

JAPAN AND UZBEKISTAN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SYSTEMS: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

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Abstract: This article analyzes the early childhood education systems in Japan and Uzbekistan, focusing on their similarities and differences. Both countries aim to ensure the comprehensive development of children and prepare them for formal schooling, with play being a central pedagogical tool. Japanese early childhood education emphasizes independence, group collaboration, and active participation in daily routines, with educators acting as facilitators and observers. In contrast, the Uzbek system relies on a more structured approach guided by educators, with increasing attention to individualized learning and the integration of national and family values. Differences in organizational structure, pedagogical methods, discipline, and coverage are discussed, highlighting the cultural and historical factors shaping each system. The article concludes that while the goals of early childhood education in both countries are similar, the methods and approaches differ significantly, and ongoing reforms in Uzbekistan aim to incorporate international best practices, including insights from the Japanese model.

Keywords: early childhood education, Japan, Uzbekistan, pedagogical approaches, curriculum, educators' role, play-based learning, cultural differences, child development, kindergarten systems

The early childhood education systems in Japan and Uzbekistan have developed under different historical and cultural conditions, yet they share a common goal — to ensure the comprehensive development of children and prepare them for formal schooling. In both countries, early childhood education supports the physical, cognitive, and social development of children, and play activities are considered an essential pedagogical tool. Through play, children develop communication skills, creative thinking, and the ability to make independent decisions. Furthermore, in both systems, state-established educational standards and curricula regulate the activities of early childhood education institutions. At the same time, there are significant differences between the early childhood education systems in Japan and Uzbekistan. Firstly, the Japanese system stands out with its two types of institutions: *yōchien*, which are primarily educational kindergartens, and *hoikuen*, which mainly provide care and social support services. In Uzbekistan, early childhood education institutions operate under a single system, with both public and private kindergartens serving generally the same purpose. The pedagogical approach also differs between the two countries. In Japan, fostering children's independence and teaching them to work collaboratively in a group is a key priority. Children actively participate in daily routines, such as tidying up toys or organizing the classroom, which helps cultivate a sense of responsibility from an early age. Japanese educators perceive themselves as observers and supporters of children's development. They identify each child's individual abilities and design tailored play and learning activities accordingly. Educators act primarily as advisors and facilitators rather than direct controllers, allowing children to engage in independent activities. This approach promotes creativity, responsibility, and social skills. In contrast, in Uzbekistan, the educator plays a central role, and children's activities are more structured under the teacher's guidance. Educators supervise learning processes, organize activities, and provide support for children's social interactions and knowledge acquisition. Recently, there has been an increasing emphasis on individualized approaches, adapting activities to meet each child's specific needs. Uzbek educators often integrate national values, traditional practices, and family-based



education into the curriculum, placing significant emphasis on shaping children's social and moral development. Differences are also evident in discipline and daily routines. Japanese early childhood institutions follow a strict daily schedule, teaching children to manage their behavior independently. In Uzbekistan, while a daily routine exists, it is comparatively flexible, taking children's individual needs into account. Coverage of early childhood education also varies. In Japan, nearly all children attend early childhood programs. In Uzbekistan, although coverage has significantly increased in recent years, it is not yet universal. Consequently, the state is implementing large-scale reforms to build new kindergartens and expand the system. Cultural approaches also differ. In Japan, collectivism and group interests are emphasized, whereas in Uzbekistan, family values and individualized attention to children are more pronounced. These aspects define the distinct characteristics of each country's early childhood education system. Overall, while there are similarities between the early childhood education systems in Japan and Uzbekistan, their organizational structures, pedagogical approaches, and the role of educators differ significantly. The Japanese system emphasizes discipline, independence, and group collaboration, whereas the Uzbek system relies more on individualized guidance and the active role of the educator. At the same time, ongoing reforms in Uzbekistan aim to modernize the national system, drawing on international experiences, including the Japanese model, and implementing them in practice.

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