



Turkmenistan

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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 co-ordination with education systems in other countries;
- continuity, flexibility and diversity of the national education system.

Current educational priorities and concerns

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*)—Akhhal, Balkan, Lebap, Mary, Dashkhovuz—incorporate some twenty towns and forty-six regions (*etraps*).



“The country has the fourth largest reserve of natural gas in the world and 64% of the total oil reserves in Central Asia. However, between 1987 and 1993, the gross domestic product (GDP) of Turkmenistan declined by 14%. (Although this is lower than the decline observed in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan—21% and 30%, respectively). Accordingly, the number of poor in Turkmenistan increased fourfold between 1987 and 1994. (However, this also was less than the increases experienced by Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan—6.3 times and 10 times, respectively. Comparative estimates of percentages of poor in Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan for the years 1993/94 and 1987/88 are: 48% and 12%, 50% and 5%, 76% and 12%, respectively.) Education—the largest social sector branch—accounted for 47% of sectoral employment and received 61.5% of the State budget allocations for social and cultural measures in 1994.” (UNDP, 1996).

Notwithstanding these figures, the education sector remains inadequately funded. The government spends only 3% of the gross national product (GNP) on education. Moreover, State expenditures on education have been sharply reduced over the last five years—from 17% to 10% of the total expenditure. This low level of financing is having an unfavorable impact on education quality. Insufficient allocations are resulting in: a scarcity of textbooks and other teaching aids; low teacher salaries—which in turn are causing staff fluctuation and increased teaching workload; a decrease in the number of pre-school institutions, etc.

Furthermore, the transition period to the market economy has required the introduction of appropriate changes into the education system. Thus, the education sector has been undergoing major reforms as it tries to adapt to the needs of a market economy and the challenges of the twenty-first century. In this context, education policy has provided the foundation for a human development strategy focused largely on improving manpower training.

Since the declaration of independence, several education reforms have been implemented. At the beginning of 1993, the Government issued a new law which introduced the following changes:

- reduction of the length of schooling from ten to nine years in establishments teaching in Turkmen language;
- revision of the content of social subjects, as well as textbook editions using the Latin alphabet;
- preparation of new textbooks for social sciences, including a revised history programme to incorporate new ideological perspectives currently reigning in Turkmenistan;
- introduction of the English language as a compulsory subject in all schools; reduction of the number training fields and the number of specialized secondary schools (colleges) from forty-one to nineteen; training of specialists in the fields of agriculture, jurisprudence, transport and construction either at vocational schools or institutes;



- establishment of a National Institute of Education, functioning as a methodological centre of the Ministry of Education.

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 states 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.

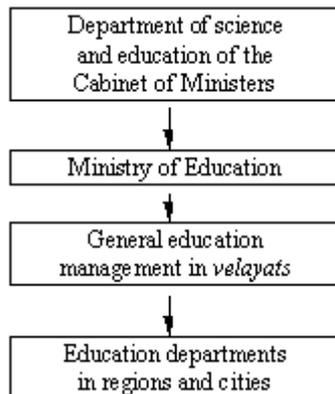
As stipulated in Article 35 of the **Constitution** (1992), every citizen shall have the right to education. Basic secondary education shall be compulsory; every person shall be entitled to receive it free of charge in State educational institutions. Associations and private citizens may create private 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.

Administration and management of the education system

The People's Council (*Khalk Maslakhaty*) is the highest representative body and the Parliament (*Mejlis*) is the main legislative body in the country.

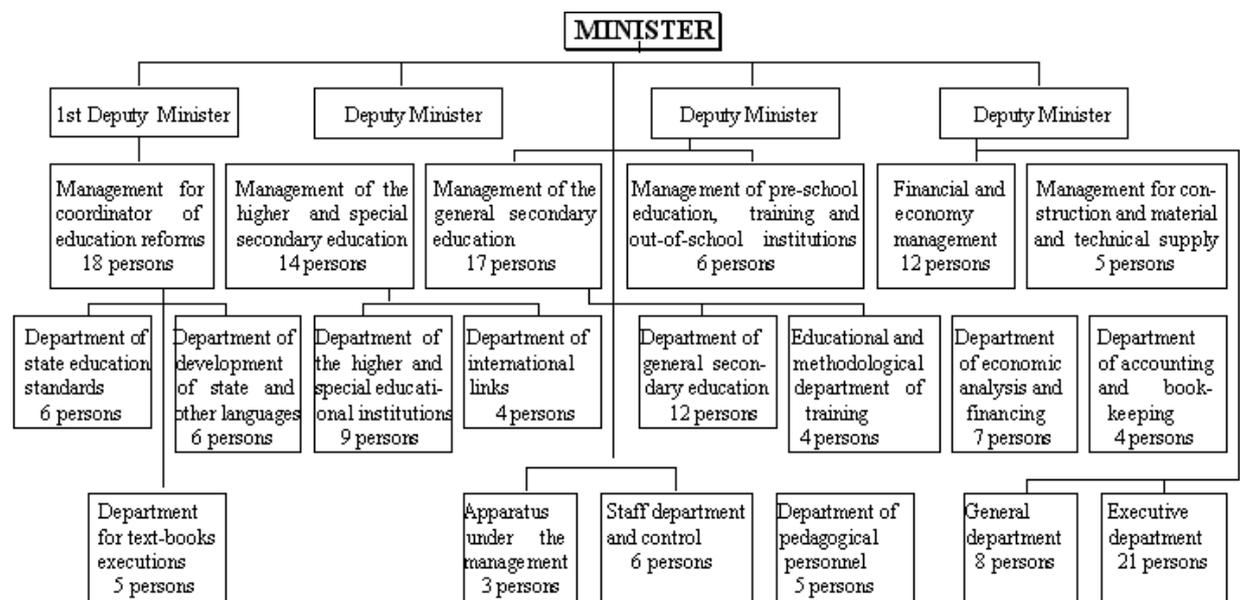
The President of the Republic is the head of the executive power, as well as the Cabinet of Ministers. In the Cabinet of Ministers structure, a Vice-Chairman assumes overall responsibility for the department of science and education activities; while a department head coordinates the activities of: the Ministry of Education, the State Association for Vocational Training and Education (SENET, 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 figure below is a representation of the (vertical) structure of the current education management system.



The Ministry of Education organizational structures is shown in the figure below:

Structure of the Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan



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 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 *khyakim* (the velayat administrative head or chief executive) who has authority over the velayat's management of education. The education departments of the various etraps and cities handle the management of their respective schools, pre-schools 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; improvement of personnel professional skills.

Structure and organization of the education system

Turkmenistan: structure of the education system

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>Sovæt</i>)				
7					
6					
5	Kindergartens		level 0		
4					
3					
2	Crèches				
1					
0					
	Age				

Pre-school education

Pre-school 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). Pre-school education is not compulsory.

Primary education

The compulsory general secondary education programme consists of two stages: *Sovat* (“reading and writing”) covering Grades I-III (Grades I-IV in schools teaching in the Russian, Uzbek and Kazakh languages); and *Bilim* (“knowledge”) covering Grades IV-IX (Grades V-X in schools teaching in the Russian, Uzbek and Kazakh languages). The admission age is 7.

Secondary education

Upon completion of the general secondary education programme, students sit the state examinations for the school-leaving certificate. Colleges and technical lyceums are to be established in order to offer two-year programmes to secondary school-leavers, preparing them for the university and/or training them at the technician level. Postsecondary vocational-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 postsecondary 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 establishments (institutes, the university, the academy and the conservatory) offer programmes in a variety of fields. The duration of courses ranges from four to six years (engineering, five years; medicine, five to six years) leading to the Higher Education Diploma of Specialist. Postgraduate programmes generally last three years and involve the preparation and defense of a thesis. Successful candidates at the public examination administered by the Supreme Certification Committee are awarded the Ph.D. degree. In recent years, the duration of university studies has been shortened.

The school year consists of thirty-five working weeks.

The financing of education

In accordance with the current legislation, a variety of educational establishments can function in Turkmenistan. They are classified based on the nature of their property ownership—State, private or mixed. State educational establishments are still quite prevalent, as the process of forming of alternative educational establishments is developing slowly.

However, the first eleven joint Turkmen-Turkish schools have been established, as well as one Turkmen-Turkish university—a development which has the potential to greatly affect the character of future education system financing. Nevertheless, the major financial resource for education in the country is the State



budget. Additional sources come from: social security funds; co-operatives; social and other enterprises and organizations; as well as the population.

The inadequate material and technical situation presents a major problem, in particular for vocational-technical schools. The lack of modern equipment and visual aids is one of the main causes for the low quality of training at the vocational-technical establishments. During recent years, the State budget provisions have been negligible for financing such items as capital investments and school expenditures, while allocations for capital repairs and the purchase of equipment stock have also been reduced.

Several factors have constricted education sector financing during the transition period: the difficult economic situation of industrial and agricultural enterprises; a decrease in the real income level of the population; and the lack of the necessary legislative and normative acts, regulating the procedure for collecting educational services payments. Structural changes in the financing of educational establishments from non-budget resources have been closely monitored. In this context, it has been observed that in 1990 more than half of the resources of co-operatives, government and social institutions was spent on kindergarten maintenance; in 1995, kindergarten maintenance accounted for less than 23 % of their institutional resources.

Decentralization of financing was implemented as a part of the education sector reform process. Beginning in 1993, the budget policy embraced decentralization of social and cultural sphere financing—including education. In this context, the pre-school institutions, general education schools, out-of-school establishments, special secondary educational institutions are now supported by the local government authorities (provinces, regions and cities) through organizational subdivisions responsible for dealing with education issues. This decentralization policy has resulted in local budget education sector increments—83 % in 1995 compared to 74% in 1991. Distribution of education resources through the local budgets requires rational usage of such allocations; including proper regard for local character and conditions.

The annual budget for education is fixed by the Ministry of Economy and Finances based on proposals of: the Ministry of Education; ministries and departments having their own network of educational establishments; higher education institutions; as well as velayat bodies of education. Budget estimates are submitted to the Parliament for approval. The budget estimates are based on several indices: quota of children at pre-school institutions; number of pupils and students; number of employees; number of seats at the educational establishments, etc.

The Ministry of Economy and Finances (MEF) handles the financing of higher education institutions which permits institutional economic autonomy. The higher education institutions themselves prepare budget estimates, which are submitted directly to the MEF for approval. Payments (within the projected budget lines) are allocated based on billings submitted and actual work implemented. The financing of higher educational institution expenditures is thereby accomplished within the existing budget revenues and, in order to assure that expenditures of the State budget



conform to line item targets, the payments are made through the Treasury Department of the MEF and its local bodies.

Expenditures must be made in accordance with the directives regarding approved norms for labour payments, nutrition, grants and index coefficients. Functional norms are used for purchase of training appliances, equipment, stock as well as capital repairs and construction. Since the State budget is the main source for education financing in Turkmenistan, the process for the development of budgets and disbursement of funds (described in the example below) is based on this premise.

First, the Ministry of Education, together with the institutions under its supervision, devises the budget line item expenditures, taking into consideration the prevailing norms (consumption of energy, food, etc.) and prices specified by the Ministry of Trade. Currently, the so-called “union norms” (which were used in the former USSR) are still being used in Turkmenistan. Then the proposed budget is submitted to the MEF for approval. Second, the MEF considers every item of the submitted budget, taking into consideration a full array of factors, including: budget revenues; actual usage of funds during the prior year fiscal period; extreme conditions (i.e. emergency state of buildings, etc.). As a rule, certain line items are approved without modification (i.e. salary, extra charges, student grants, nutrition, etc.). But other line item expenditures (usually contracted) are frequently modified (i.e. economy expenses, purchase of equipment, upholstered stock, capital repairs, etc.)

Then, after budget approval, the MEF provides the financing to the Ministry of Education, for support of the institutions under its jurisdiction. In turn, the Ministry of Education directly finances each of its establishments, designated in the central budget. The MEF and local authorities (without the participation of the Ministry of Education) agree on a budget for those educational establishments that are financed under the local budget (pre-school institutions, general education schools, out-of-school institutions, etc.).

The cost allocations are determined according to the type of educational institution (pre-school, out-of-school, schools, etc.). The establishment of line items for the *velayats* and *etraps* is carried out by the provincial management responsible for education, economy and finances. (In the regions, a similar process occurs to determine the resource allocations for each educational institution). The norms utilized for financing of educational institutions are out-of-date and need improvement. On the one hand, the decentralization of financing of educational institutions (in particular schools and pre-school institutions) has promoted the democratization process. On the other hand, it has resulted in the irrational utilization of financial means—due to the low skill levels of employees at the local education management bodies.

The educational process

Pre-primary education

Pre-school 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, pre-school institutions begin a systematic education and training process.

The group structure at the pre-school institutions has the following gradation:

- 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 Pre-school Institution. The new programme was developed and approved in 1995 by the Ministry of Education. Pre-school 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.

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, according to the different stages and languages of instruction, are shown in the tables below:

**First stage (*Sovet*) 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 (*Sovaz*) 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 (*Sovet*) 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).

The teacher evaluates 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 national estimates, there were 1,705 general secondary schools and 15 secondary vocational training schools in 2004.

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

Programmes for assessing and monitoring pupils' and students' learning achievement nationwide are not reported.

Higher education

Higher education provides citizens of Turkmenistan with: the basic scientific and practical training; an area of specialization consistent with their interests and capabilities; the opportunity for improvement of their professional skills and additional training. Higher education also provides for the training of scientific and pedagogical personnel.

The training of specialists (higher education) is carried out on the basis of general secondary education. This training is full-time in higher education institutions. Successful students are awarded the qualification of specialist (higher education) in a given professional specialization. In this context, the various levels achieved are dictated by the volume or comprehensiveness of the programme followed.

The following ministries and departments operate higher education institutions: Ministry of Education: seven institutions; Ministry of Culture: three institutions; Ministry of Defense: one institution; Ministry of Industry and Energy: one institution; Ministry of Health and Medical Industry: one institution; State Committee for Physical Training: one institution; Ministry of the Interior: one institution.

The higher school has one stage. Specialized secondary educational institutions (SSEI) operate as the initial component of specialized vocational training.

The following types of the higher education institutions are available in Turkmenistan: university, institute, conservatory and academy. In 1996, the first technical college with the license to train specialists requiring higher qualifications was established in Mary. All higher education institutions provide equivalent levels of training and can train specialists with a higher education qualification. An academy, conservatory or college has the same status as an institute. The duration of training ranges from four to six years, depending on the specialization.

The Cabinet of Ministers, by the resolution of the President: nominates rectors and pro-rectors; determines the procedure of establishment, reorganization, liquidation of higher education institutions; prescribes the examination procedure for pedagogical and scientific personnel; approves higher education diplomas.

The Ministry of Education: co-ordinates the activities of higher education institutions; develops normative acts and instructions concerning the organization of

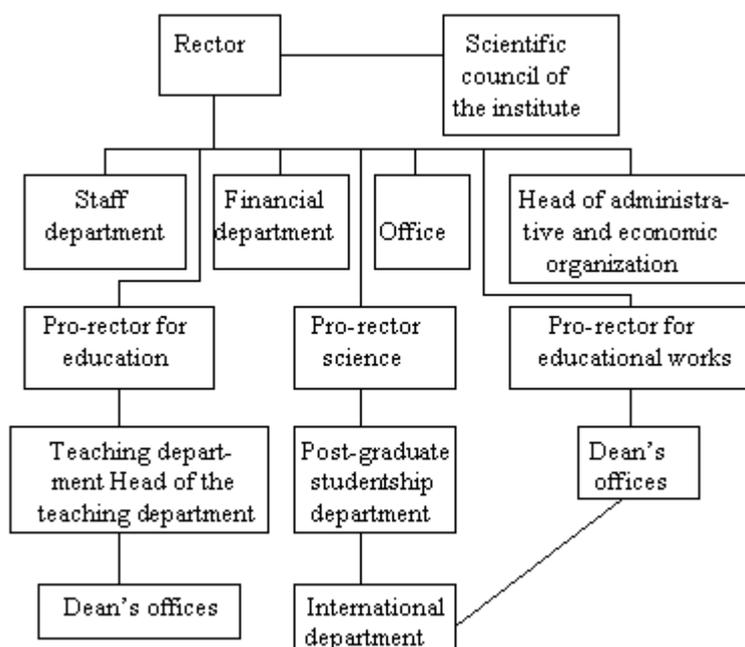
educational, methodological and scientific work; approves specialities, curriculum and educational training programmes for personnel in the higher and secondary specializations; elaborates the terms for enrolment in the higher education institutions and the standard statutes of educational establishments; approves salary schemes based on position titles (classifications).

Ministries and departments (having their own networks of higher education institutions): establish enrolment plans for admission into higher education institutions and assign graduating students to the enterprises and institutions in their respective branches; define specializations for the training of specialists; develop curricula and educational programmes for the training of specialists; control the selection and placement of personnel.

The Ministry of Economy and Finances funds higher education institutions from the State budget and controls their financial and economic activities.

Although the internal management scheme (presented in the figure below) depends on the specific character of the institution, differences between various institutions are insignificant.

Internal scheme of management



Higher education institutions are free to determine their respective organization, economic structures and in addressing financial problems; this autonomy, however, is within the limits of a normative framework that has emerged based on a large number of prevalent examples.

State higher education institutions include: one university, eleven institutes, one academy, one college and one conservatory. An analysis of the number of higher education institutions by type reveals that there is a positive correlation between the

predominance of certain types of institutes and the organizational structure currently in place for highly specialized personnel training.

Since 1991, the number of higher education institutions has sharply increased (by six units). After independence, Turkmenistan had to face the necessity to train personnel for a number of significant branches of the economy. From 1993-1995, the training of military experts and of specialists for the energy, transport and communication sectors was undertaken; the same applies to different specializations in the cultural sphere.

Higher education institutions mainly offer programmes developed during the former Soviet period with some additions and amendments being stipulated by specific local character and transition period peculiarities.

Higher education institutions, 1990-1996

	90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96
Number of the higher education institutions according to the type, total including:	9	9	10	11	15	15
universities	1	1	1	1	1	1
institutes	8	8	9	10	14	14

Total number of students (in thousands)

90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96
41.9	41.7	39.9	38.9	38.5	32.1

Geographical distribution of higher education institutions

	90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96
Ashgabat	8	8	9	10	13	13
Mary	-	-	-	-	1	1
Charjev	1	1	1	1	1	1

Number of students enrolled according to the type of institution

	90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96
University	8,258	8,008	7,016	6,429	5,963	4,494
Institutes	33,593	33,730	32,935	32,505	32,558	27,644

At the beginning of 1995/96, more than 32,000 students were enrolled in higher education institutions, which was 1.3 times lower than 1990/91 figures. This decrease



was due to the elimination of tuition by correspondence and part-time training, which previously accounted for more than one third of the student enrolment.

Further analyses reveal that, during the above mentioned periods, the average number of students per higher education institution declined—from 4,600 to 2,100. On the one hand, this was due to a decrease in the number of student enrolments; on the other hand, this was an outcome of the establishment of six new educational institutions. It should be mentioned that, on the whole, these changes have had a positive impact on the organization of the educational process, providing students with hostels, libraries, etc.

Most higher education institutions are located in the capital, Ashkhabad. In Mary city, recent activities in the energy sector have spurred relatively high rates of development, requiring a decision in favour of the establishment of a higher education institution. Such a decision was adopted in 1992.

Students enrolled in higher education institutions according to sex

Year	1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96
Total	41,851	41,738	39,951	38,934	38,521	32,138
Male	24,540	25,023	24,693	24,066	24,193	19,388
Female	17,311	16,715	15,258	14,868	14,328	11,750

Student enrolments by gender are not representative of the demographic structure of the population of Turkmenistan. In 1990/91, female students share in higher education accounted for 41.3%; in 1995/96, this figure had dropped to 36.4%. Thus, during the period under consideration there was a negative tendency in female participation in higher education. This is explained by the fact that, in recent years, a number of higher education institutions have been established for the ministries of Defence, Internal Affairs, Industry and Energy, Transport and Communication, which either did not make provision for female enrolment or offered training programmes that have not traditionally attracted the interest of women.

In 1995/96, the number of students enrolled in economic specializations decreased 1.6 times in comparison to 1990/91. This is a rather contradictory trend, given the current environment of market transformations. However, the decrease of students enrolled in agricultural specialities—from 6,200 to 3,600—reflects the agrarian reorientation which is occurring in the country, with a shift from the large collective farms toward small private farms.

Special education

Orphans and children without parents in charge are completely supported by the State and are brought up at general education boarding schools, children's homes. The State promotes and provides assistance in the establishment of children's homes, the educational programmes of which are similar to those of the general education schools.

Number of boarding schools and children enrolled

Year	1991	1993	1995	1996
Number of boarding schools for orphans	5	5	5	5
Number of children, (thousands)	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4

Students who need long-term medical treatments, have physical or mental impairments, are educated in special educational institutions.

Number of boarding schools for children requiring special treatment

	1991	1993	1995	1996
Number of boarding schools	17	15	15	15
Number of children (thousands)	2.8	3.0	3.0	2.8

Private education

In 1999, there were no private educational institutions in Turkmenistan. Their growth was expected during the transition process to a market economy. However, private-sector education is still nonexistent.

Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure

The strongest aspects of the education system are: high degree of population involvement; internal effectiveness; and highly decentralized management system.

The following factors require special attention:

- Gradual worsening of school infrastructure. School buildings and equipment, as well as training supports, are becoming dilapidated because of continued insufficient financing. The equipment is out-of-date. Schools operate in several shifts, thus they are running at full capacity.
- Lack of pupil access to sufficient quantity of relevant textbooks. In recent years, the Government has attempted to prepare and publish new textbooks for all disciplines and classes. New textbooks are being written in a new alphabet (Latin) to reflect the aspirations of an independent Turkmenistan nation. However, the publication of textbooks on a large scale requires foreign investments.
- The introduction of modern technology tools into the education system is at an initial stage. At some model schools, specialized computer classes have been organized, where new methods of teaching are being mastered.



There is a particular need of textbooks on the following subjects: English and German languages; history of Islam; geography of Turkmenistan; physics; natural history; and Turkmen language for schools with Russian language teaching. Despite the difficult economic situation in the country, the pupils are supplied textbooks and training materials free of charge.

In 1997, the President of Turkmenistan allocated US\$10 million for the purchase of textbooks and teaching materials, as well as furniture and training devices for schools and pre-school institutions.

According to the United Nations (*Country Common Assessment*, February 2004), a shortage of textbooks for students exists, particularly in rural areas, and includes poor quality of new editions in content and design. Budgetary constraints hamper the purchase of new updated textbooks and updating of libraries. Cost-cutting measures since 2000 also have manifested themselves in reductions in the number of secondary schools, in subsidies to pre-schools and educational institutions run by collective farms and local authorities. Reduction in State spending on education also has led to a deterioration of school infrastructure and a freeze on the opening of new schools, which can further lead to decreasing access. In particular, a dramatic decline in the number of pre-schools has resulted in the lack of early childhood education opportunities.

Adult and non-formal education

The Turkmenistan education base was formed during the Soviet period of the country's development. As an integral part of the former social and economic system, it has inherited both positive and negative aspects. The transition period requires the adaptation of education to the new economic and social relations taking shape in the country, but also the maintenance of values accumulated during the past.

Education is one of the largest and rather developed sectors of social infrastructure which is capable, under certain conditions, to implement the entrusted tasks—both in transition and in perspective. The country has greatly succeeded in realizing the objective of each individual's right to education. In 1970, the literacy rate was 99.7%. Subsequently, this rate has remained high—fluctuating between 99.7 and 99.9%.

Literacy rate in Turkmenistan

Region	% of literate population aged 9-49 years				
	1959	1970	1979	1989	1995
Turkmenistan	95.4	99.7	99.9	99.7	99.8
Ashgabat city	96.7	99.9		99.9	99.9
Akhal velayat*	97.2	99.6		99.7	99.8
Balkan velayat*					
Dashkhovuz velayat	94.9	99.6		99.7	99.7
Lebap velayat	94.6	99.6		99.8	99.9
Mary velayat	94.5	99.6		99.7	99.8

Source: Census in Turkmenistan, Vol. 3, Ashgabat, 1996.

(*) Are taken into account in the structure of cities and regions of Republic subordination.

The problems of increased education level and literacy levels were solved simultaneously, and the number of citizens with the secondary special and general education increased noticeably. According to 1995 Census data, 92 out of 100 persons aged 15+ had a higher education; whereas in 1989 and 1979 the figures were 83 and 64, respectively.

One of the strongest features of the education policy is its orientation to the education of females. Up to 1989, the education level of females had experienced steady growth; but after that, the dynamics changed. The share of women with uncompleted higher education at age 15+ decreased from 38.7% in 1989 to 31.9% in 1995. From 1979 to 1995 women accounted for 51.7-51.4% of the total population in this age group.

During the period 1993-1996, the share of women among blue-collars and white-collar workers tended to decline—dropping from 43.2% to 40%. In addition, their relative numbers are decreasing in those branches where traditionally women have been in the overwhelming majority. In the education system, in particular, female participation has declined—from 58.9% in 1993 to 56.9% in 1995.

This process is not caused by the reduction of working places or by the discrimination against females. Rather, it can be best explained by the fact that, in 1992-93, a number of Government resolutions were adopted concerning population social security. Specifically, new children allowances were introduced and the term for the paid maternity leave was prolonged from three to six years.

The system of vocational and technical education acts as the main body for training and retraining of adults. This system consists of three components: (a) training of young people before their labour market entry; (b) improving personnel skill qualifications within their field specialization—usually on an enterprise basis; and (c) retraining of adults offering them new specializations.



Enterprise-based training is a training approach that is being practised just as widely as the training provided at vocational and technical educational institutions. In 1994, about 25,000 blue-collar workers were trained at enterprises; about 22,000 were trained at vocational and technical educational institutions. However, the enterprise-based training is not an integral part of the industrial process. Such training is carried out irregularly by unskilled masters. Therefore, a *bona fide* education system is not being made available to the enterprise workers.

Statistical data concerning the numbers of retrained adults are unavailable. This type of education is implemented in vocational and technical education institutions; however, no separate data collection is conducted for retrained adults as a distinct group. However, about 8,400 adults were retrained in 1996—one fourth of the total pupil enrolment.

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 judgement 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 is 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.

The salary for teacher-masters and honoured teachers amounts to 108,000 *manats* per month; for the people's teachers it is 117,000 *manats* per month (data refer to 1996).

Educational research and information

Information is not available.

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