

HR Strategies for Effective Management of Teaching Staff Under Demographic Burden: A Case Study of Uzbekistan

Ozodakhon Akhmadqulova

Doctoral Student, National Institute
of Pedagogical Skills named after
A. Avloni, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Email: ozodaxon1991@gmail.com

Abstract

Background: In recent years, the education system in Uzbekistan has faced unprecedented challenges due to rapid demographic growth, resulting in severe school capacity deficits and increased pressure on educators. Traditional administrative management methods are no longer sufficient to handle this demographic burden.

Objective: This study analyzes the impact of the demographic boom on public schools and proposes adapted Human Resource (HR) strategies to effectively manage and retain teaching staff.

Methods: The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining a qualitative policy review of official statistics (2024–2025) with a descriptive cross-sectional survey conducted among 32 school principals and 129 teachers across urban and suburban regions of Uzbekistan.

Results: Empirical data reveals that nearly 78% of surveyed schools operate at or exceeding 1.5 times their design capacity. Furthermore, 25.6% of teachers report an inability to implement individualized learning in classes exceeding 40 students, resulting in forced lecture-style teaching. To address these issues, an adapted strategic HR model is proposed, encompassing four dimensions: adaptive recruitment, burnout prevention, continuous professional development (peer-mentoring), and data-driven performance evaluation.

Conclusion: Shifting from conventional personnel administration to strategic human capital management is crucial. Implementing flexible workloads and non-financial motivation mechanisms can transform demographic challenges into a “demographic dividend,” ensuring educational quality and teacher well-being.

Keywords: Demographic burden, school capacity deficit, teaching staff, strategic HR, teacher burnout, educational management, Uzbekistan.

1. Introduction

The education system is a critical institution that determines the future socio-economic trajectory of any nation. Currently, global demographic shifts—whether population aging in Western countries or rapid population growth in developing nations—are presenting unique challenges to educational infrastructure and human resource management (HRM). In the context of Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan, a sustained high birth rate has created a significant “demographic burden” on the public education sector.

According to recent statistical data, at the beginning of the 2024/2025 academic year, the number of students in general secondary education institutions in Uzbekistan reached nearly 6.77 million—the highest figure recorded in the last thirty years (Statistics Agency, 2024). While 558,000 teachers currently serve in 10,180 public schools, the design capacity of these schools falls drastically short of the student population, creating a “capacity deficit” of more than one million seats (Ministry of Preschool and School Education, 2024). This disparity directly leads to overcrowded classrooms, increased shift-teaching, and severely heightened stress levels among teaching staff.

A school’s teaching staff is not merely a collection of employees; it is an intellectual and social system that determines the quality of education (Kurbanov, 2024). Therefore, under such high demographic pressure, it is urgently necessary to shift from traditional administrative methods to modern strategic HR models to attract, retain, and motivate educators. This study aims to analyze the current demographic challenges in Uzbekistan’s schools and propose a tailored HR strategy model to manage teaching staff effectively.

2. Literature Review

The impact of demographic changes on educational systems has been widely discussed in international literature. However, the focus often varies depending on the region. In developed nations, researchers primarily address the challenges of an aging teacher workforce and declining student enrollments. Conversely, in developing economies, the primary focus is on managing the rapid influx of students.

Class Size and Teacher Burnout:

Numerous international studies highlight that overcrowded classrooms significantly contribute to teacher burnout and high turnover rates. When the student-to-teacher ratio exceeds optimal levels, educators struggle to provide individualized attention, leading to physical exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). Recent studies demonstrate that large class sizes and excessive workloads are the primary predictors of emotional exhaustion among educators (Huang et al., 2022; Joshi, 2025; Meado, 2025). Furthermore, Ang (2025) argues that prioritizing educational access (quantity) without addressing overcrowded environments severely diminishes the quality of teaching and accelerates staff burnout. In developing regions, teaching in overcrowded spaces not only complicates classroom management but also triggers long-term stress that traditional administrative systems fail to mitigate (Herman et al., 2018; Tshangana et al., 2023). To combat this, mentorship and resilience-building programs are highly recommended (Dreer-Goethe, 2021).

Strategic HRM in Education: According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), HRM in education should go beyond basic personnel administration and align with the strategic goals of the school. Effective HR strategies in schools include proactive recruitment, continuous professional development (CPD), and comprehensive well-being programs. However, in post-Soviet educational systems, HR functions are often limited to bureaucratic record-keeping rather than strategic human capital development. This study addresses this gap by contextualizing strategic HRM for schools operating under severe demographic constraints.

3. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach based on document analysis and secondary statistical data review.

Data Collection: Quantitative data regarding student enrollment, school capacity limits, and teacher-to-student ratios were extracted from the official open-data portals of the Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Preschool and School Education for the period of 2020–2025. This timeframe was selected to capture the peak of the recent demographic boom. Additionally, government resolutions related to educational HR policies, such as Resolution No. 662, were analyzed (Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023).

Survey Design and Participants: To validate the secondary statistical data, an empirical survey was conducted via Google Forms among school administrators and teaching staff. The sample comprised 32 school principals and 129 teachers (N=161). The majority of respondents represented high-density urban areas, particularly Tashkent city (96.8% of surveyed teachers and 56.7% of principals). The survey instruments utilized Likert-scale and multiple-choice questions to assess the impact of classroom overcrowding on pedagogical efficacy, administrative challenges, and the psychological well-being of the staff.

Data Analysis: A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to measure the gap between current educational infrastructure capacity and demographic growth. Following this, a logical modeling approach was utilized. Based on Armstrong's (2020) strategic human resource framework, an adapted HR model was developed specifically targeting the identified challenges in public schools: capacity deficit, teacher burnout, and retention.

4. Results

4.1. Empirical Findings on Demographic Pressure and Pedagogical Efficacy

The survey results explicitly highlight the physical and professional strain caused by the demographic boom. According to the school principals surveyed, 50% report operating at maximum capacity, while 28.1% state their student population exceeds design capacity by up to 1.5 times. When asked about administrative hurdles, school leaders ranked “classroom shortages” and “managing education quality in overcrowded classrooms” as the highest levels of difficulty. Crucially, 31.3% of principals noted that while the quantity of available teaching staff might be sufficient, their professional qualifications do not meet modern demands, emphasizing the need for targeted human resource development.

Figure 1. Teachers' Assessment of Class Size Impact on Teaching Quality

Based on an empirical survey of teaching staff (N = 129)

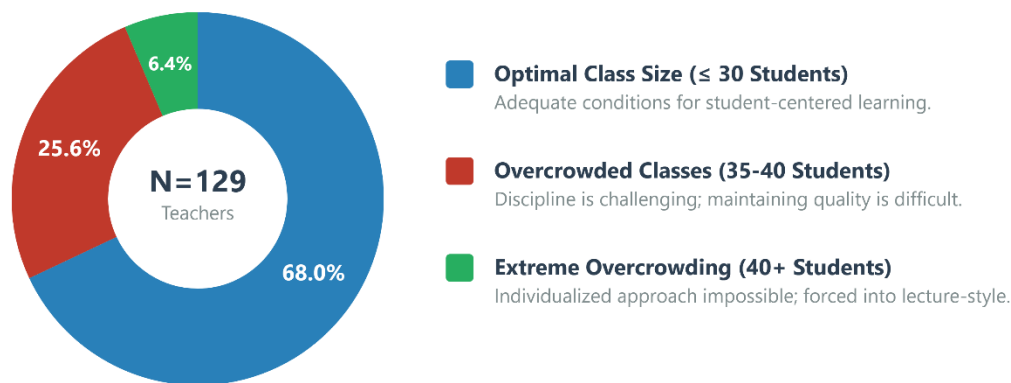


Figure 1. The perceived impact of demographic burden and class size on pedagogical effectiveness, based on a survey of 129 public school teachers.

From the educators' perspective, the demographic burden directly compromises teaching methodologies. When evaluating the impact of class size on teaching quality, while a majority (68%) currently operate within standard limits (up to 30 students), a critical segment of the workforce is severely strained. Specifically, 25.6% of educators report managing overcrowded classes of 35–40 students, where maintaining discipline and pedagogical quality is increasingly difficult. Furthermore, the remaining respondents (approx. 6.4%) operate in extreme conditions (such as classes exceeding 40 students), making individualized student approaches “absolutely impossible” and forcing them to resort to passive “lecture-style” teaching. Additionally, 67.2% of teachers indicated that overcrowded spaces significantly hinder the attention and involvement of students seated in the back rows.

To alleviate these pressures, the respondents strongly indicated a need for administrative reforms. Notably, 40% of teachers demand a strict cap of 30 students per classroom, and 28% request immediate relief from excessive bureaucratic paperwork to focus on teaching. Meanwhile, 53.1% of school principals argue that granting them full autonomy in hiring and firing processes is the most effective systemic solution to manage HR under current demographic constraints.

Figure 2. Strategic Solutions Preferred by School Principals

Based on an empirical survey of school administrators (N = 32)

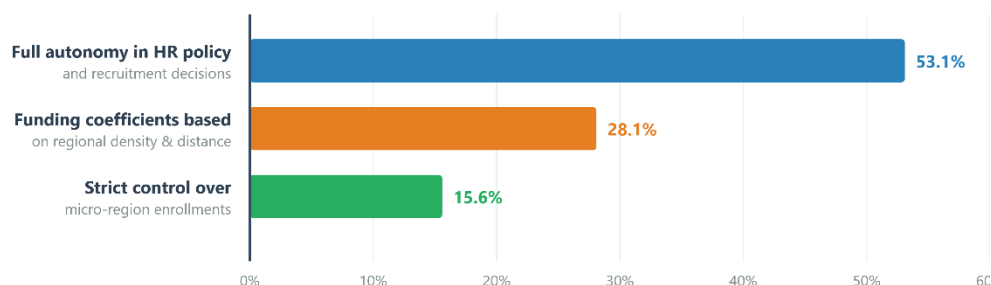


Figure 2. Systemic solutions proposed by school principals to mitigate demographic challenges and manage school capacity (N=32).

4.2. The Consequences of the Demographic Burden

The analysis of current educational statistics in Uzbekistan indicates that the demographic burden is unevenly distributed, with regions like Samarkand, Fergana, and Kashkadarya facing the highest pressures. If this

demographic burden is left unmanaged without a specialized HR strategy, three major negative consequences emerge:

1. **Professional Burnout:** Handling classes of 35–40+ students with excessive teaching hours causes severe psychological fatigue.
2. **Staff Turnover:** Experienced and highly qualified teachers are migrating to the rapidly growing private education sector, which offers lighter workloads and better working conditions.
3. **Decline in Educational Quality:** The physical impossibility of implementing individualized or student-centered learning in overcrowded settings.

4.3. Proposed Strategic HR Model for Schools

To navigate the demographic burden, school principals must adopt HR strategies as a core management tool. We propose a modernized, four-pillar HR framework tailored for schools operating beyond their capacity (Table 1).

Table 1.
Adapted HR Model for Schools Under Demographic Burden

Strategic Direction	Practical Actions & Mechanisms	Evaluation Criteria (KPI)	Expected Outcomes
Adaptive Recruitment	Forecasting regional needs based on demographic data; offering early “future job” contracts to university graduates; introducing a “Teacher Assistant” (Tutor) role.	Speed of filling vacancies (in days); percentage of young teachers passing probation.	Early capture of qualified educators and prevention of teaching disruptions.
Burnout Prevention	Introducing psychological rest hours for teachers handling oversized classes (35+ students); eliminating redundant bureaucratic reporting.	Reduction in sick leave rates; positive shifts in teacher job satisfaction surveys.	Psycho-emotional stability of the teaching staff and reduced turnover.
Continuous Professional Development	Replacing formal seminars with school-based peer-review; providing financial incentives for a structured “Mentoring” system.	Increase in the qualification categories of young teachers mentored by senior staff.	Shortened adaptation period for novices and overall growth in teaching quality.
Data-Driven Performance Evaluation	Monitoring teaching quality and student progress via digital platforms (e. g., E-maktab) to allocate workload fairly.	Dynamics of objective real-time grades on digital platforms.	Optimal, transparent, and fair utilization of human resources.

4.4. Institutionalizing the Mentoring System

A critical finding of our analysis is the vulnerability of young, newly graduated teachers who often face a “reality shock” when assigned to overcrowded classrooms. To mitigate this, the proposed HR model emphasizes the institutionalization of *Mentoring*. By slightly reducing the teaching load of highly experienced educators and officially assigning them as coaches for novices (with guaranteed financial compensation), schools can bridge the experience gap effectively.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study emphasize that traditional motivational tools, such as basic financial bonuses, are insufficient in the face of physical and emotional exhaustion caused by demographic burdens. A hybrid

motivation system is required. This aligns with international HR practices suggesting that non-financial incentives such as flexible scheduling, psychological support, and health recovery vouchers are crucial for retaining staff in high-stress public sector roles (Xalimov & Jabborova, 2025).

Furthermore, a significant barrier to implementing these strategies in Uzbekistan is the lack of autonomy among school principals. This theoretical observation was heavily supported by our empirical findings, where more than half (53.1%) of the surveyed school principals identified “full autonomy in HR policy and recruitment” as the primary solution to stabilize the demographic crisis. For the proposed HR model to function, school management must be granted the flexibility to hire supplementary staff (such as teacher assistants) using local or extra-budgetary funds, depending on immediate demographic needs.

6. Conclusion

The demographic burden in Uzbekistan’s education system is not merely a social challenge; if managed correctly, it can transform into a “demographic dividend” that dramatically increases the country’s intellectual potential. To achieve this, it is crucial to abandon traditional administrative-command methods of managing teaching staff and transition to modern, investment-oriented HR strategies. The implementation of adaptive recruitment, flexible workloads, fair data-driven evaluation, and continuous mentoring will guarantee team efficiency and elevate the quality of education to a competitive level despite demographic pressures.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The empirical survey of teachers was predominantly concentrated in Tashkent city (96.8%), which represents a highly urbanized environment. The challenges of demographic burdens in rural or remote areas might differ significantly. Future research should aim for a broader, nationwide sample and empirically test the proposed HR model (Table 1) in pilot schools to quantitatively measure its impact on teacher retention and student academic performance.

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