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THE ROLE OF INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTERS IN THE MODERN EDUCATION SYSTEM AND PROSPECTS FOR THEIR DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract. The article analyzes the role of information resource centers (IRCs) in the modern education system and the legal framework for their formation and development, using the Republic of Karakalpakstan as a case study. Based on regulations adopted in 2006–2020, it traces the evolution of the IRC model, the 2019 transfer of the IRCs of general schools and vocational institutions to district and city information and library centers, and the effect of this reform on the educational process. Drawing on the historical experience, the current state of the library network and inclusive library services in Karakalpakstan, the article identifies regional problems and proposes promising directions for the development of IRCs.

Keywords: information resource center, information and library center, education system, digitalization, electronic resources, Karakalpakstan, information literacy, inclusive services.

РОЛЬ ИНФОРМАЦИОННО-РЕСУРСНЫХ ЦЕНТРОВ В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ СИСТЕМЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ ИХ РАЗВИТИЯ (на примере Республики Каракалпакстан)

Аннотация. В статье анализируются роль информационно-ресурсных центров (ИРЦ) в современной системе образования и правовые основы их становления и развития на примере Республики Каракалпакстан. На основе нормативно-правовых актов 2006–2020 годов рассматриваются эволюция модели ИРЦ, передача ИРЦ общеобразовательных школ и учреждений профессионального образования в районные (городские) информационно-библиотечные центры в ходе реформы 2019 года и её влияние на образовательный процесс. На основе исторического опыта, современного состояния библиотечной сети и опыта инклюзивного обслуживания в Каракалпакстане выявлены региональные проблемы и предложены перспективные направления развития ИРЦ.

Ключевые слова: информационно-ресурсный центр, информационно-библиотечный центр, система образования, цифровизация, электронные ресурсы, Каракалпакстан, информационная грамотность, инклюзивное обслуживание.

ZAMONAVIY TA'LIM TIZIMIDA AXBOROT-RESURS MARKAZLARINING O'RNI VA RIVOJLANISH ISTIQBOLLARI (Qoraqalpog'iston Respublikasi misolida)

Annotatsiya. Maqolada zamonaviy ta'lim tizimida axborot-resurs markazlarining (ARM) o'rni hamda ularning shakllanishi va rivojlanishining huquqiy asoslari

Qoraqalpog‘iston Respublikasi misolida tahlil qilinadi. 2006–2020-yillarda qabul qilingan normativ-huquqiy hujjatlar asosida ARM modelining evolyutsiyasi, 2019-yilgi islohot natijasida umumta’lim maktablari va kasb-hunar ta’limi muassasalari qoshidagi ARMlarning tuman, shahar axborot-kutubxona markazlariga o‘tkazilishi va uning ta’lim jarayoniga ta’siri ko‘rib chiqiladi. Qoraqalpog‘istondagi axborot-kutubxona tarmog‘ining tarixiy tajribasi, hozirgi holati va inklyuziv xizmatlar tajribasi asosida hududiy muammolar aniqlanib, ARMlarni rivojlantirishning istiqbolli yo‘nalishlari bo‘yicha takliflar ishlab chiqilgan.

Kalit so‘zlar: axborot-resurs markazi, axborot-kutubxona markazi, ta’lim tizimi, raqamlashtirish, elektron resurslar, Qoraqalpog‘iston, axborot savodxonligi, inklyuziv xizmat.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the quality of education depends largely on how quickly and freely pupils, students and teachers can access high-quality information. Whereas a traditional library has been limited mainly to storing printed publications and lending them to readers, an information resource center (IRC) brings printed, electronic and multimedia resources together in a single service system and teaches users how to find, evaluate and use information properly. Contemporary research in information science likewise regards the organization and retrieval of information and digital literacy as core areas of information services in the digital environment. For this reason, the IRC is becoming a key unit that provides information support for the teaching, research, and cultural and educational activities of a modern educational institution.

In Uzbekistan, this field is regulated at the level of law. The Law “On Information and Library Activities,” adopted in 2011, defines information and library activities as the work of institutions in building collections and organizing services on the basis of information and communication technologies, and makes ensuring the shared use of information and library resources one of the tasks of the field. In other words, state policy views the library as an open, network-based institution closely tied to information technology.

The topic is especially relevant for the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The territory is vast, settlements are far apart, and education is provided in Karakalpak, Uzbek and Russian. Under these conditions, IRCs and information and library centers (ILCs) are the most convenient way for pupils and students in remote districts to reach high-quality sources. However, the activities of IRCs in the region, especially in the context of the structural changes since 2019, have not been sufficiently studied in the academic literature.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the role of IRCs in the modern education system using the Republic of Karakalpakstan as a case study, to identify existing problems, and to substantiate prospects for their development.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The study draws on three groups of sources. The first group consists of legal and regulatory documents: Presidential Resolution No. PQ-381 of 2006, which laid the foundation for establishing IRCs; the 2011 Law; Presidential Resolutions No. PQ-3271 of 2017 and No. PQ-4354 of 2019; and the "Digital Uzbekistan – 2030" Strategy. The second group comprises regional studies on the history of librarianship in Karakalpakstan. In particular, D.A. Aytimova describes the stages in the formation of the collections of the first libraries in Karakalpakstan and the role of research libraries in scholars' work.

D.A. Sharipova, in turn, analyzes the path taken by the Information and Library Center of the Republic of Karakalpakstan from 1936 to the present, the dynamics of its book collection, and its functional changes in the context of digitization, based on archival materials and statistical data. These regional studies rely on O. Qilichboyev's handbook "The Largest Libraries of Uzbekistan" as an important source. The third group includes international standards, in particular the recommendations of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) on libraries in educational institutions.

The study used legal analysis, the historical-comparative method, statistical analysis and a systems approach. Statistical data were taken from official releases of the National Statistics Committee and the Ministry of Culture.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

1. Stages in the formation of the IRC model

The concept of the IRC was introduced into practice in Uzbekistan by Presidential Resolution No. PQ-381 of June 20, 2006. The resolution defined the main tasks of IRCs as helping students and the public pursue regular and independent learning with the help of modern information technologies, providing information services based on electronic databases and internet resources, and developing cooperation with educational institutions, local self-government bodies and cultural centers. In this way, the IRC became a bridge between the library and the learning process. Subsequent documents gradually changed this model (Table 1).

Table 1. Key regulations governing IRC activities

Year	Document	Significance for IRC activities
2006	Presidential Resolution No. PQ-381	The IRC model was introduced; the task of providing information support for independent learning was defined

Year	Document	Significance for IRC activities
2011	Law "On Information and Library Activities"	The field was regulated by law; ICT-based services and shared use of resources were consolidated
2017	Presidential Resolution No. PQ-3271	Enrichment of the collections of educational institutions' IRCs; creation of a unified resource database
2019	Presidential Resolution No. PQ-4354	186 district (city) ILCs were established; school and college IRCs were transferred to these centers; Concept for 2019–2024
2020	Presidential Decree No. PF-6079	"Digital Uzbekistan – 2030": requirements for digital transformation

Presidential Resolution No. PQ-3271 of September 13, 2017 approved a comprehensive program to promote a culture of reading and set the tasks of enriching the collections of educational institutions' IRCs with teaching, popular-science and fiction literature, strengthening their material and technical base, and creating a unified database of all types of resources held by the National Library and information and library centers. The resolution also proposed placing textbooks and teaching aids for schools, lyceums, colleges and higher education institutions in the database of e-reader devices.

The most important structural turning point came with Presidential Resolution No. PQ-4354 of June 7, 2019. The resolution approved the Concept for the Development of the Information and Library Sphere for 2019–2024 and provided for the establishment of 186 district (city) information and library centers under the National Library, the abolition of all IRCs at general secondary schools and at secondary specialized and vocational education institutions, and the transfer of their book collections and staff positions to the new centers. At the same time, school and college libraries were retained, with collections and staff in line with current standards. The resolution also tasked the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan with allocating buildings for the centers, carrying out their major renovation and creating a barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities.

As a result of this reform, the IRC model split into two levels. In higher education institutions, the IRC remained a unit that provides information support for teaching and research. At the level of general secondary and vocational education, however, the IRC's functions were divided between the school library and the district information and library center. In our view, this made it possible to concentrate resources in one place and open services to the entire population, but part of the information service for pupils moved outside the educational institution. For this reason, the mechanism of cooperation between school libraries and district centers is of decisive importance today.

The "Digital Uzbekistan – 2030" Strategy, approved by Presidential Decree No. PF-6079 of October 5, 2020, provides for the rapid digital development of economic sectors, the social sphere and public administration. In education, this means that IRCs must expand electronic catalogs, digital collections and remote services. Regional studies also regard this strategy as a basis for digitizing library collections and expanding the public's access to information resources.

2. The information and library network of Karakalpakstan: historical experience and current state

The roots of librarianship in Karakalpakstan go back to the late nineteenth century, when the first city library was opened in Turtkul on the basis of residents' private collections. In 1936, the Republican Library was established on its basis and was later moved to Nukus. Initially, the library occupied an area of about 60 m², its collection amounted to 24,430 copies, and it had 500 readers. By 1960, the number of libraries in the region had reached 293, and the Republican Library had become a methodological center coordinating the work of more than 400 libraries.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the center entered the stage of digitization: practical training on creating an electronic catalog began in 2002, a computer training center opened in 2003, and by 2004 the collection had reached 257,000 copies. At the same time, serious problems with replenishing the collection emerged: while 662 books were purchased in 2002, the arrival of new literature almost stopped in the following years. This experience shows that unless technical equipment goes hand in hand with regular acquisition, an IRC cannot supply the learning process with up-to-date resources.

As for the current situation, according to the National Statistics Committee, as of January 1, 2026, there were 17,763 libraries in the country, with a combined collection of 89.2 million copies of books and journals; the Republic of Karakalpakstan had 1,058 libraries. According to data published by the Committee in 2025, libraries had 12.8 million regular users, 31.6 percent of whom were children under 14 and 45.9 percent young people aged 15–24. Thus, more than three-quarters of users are of school or student age, which means that the library network effectively serves as the information infrastructure of the education system.

The region's experience with inclusive services is also noteworthy. The Special Library for the Blind of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, through its branches in the city of Nukus and in the Amudarya, Beruniy, Kegeyli, Kungrad, Takhiatash, Turtkul, Chimbay, Khojeyli and Ellikkala districts, serves 4,552 readers, including 2,230 blind citizens. Its collection consists of 60,844 items, of which 14,249 are in Braille and 9,231 are talking books; the library's studio has produced 244 audiobooks, and 124 Braille publications have been printed in Karakalpak. This experience can serve as a ready model for the IRCs of educational institutions in the context of inclusive education.

At the higher education level, the region's IRC network consists of the IRCs of Karakalpak State University named after Berdakh, Nukus State Pedagogical Institute named after Ajiniyaz, and the Nukus branches of the country's higher education institutions. Of these, Nukus State Pedagogical Institute was founded in 1934 and is the first higher education institution in Karakalpakstan. Specialists for the field are trained in the Library and Information Activities program at the Nukus Branch of the Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture. The provision in Resolution No. PQ-4354 that admission quotas for this program be set on the basis of a study of the demand for specialists is of great importance for the region.

DISCUSSION

The results point to a number of problems affecting the activities of IRCs in Karakalpakstan. G.S. Dauletbaeva likewise notes that during the years of independence the IRCs of higher education institutions in Karakalpakstan helped improve the quality of education by building collections, digitizing resources and introducing information and communication technologies, but that problems requiring solutions persist in their work. First, the problem of collection development has recurred throughout history. Modern teaching and scholarly literature in Karakalpak, as well as publications in the Latin script, do not fully meet demand, which often forces students to turn to sources in other languages.

Second, digital resources are being developed in a fragmented way. The IRCs of higher education institutions, the Republican Information and Library Center and research libraries maintain their catalogs separately. Implementing at the regional level the task set by Resolution No. PQ-3271 of creating a unified resource database, that is, merging catalogs into a single search space, remains a pressing issue.

Third, since the 2019 reform, information services for school pupils have come to depend on cooperation between the school library and the district ILC. The IFLA guidelines emphasize that the library of an educational institution should be an integral part of teaching and learning and should be supported by qualified staff, up-to-date resources and information literacy programs. Judged by these criteria, formal cooperation agreements between school libraries and district centers, as well as services coordinated with curricula, are needed.

Fourth, internet quality and distance limit the use of remote services in outlying districts. Fifth, librarians are now expected not only to lend books but also to work with electronic databases, teach information literacy and create digital content, which calls for regular professional development.

PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Based on the results of the analysis, we propose the following directions for developing IRCs in Karakalpakstan:

1) Building a corporate network of the IRCs of higher education institutions in Nukus, the Information and Library Center of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and research libraries: a unified electronic catalog, electronic interlibrary loan, and joint subscriptions to international research databases.

2) Creating an open digital repository of teaching, scholarly and local-history sources in Karakalpak, and depositing local journals, dissertations and master's theses in it.

3) Turning the IRC into a "learning space": introducing short courses on information literacy and academic integrity, group study rooms and consultation services.

4) Concluding cooperation agreements between school libraries and district ILCs, and setting up thematic services and an online system for ordering literature for pupils.

5) Extending the experience of the Special Library for the Blind to the IRCs of educational institutions: the use of audiobooks, Braille publications and assistive software.

6) Organizing regular professional development courses to strengthen the digital competencies of IRC staff at the Nukus Branch of the Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture.

7) Diversifying funding sources by using the paid services provided for in Resolution No. PQ-4354 (language and computer courses, copying) and public–private partnership opportunities.

CONCLUSION

In Uzbekistan, IRCs took shape from 2006 as a system of information support for educational institutions and acquired a legal basis with the 2011 Law. As a result of the 2019 reform, the IRC model became a two-level system: in higher education the IRC remained a teaching and research unit, while in general secondary and vocational education its functions were divided between school libraries and district information and library centers.

The experience of Karakalpakstan shows that the effectiveness of IRCs depends not only on technical equipment but also on regular collection development, the creation of resources in the local language, and qualified staff. The experience of the region's Special Library for the Blind is an important model for inclusive education.

The prospects for the development of IRCs are linked to a corporate network and a unified electronic catalog, a digital repository in Karakalpak, information literacy programs, cooperation with school libraries, and staff professional development. Implementing these directions will turn IRCs into modern information and education centers that actively contribute to improving the quality of education.

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