 1-3, 39,600 teachers in grades 4-9, and 11,200 teachers of music, drawing, physical education and vocational education and training.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS-3) conducted in Turkmenistan in 2006 found that of the total number of children of primary school age (7 years), 97% attended the first grade of primary school. There are no differences between urban and rural areas. Girls enrolment in primary education was estimated at 98% and boys enrolment at 96%. The net school attendance rate was high: 99% of primary school age children attended school, and the net secondary education attendance rate

was over 95%. Practically all children who enter grade 1 complete grade 5. (UNICEF, 2007).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

Information is not available.

Teaching staff

Persons with the relevant professional, pedagogical education and training have the right to teach in educational establishments. Labour relations between the employees and educational establishments are prescribed by a negotiated contract.

Turkmenistan labour legislation has elaborated a procedure whereby persons involved in professional pedagogical activities are released from their positions, in cases involving: insufficient qualifications or state of health which prevent the implementation of pedagogical and educational functions; and immoral behaviour that is incompatible with the continuation of pedagogical activity. Those who are prohibited by medical examination or court judgment from carrying out pedagogical activities at educational establishments are not allowed to teach.

Educational staff have the right to: provision for their professional activity—under certain conditions; individual pedagogical activity; security of professional honour and dignity; improvement of professional skills; privileged access to training, methodological, and scientific literature supplies; material and moral encouragement to succeed in their pedagogical activity and training of the next generation (decorating with orders and medals, awarding honorary titles).

Teachers in educational establishments located in rural areas and settlements are granted privileged access to: the immediate supply of dwellings free of charge; tax free land plots for building a personal house and a personal subsidiary farm. Teachers are obliged to: continually upgrade their professional knowledge and pedagogical skills; respect the honor and dignity of pupils and students; conduct the teaching process with high professionalism; ensuring curriculum mastery in accordance with the State requirements; create appropriate conditions for the development of pupils individual and creative abilities; observe ethical norms; refrain from using their status to pursue political goals or compel persons to actions contradicting the Constitution (during the educational process).

Teachers are trained at five pedagogical colleges and four higher educational institutions. The existing network of educational establishments is capable of supplying schools with the necessary number of specialists having the proper qualifications.

According to the Ministry of Education Order No. 203 of 14 October 1996, the teacher's salary was fixed based on qualification (level of education) and level of professional training categories. On this basis, the following levels of professional training have been outlined: teacher; teacher of the second category; teacher of the first category; teacher of the supreme category; teacher-master; honoured teacher;



people's teacher. Teacher qualifications are awarded by decision of the State Commission of higher education institutions and special secondary educational institutions; and orders of rectors and directors. Categories are conferred by the examination commissions of educational management in *velayats* and Ashgabat city. The teacher-master category is conferred through an order of the Ministry of Education. Qualifications for the honoured teacher and people's teacher categories are awarded by a decree of the President of Turkmenistan.

To ensure high quality of educating and upbringing of the young generation, in 2007 the weekly workload of teachers in all types of secondary, professional and vocational schools has been reduced from 30 to 24 hours; the annual workload of the teaching staff in higher educational institutions has been reduced from 1,250 to 850 hours. (UNICEF, 2007).

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