

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.15860513

Link: <https://zenodo.org/records/15860513>

PRIORITIES OF DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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Summary - National education is one of the most important factors shaping the existence of a nation. This factor, on the one hand, allows the nation to correctly assess its past, and on the other hand, to build its future in the best possible way. The purpose of this article, which discusses the process of establishing and developing the foundations of the national education system in the Republic of Azerbaijan, is to explain the enrichment of the education strategy based on the principles of statehood after gaining independence. For a better understanding of the topic, the article analyzes the positive and negative effects of the Soviet era on the education system in Azerbaijan.

Keywords: national education, Republic of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, national education priorities, Azerbaijanism

The leading directions of human development directly depend on the level and quality of the existing education systems in the world. From here, a legitimate question arises: how and what kind of education? In this regard, the most widespread results of research conducted on the problem of how education in the 21st century should be: enriching existing systems and theories in accordance with the requirements of new challenges; selecting elements and proven examples of practice that can be effective for the sustainable development of humanity; developing models that can accelerate the integration of people; widely applying models that justify the conceived concept and allow education to harmonize with priority goals; forming centers serving the creation of national education standards in developed and developing countries and creating the necessary conditions for their strengthening and effective operation.

As can be seen, the main component of the educational strategy of the century is related to the implementation of the concept of national education. Then a very legitimate question arises: what is national education, as opposed to traditional education?

Educationalists give various definitions of the essence of the concept of national education. The common feature of all definitions is that an education system that thinks about the fate of its country, nation and at the same time humanity, and can prepare high-level personnel who can contribute to its progress, in accordance with the requirements of the modern era, can be called a national education system. Just as nations and education are not formed all at once, national education is not formed all at once. Both processes develop gradually and simultaneously in the form of a dialectical unity.

From the works devoted to the analysis of theoretical problems of education, the concept of national education, it becomes clear that the national education system

involves the preparation of curricula and programs that are appropriate to the level of socio-economic and cultural-spiritual development of each country, as well as based on the national mentality and value system, as well as the use of appropriate teaching methodologies.

As a developing country, Azerbaijan joining the educational challenges of the century, has chosen the construction of national education as a priority path among the main tasks and main directions set in the development of modern secular education.

The national education priorities of the modern world have a rich, traditional history in the Republic of Azerbaijan. First of all, let us note that the national education system of the Republic of Azerbaijan means an education system that encompasses the foundations of secular sciences, the ideology of Azerbaijaniism - national-spiritual and universal progressive values, national moral norms, Islamic culture in its content, and serves democratic principles, the requirements for the protection of human rights and entitlements, and the development of society and man.

We should also note that the elements of upbringing, intellectual education, intellectual universal and spiritual-cultural resources carried in the minds of the Azerbaijani people prove that Azerbaijan is one of the countries with ancient and rich educational traditions and one of the first. This potential has been reflected in one way or another at all stages of our educational history. With loyalty to the principle of inheritance and at the same time, with the expectation of the unity of tradition and innovation, the transfer of Azerbaijani education to the modern era in the form of thought, enlightenment, in short, national ideas has been ensured.

The foundation of modern Azerbaijani national education is considered to be the education of the 20th century based on the principle of continuous history. This complexity is characterized by the fact that Azerbaijan has gone through three socio-political structures, and of course, each structure has its own goals and objectives in the field of education, resulting in the reorganization of the education system each time.

The basis of our current education was formed in the Soviet education system, and knowing the specific features of this system, you are faced with the difficulty of searching for traces of national education there and, at this time bringing innovation to existing ideas about where to start building national education.

Today our society is experiencing different attitudes towards the topic of Soviet education, which has lasted for 70 years. In the current views there are also strong feelings of hatred for this period due to the suppression of national ideas and its inclusion in the ideological molds of the Soviet state, but at the same time, there are widespread cases of remembering the shortcomings of Soviet education and objectively approaching its progressive aspects.

Before listing the negative and progressive features of the Soviet era, which are not evaluated unambiguously from this point of view, let us try to clarify its essence. Analyzing the values on which Soviet education was based in the context of the Eastern and Western models of education, S. Khalilov shows that the unique image of Soviet education that we now see from afar was actually nothing more than a myth, it consisted of an eclectic mixture of extreme Western and extreme Eastern positions [7, p. 14].

In general from the considerations put forward regarding Soviet education and the analysis of the direction taken by the history of Soviet education, it is possible to draw the following conclusion: it underwent several serious ideological changes during its existence. Without listing these changes and their impact on the education of our republic, let us summarize the progressive traditions that Azerbaijan acquired in the Soviet education system. First of all, the complete elimination of illiteracy, the establishment of compulsory general education, all types of educational institutions and the issuance of direct appointment letters for graduates to find jobs in their specialties, the creation of a teacher standard, in-depth teaching of the basics of mathematics and natural sciences and the acquisition of deep knowledge and skills by students in this field, the creation of rich laboratories, offices and workshops in specific subjects, the systematic study of educational problems, the training of higher pedagogical personnel, the development of subject methodologies by highly qualified specialists, the creation of a perfect educational system, albeit in the name of communist morality, the existence of a strict moral code, the existence of special criteria in the selection of leading scientific and pedagogical personnel, the exaltation of the upbringing of optimism in children and youth regardless of ideology, the unification of them in organized organizations for the efficiency of their leisure time and etc.

The widely observed general shortcomings of the Soviet education system stemmed from the nature of the socio-political structure, the undemocratic methods of management, and the mistakes of the education administrators themselves. These are general shortcomings such as the ideological molding of the education system, the severing of ties with existing societies in the world in the name of building a communist society, the creation of a contradictory worldview due to the aversion to the development trends of the world, the dominance of authoritarianism and bureaucratic rules in the management of the education system, the denial of religions through the teaching and promotion of atheism and the creation of deformations in spirituality and etc.

However in our educational history, Soviet education has had a particularly negative impact on our country. This is characterized by the suppression and elimination of national ideas, the falsification of the history of the people, the implementation of a policy indifferent to ethnic origin, and the most unfair attitude towards Azerbaijan among the republics that were part of the Soviet Union, despite the appropriation of its rich resources.

This policy resulted in the fact that by the 1970s, Azerbaijan was one of the last places in the union in terms of industry, agriculture and education; in general the republic as a whole had entered a stage of deep and long-term crisis.

Finding a way out of the difficult situation, developing fundamentally new conceptual approaches for the development of the country in all directions, carrying out radical structural changes in all areas, and decisively eliminating the negative situations that were a serious obstacle to the national progress of the people, which were deliberately created artificially, are among the exceptional services of the

outstanding historical figure, educationalist statesman Heydar Aliyev to Azerbaijan during the first period of his leadership.

In those years with the extraordinary managerial skills, far-sighted and purposeful decisions of the country's leader, our republic achieved a great leap forward in the development of socio-economic, scientific-technical and cultural spheres in a very short time, and thus, radical changes were manifested in the course of our history and the harmony of our life. The decisive steps taken to restore historical memory served to revive the national spirit, ensuring self-awareness and a return to one's roots [1].

The period of 1969-1982 considered the chronicle of Azerbaijan's national construction, was marked by radical changes in all spheres of our country's political, economic, social and spiritual life which due to their scale, overcame the barriers of totalitarian conditions and created a solid foundation for Azerbaijan's independence and its current deep integration into the world economy. A study of the different levels of Heydar Aliyev's multifaceted activities during that period shows that all these processes are based on and implemented on the basis of one concept. This concept, based on the literary-historical process, is capable of changing the course of history and forms the basis of our current independence. Therefore, it can be firmly said that since 1969, a new era has begun in the history of Azerbaijani education which continues to this day.

The years 1969-1982 when the foundation of our current national education strategy was formed are characterized as the period of national renaissance. From the studies of the evolutionary path of the national idea in our country, the historical stages it has passed, it becomes clear that the tradition of combining the struggle for national ideals with democratic values and principles, which is peculiar to our people, did not become an appropriate social basis for its further development after the process of independent state building in Azerbaijan was interrupted[6]. At the modern stage, the laying of the foundations of the national idea, the development of its scientific and conceptual foundations cover the years 1969-1982.

M. Huseynova interprets the first major event in the direction of establishing the foundations of the national idea in Azerbaijan during that period - Heydar Aliyev's speech in his native language at the 50th anniversary of Baku State University in November 1969, as well as his talk about our carriers of the national idea, as priorities for the upcoming directions of activity [5, p.33].

Starting from 1969 the determination of the priority place of the Azerbaijani language in state policy gave a strong impetus to the formation of national self-awareness and the ideology of Azerbaijaniness. National awakening, a new view of our ethnic roots, and the study and study of our national literature, our native language, our history and culture in educational institutions strengthened.

Extensive research into the lives and creativity of prominent figures of our rich history of science, education and thought, the publication of their works in large circulations, their translation into various languages, the filming of historical films, the organization of international conferences and anniversary events, in addition to introducing the Azerbaijani people to the whole world as a people with an ancient history of statehood and a rich culture, formed self-confidence in the people.

As a result of the national development strategies laid down in these years, the revival of the national idea, feelings of freedom and independence, self-awareness and national identity that had been accumulated in the minds and dreams of our people for decades, acted as an ideological-political and driving force and laid the foundation for the creation of our independent state.

Considering education to be the future of the nation, Heydar Aliyev who chose a very skillfully thought-out strategy and tactics for the progress, science, education and culture of Azerbaijan within the framework of the strict laws of the totalitarian regime is an important component of this development. The rise of all educational institutions, from preschool institutions to universities, to a new level of development compared to previous years, the enrichment of their content, the increase in the potential of highly qualified, high-level personnel and the result of the strategy of education outside the republic which is equivalent to the current study abroad program, led to the improvement of the educational, general cultural, and intellectual levels of the Azerbaijani population, and became an important intellectual resource in the creation of our independent state [8, p.124].

As a result of the national liberation movement that swept the Soviet Union in the late 80s and early 90s of the 20th century, our country, like other republics gained national independence and the Republic of Azerbaijan entered a new stage of development.

The contradictions in economic, socio-political and cultural-spiritual life, the socio-political processes taking place in Azerbaijan began to show their serious consequences in the field of education very quickly. The national strategic foundations laid in all the above-mentioned areas were shaken.

The need to create its own national education system arose in the Republic of Azerbaijan like other countries that had gained independence.

In connection with the restoration of state independence, the change in educational policy in Azerbaijan and the reconstruction of the country's education as a whole based on national and universal values became an objective reality.

However, although the decisions taken in 1991-93 partially enriched the education system of the independent state, they could not determine the leading direction. One reason for this was the inability of those in political power and education experts to demonstrate a unified position on the issue of what system to create in place of the socialist education system and how to create it.

With the return of Heydar Aliyev to political power in 1993, the education sector which was considered the main locomotive of the state, was also brought out of the crisis, preventing the ongoing decline and destructive tendencies and forming a new environment for confident progress in education.

With the initial decisions made during this period, chaos in the education system was eliminated, and normal activity was restored in all spheres of the education system with the strategic direction prepared and started to be solved at the state level.

Considering education to be a real, powerful factor in state building, determination of national ideology and national progress, Heydar Aliyev put forward

the development and implementation of a program covering broad and deep reforms in this area as one of the first state tasks.

In independent Azerbaijan, the establishment of national education, the determination of key priorities and strategic goals in education began to be implemented as an integral part of state building. Having education that meets modern requirements was considered the main factor for successful participation in the process of society and state building [7, p. 194].

Heydar Aliyev's idea of conducting national education as an integral part of state and new society building is clearly expressed in his ideas. He showed that any reforms carried out in the field of education without a correct forecast of national progress and without a clear definition of the goal would be ineffective, he considered it important to consider educational problems in the context of the country's public life as a whole, and he showed that, unlike other areas of statehood, the whole society should participate in the formation of education law and the implementation of educational reforms [7, p. 194].

The establishment of the commission that prepared the draft of the first national Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan by the decision of the Milli Majlis dated December 6, 1993, its adoption by a nationwide vote on November 12, 1995, and the establishment of the right of citizens to education in Article 42 of the Constitution were the legal basis for the reforms to be implemented in the field of education, as well as confirmation of the position in the above paragraph.

National education construction in the independent Republic of Azerbaijan is mainly manifested in two directions:

1. Formation of the conceptual foundations of national education;
2. Work carried out for the harmonious development of various fields of education in the direction of national education.

Programmatic tasks related to the establishment of national education. In Heydar Aliyev's meetings with education workers, discussions of ideas, appeals to youth, participation of children in international events, and regular meetings of students on the Day of Knowledge, his principled position on the important importance of education in the development of our statehood was repeatedly stated, and the main development directions of the national education system in our country and rules on social protection of workers in the field of education were determined.

For example, a meeting with education workers of Baku city [3, p.169-182] is characterized by such programmatic provisions as the care of statehood in the development of education in accordance with national traditions. It was at this meeting that the proposals and considerations put forward to determine the prospects for the development of our national education were summarized, and specific instructions were given to officials to take the necessary measures.

These meetings and events resulted in the identification of priority areas of the national education system. The establishment of the State Commission for Educational Reforms in accordance with the Order dated March 30, 1998, the preparation of the Reform Program, which is the highest conceptual source in the construction of national

education, and the approval of this document by the decision dated June 15, 1999, determined new priority directions [2].

It should be noted that with the Reform Program, the process of national education construction entered a decisive stage. Thus, the strategic goals and conceptual foundations of the Azerbaijani national education system were determined in the Document. The provisions put forward by Heydar Aliyev constituted the main conceptual ideas and fundamental principles of the Program. The effective use of the national-spiritual characteristics of our people, especially the progressive traditions formed in Azerbaijan in the 20th century in the field of education, the benefiting from universal values and the basing of the education system of independent Azerbaijan on the national basis were included in the national education program as the main provisions of the national education construction of our independent country.

Also, the Reform Program determined the stages, main directions, goals, tasks and principles of national education construction at the modern stage, reflected the expected results and the mechanism for implementing the reform. The main conceptual principles of reforms were determined in the program in order to establish the education system at the level of current requirements and ensure its development.

In the new education system based on the fundamental principles of national statehood, the formation of the student as a personality and his transformation into an equal subject of the educational process were considered one of the main tasks. The formation of intellectual potential capable of forming and developing the strategic goals and objectives of Azerbaijan using the educational criteria determined by the scientific and pedagogical community of the Republic of Azerbaijan was accepted as the main principles serving national goals.

The construction and development of national education in the Republic of Azerbaijan was based on the following provisions:

1. Innovations in the education system should be implemented not through revolution, but through evolution;
2. The education systems of developed countries and the currently implemented reforms should be studied in depth in the context of national and spiritual values;
3. The education system should benefit from national values, customs and traditions, and the experience gained in the 20th century;
4. The current state and problems of the education system should be comprehensively analyzed and the main tasks should be determined;
5. The modern Azerbaijani education system should be based on national values, and at the same time, benefit from universal values [2].

It should be noted that the process of national education construction, which is planned to be implemented in the Republic of Azerbaijan in two directions - the formation of its conceptual foundations and the harmonious development of educational areas, is carried out in unity and its content reflects the following priorities:

1. The growing generation should be prepared to ensure the supremacy of Azerbaijani laws, to be able to fulfill its efforts to protect human and civil rights and freedoms, and should be able to be its bearers;
2. It should ensure and preserve the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan;

3. The content of education should be created on the basis of the principles of the ideology of Azerbaijanism;
4. The growing generation should be educated in the spirit of high morality;
5. The national-moral values of the Azerbaijani people and universal values should be assimilated by every young person;
6. The growing generation should be educated in the national spirit;
7. The history, language, culture and religious values of Azerbaijan should be the spiritual foundations of education.
8. Sustainable development should be implemented on a historical-literary-cultural basis and in the direction of protecting national security [2].

By the way the statehood ideology of the Republic of Azerbaijan, being Azerbaijaniism, reflects the organic unity of the concepts of statehood, national-spiritual values and universal values. The national and spiritual qualities that we have gained throughout history, as a whole, are reflected in the ideology of Azerbaijaniism, reflecting our national psychology and forming the foundation of our national education system.

These forms which play an important role in the formation of the ideology of statehood, constitute a part of human culture due to their moral and ethnic qualities.

The main priority of our national education, the goal of Azerbaijaniism, regardless of the place where they live, is to instill in every Azerbaijani and our compatriot a sense of patriotism, love for our historical lands, language, cultural heritage and state symbols. This ideology unites every Azerbaijani around a single goal, idea and homeland, regardless of their religion, language, or ethnicity. The ideology of Azerbaijanism, which expresses a complete, complete and perfect image of the ideological source of our state's national education strategy, is a perfect theoretical and practical ideological base that must be constantly studied, a generalized set of the system of national, spiritual, cultural, literary, historical, political and economic values that form the basis of the statehood thought of the Azerbaijani people.

In our national education strategy, in connection with the adaptation of education to world standards, it is argued that the path to democracy which is one of the main principles of state policy serving humanity in the field of education, also passes through national spirituality: The boundaries of democracy are wide. It develops in accordance with the national-spiritual values and mentality of each nation, the requirements of each society and each era [4, p. 339].

It should also be noted that the successful development of national education priorities in Azerbaijan is conditioned by the amount of funds allocated by the state to this area. According to statistical data, the amount of state spending on education has increased many times in line with the overall economic development of the country. The rapid growth of spending on education from the state budget began in 2005, and in 2006, education spending was close to 480 million manat, while in 2011, spending on education from the state budget reached 1.27 billion manat, and in the 2023 state budget this figure was increased to 4.5 billion manat. In the 2025 budget draft, 4.95 billion manat (with a specific weight of 12% in the budget) was projected for the

"Education" section. This is 396 million manat more than last year, or an increase of 8.7% [9, p. 496].

These facts also show that science and education are one of the priority directions in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

It is a logical consequence of the political course pursued by the Republic of Azerbaijan, the ideology on which it is based, and the path of development it has taken that today it occupies one of the leading positions in the Eastern world, including the Islamic world. At the same time, it is in close contact with Western culture. A number of global projects of the Western world are being implemented in the Republic of Azerbaijan today. Tolerance in the national and religious context in Azerbaijan can be considered an example for all countries of the world. However, despite this, our national uniqueness is not forgotten in our country and great steps are being taken towards the development of our national culture. The example of Azerbaijan as a model of unity between the East and the West is the result of the realization of the concept, main components, and main directions of the national ideology, the architect of which was Heydar Aliyev.

Today as a result of the national education policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 100 percent literacy of citizens is ensured. The national education strategy, the foundations of which were laid in the 1970s with the principle of uninterrupted history, is being successfully continued at the modern stage and acts as a guarantee of our independence and economic growth.

As a result, it can be said that new foundations have been laid for the ideas of national education with an ancient and rich history since the 70s of the XX century, and this acts as the foundation of the independent Azerbaijani state.

The Reform Program, which was prepared in our independent republic since 1993 for the new expansion of national education, has created an incentive for the beginning of a new stage in the development of education in our country by laying the foundation for a revival in education.

The successes achieved in the construction of a legal, democratic and secular state in Azerbaijan were possible as a result of giving priority to education and paying special attention to it as a strategically important area.

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