EVALUATING UZBEKISTAN'S TRANSITION FROM A FIVE-POINT TO A 100-POINT GRADING SYSTEM: POLICY RATIONALE AND STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

Egamov Abdulaziz Abdumalikovich

Graduate of Cambridge International College´25
Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Mail: egamovabdulaziz233@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines Uzbekistan's recent transition from a five-point to a 100-point grading system in public schools. Combining policy analysis and student survey data from seven pilot schools in Tashkent, the research explores the reform's rationale, advantages, challenges, and perceived fairness. The results reveal a mixed reception: while most students recognize the new system's precision and alignment with international standards, many still find it stressful and complex, preferring the familiarity of the old scale. Students attributed difficulties mainly to inconsistent grading, limited teacher training, and unclear communication rather than to the system itself. The discussion highlights that resistance to the reform reflects adaptation challenges rather than policy failure, emphasizing the need for teacher professional development, transparent implementation, and better orientation for learners. Overall, the findings suggest that the 100-point system represents a promising but demanding step toward a fairer and more transparent education framework in Uzbekistan.

Keywords

Uzbekistan, five-point grading system, 100-point grading system, education reform, policy analysis, student perspectives, assessment fairness, learning process, teacher professional development, school education.

Introduction

Background: Short history of the 5-point grading system in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan's education system long relied on the traditional five-point grading scale, a legacy of the Soviet Union standardized in the mid-20th century. The system ranged from "5" (excellent) to "2" (unsatisfactory), with "1" rarely used. Its simplicity made it widely familiar to students, teachers, and parents for decades. After gaining independence in 1991, Uzbekistan retained this framework, ensuring continuity in schools and higher education. However, the five-point scale

was increasingly criticized for its limited precision and reliance on subjective teacher judgment, which restricted its ability to differentiate among varying levels of student performance (Mavlonov & Bo'riyev, 2025).

Context: Why grading reform became a priority

Educational modernization has been a cornerstone of Uzbekistan's post-independence development strategy. As emphasized in the *Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy*, reforming assessment practices is central to aligning the national education system with international standards, improving transparency, and preparing a globally competitive workforce (Kholiyarov, 2023). Policy makers noted that the five-point system relied heavily on teacher discretion, with nearly 90 percent of assessments influenced by human factors, which undermined fairness and objectivity (Ministry of Preschool and School Education, 2023). By contrast, a 100-point scale promises greater nuance in measuring student achievement and supports criterion-based assessment methods, such as summative and formative evaluation, already being piloted in schools (Ministry of Preschool and School Education, 2023).

Problem statement: Lack of public understanding of the 100-point reform

Despite the government's stated goals, the rationale behind replacing the five-point scale with a 100-point system has not been fully communicated to the public. Many parents, teachers, and students remain attached to the familiar five-point framework and are skeptical of the reform. Confusion stems from limited official outreach and the rapid pace of implementation–first in 500 schools in 2023, then expanded to 1,000 institutions in 2024–2025 (Central Asia News, 2024). While early reports suggest student performance scores have improved modestly (from 53% to 59%), resistance persists due to unclear explanations of the system's benefits and unfamiliarity with its methods (Central Asia News, 2024). This gap in understanding highlights the need for academic analysis of both the reform's rationale and its reception among key stakeholders.

Research aim

This study seeks to analyze the introduction of the 100-point grading system in Uzbekistan from multiple perspectives. Specifically, it aims to examine the government's motivations for replacing the five-point system, to compare the relative advantages and disadvantages of both grading frameworks, and to assess how students in pilot schools perceive and experience the reform. By combining policy analysis with survey data, the research intends to clarify the drivers behind Uzbekistan's grading reform and to evaluate its implications for fairness, transparency, and alignment with international standards.

Research questions

1. Why did the government replace the five-point system with a 100-point system?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of both systems?

3. How do students in pilot schools perceive the new system?

Literature Review

Global Practices in Grading Systems

Grading practices differ significantly across countries, reflecting variations in culture, policy priorities, and educational traditions. In the United States, grading is decentralized, with schools and universities adopting percentage-based or GPA systems that emphasize continuous assessment and comparability for admissions (Ardakani et al., 2016). In China, reforms have sought to align grading with the country's broader strategy of globalization and economic modernization, while Malaysia has emphasized research productivity and market alignment in higher education (Ardakani et al., 2016). These international cases highlight how assessment and grading are shaped by national goals as much as by pedagogical concerns.

Research also shows that the design of grading systems has profound implications for student outcomes. In Norway and Sweden, students reported that grading practices directly affected their motivation, self-confidence, and engagement in school. Transparent and detailed grading was seen as supportive, while inconsistent or overly simplistic systems discouraged learning (Sæther et al., 2025). Similarly, Klapp (2017) found that summative grading in Sweden negatively impacted low-achieving students' motivation and performance, while more nuanced assessment systems could mitigate these effects by supporting self-concept and learning goals. Together, these studies emphasize that global grading practices are not only technical tools but also critical determinants of fairness, student motivation, and learning culture.

Previous Research on Grading Reforms

Grading reforms are typically introduced as part of broader educational modernization agendas. Comparative research suggests that shifts from coarse to finer scales–such as from 5-point to 10- or 100-point systems–are often justified as ways to increase fairness, reduce subjectivity, and align with international benchmarks (Sæther et al., 2025). However, empirical studies reveal mixed results: while more detailed scales provide finer differentiation, they can also introduce stress for students and complicate teachers' workload (Klapp, 2017).

In Central Asia, reforms have often been highly centralized and implemented from the top down. Weidman and Yoder (2010) note that during the first two decades after independence, Uzbekistan's education policies were characterized by

strong ministerial control, with reforms rarely allowing for teacher or local input. Ruziev and Rustamov (2016) similarly found that higher education reforms in Uzbekistan were strictly policy-driven, often introducing new assessment procedures without adequately addressing institutional capacity or stakeholder engagement. These findings echo broader international concerns that grading reforms succeed in policy rhetoric but struggle in practice when insufficient attention is given to implementation challenges.

Theoretical Foundations: Fairness, Accuracy, and Motivation

Theories of educational measurement emphasize that assessment should be valid, reliable, and fair. Validity requires that grades reflect true learning; reliability requires consistency across teachers and settings; and fairness requires transparency and impartiality. Research confirms that criterion-based assessment frameworks, such as 100-point systems, can enhance validity and fairness by reducing the influence of teacher bias (Sæther et al., 2025). At the same time, motivation theory highlights that students' academic self-concept is strongly shaped by grading systems. Klapp (2017) showed that low-ability students are especially vulnerable to demotivation under summative grading, which tends to highlight failure rather than progress. By contrast, detailed grading combined with formative feedback can sustain motivation by recognizing incremental achievement.

This literature underscores that reforms cannot be evaluated solely on technical grounds. A grading system that appears more precise in theory may still undermine fairness or motivation in practice if it is poorly implemented. Thus, any assessment of Uzbekistan's shift to a 100-point system must consider not only its technical merits but also its effects on fairness, student motivation, and teacher practice.

Post-Soviet and Regional Context

The five-point grading system in Uzbekistan is part of a broader Soviet legacy that shaped education across the region. As Weidman and Yoder (2010) observe, Uzbekistan preserved Soviet-style centralized governance of education throughout the 1990s and 2000s, introducing reforms gradually and often without meaningful stakeholder engagement. This approach ensured continuity but also limited innovation and responsiveness. Ruziev and Rustamov (2016) further argue that higher education reforms remained highly centralized, with grading and admissions reforms creating bottlenecks that reinforced inequality rather than alleviating it.

More recently, Uzbekistan's *Partnership Compact for Education Reform* (2023) identified weaknesses in assessment and grading as major obstacles to improving

educational quality. The report highlights over-centralization, corruption in high-stakes examinations, and lack of alignment with international standards as persistent problems (Ministry of Preschool and School Education, 2023). The introduction of the 100-point system can thus be seen as part of a broader state-led strategy to modernize assessment, reduce corruption, and align with global practices. However, given Uzbekistan's history of top-down reforms, skepticism from teachers, parents, and students remains a significant barrier to acceptance.

Research Gap

While international and regional research provides insights into grading systems and reforms, there is limited empirical work on Uzbekistan's current transition to a 100-point scale. Existing studies document the historical reliance on the five-point system (Weidman & Yoder, 2010), the centralized nature of educational reforms (Ruziev & Rustamov, 2016), and the psychological effects of grading on fairness and motivation in other contexts (Sæther et al., 2025; Klapp, 2017). The government's own strategy documents provide policy justification (Ministry of Preschool and School Education, 2023), but no scholarly research has yet systematically analyzed how the reform is perceived by students or teachers. This study addresses that gap by combining policy analysis with survey data to evaluate both the rationale for and the lived experiences of Uzbekistan's grading reform.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a **mixed-methods design**, combining qualitative policy analysis with a quantitative and qualitative student survey. This approach was selected to capture both the **policy rationale** behind Uzbekistan's transition to the 100-point grading system and the **lived experiences** of students affected by the reform. The policy analysis examines official government documents and reform strategies, while the survey collects firsthand data from students in pilot schools implementing the new system. Together, these methods provide a comprehensive understanding of the reform's objectives, implementation, and reception.

Policy Analysis

The first component of the research involved a document-based policy analysis. Official publications such as the *Uzbekistan Partnership Compact for Education Reform (2017–2026)* (Ministry of Preschool and School Education, 2023), the *Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy* (Kholiyarov, 2023), and related ministerial statements and decrees were systematically reviewed. The analysis focused on three dimensions:

1.   **Rationale** – identifying the perceived shortcomings of the five-point system and the policy justifications for adopting the 100-point scale.

2.   **Alignment** – exploring how the reform fits within broader educational modernization and internationalization efforts.

3.   **Implementation** – analyzing how the reform was rolled out across pilot schools, including teacher training and phased expansion.

This analysis provided the conceptual framework for interpreting student survey results and for assessing whether the reform's stated goals align with its practical outcomes.

Survey Design

The survey phase was conducted between **September 22 and September 30, 2025**, targeting students from schools where the 100-point system had already been introduced. The questionnaire consisted of **12 questions**–nine multiple-choice and three open-ended. The closed questions assessed students' understanding, motivation, perceived fairness, and stress levels under the new system, while open-ended questions invited opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of the reform.

The survey was available in **three languages**: Uzbek, Russian, and English (Google Forms version). Prior to data collection, the online version of the form was shared on education-related Telegram channels to obtain informal feedback on clarity and wording. Based on user comments, minor adjustments were made to improve readability and comprehension.

Participants and Sampling

A total of **211 students** from **seven public schools** across **four districts of Tashkent** participated in the study. The schools were selected randomly from among those designated as **pilot schools** for the 100-point grading reform. The participants represented grades **5 through 11**, with most respondents drawn from **8th to 10th grade**. No personal identifiers such as names were collected, except for the students' grade levels. Approximately **200 responses** were collected via paper-based surveys, while the remaining responses were gathered through Google Forms. The overall response rate was **211 out of 215 surveys distributed**, indicating high engagement.

Data Collection Procedure

Surveys were distributed by the researcher and a volunteer assistant, with permission from **school principals and teachers**. The questionnaires were completed either **during class time or after school** on a voluntary basis. Before participation, students were verbally informed about the study's purpose,

anonymity, and the fact that their participation was **entirely voluntary**. Each survey took approximately **four minutes** to complete.

The paper surveys were later transcribed into a digital spreadsheet for analysis, ensuring consistency across paper and online responses. Surveys in Uzbek and Russian were translated using Google Translate and cross-verified by native speakers to ensure linguistic accuracy.

Data Analysis

Quantitative responses were coded numerically and entered into **Google Sheets** for statistical processing. Descriptive statistics, including **frequency counts and percentages**, were calculated to summarize students' perceptions of fairness, motivation, and comprehension under the 100-point system. These results were later visualized through **bar and pie charts** to facilitate interpretation.

Qualitative (open-ended) responses were analyzed using **thematic analysis**. Student comments were reviewed manually to identify recurring themes–such as perceived fairness, grading transparency, or increased workload–and representative quotes were selected to illustrate each theme.

Combining both data types enabled triangulation, allowing the study to draw connections between **quantitative patterns and qualitative insights**.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures adhered to ethical standards for educational research. Permission for school access and survey distribution was obtained from **school principals and teachers**. Students were informed of the anonymous and voluntary nature of the survey. No identifying information was collected, and participants' responses were stored securely in digital form. The multilingual survey ensured inclusivity, allowing students to respond in their preferred language.
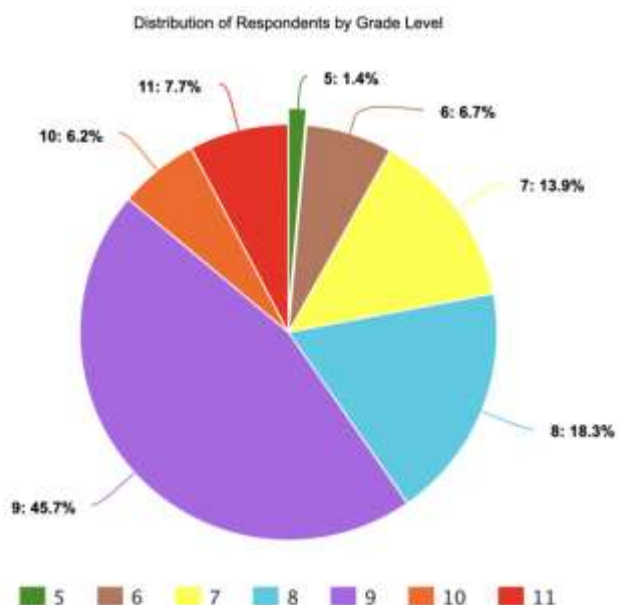
Results

Overview of Respondents

A total of 211 students from seven public pilot schools in Tashkent participated in the survey. Respondents represented grades 5 through 11, though most students were concentrated in the middle and upper secondary levels. Nearly half of all participants were ninth graders (45.7%), followed by eighth graders (18.3%) and seventh graders (13.9%). Smaller proportions came from grades 10 (6.2%), 11 (7.7%), and 6 (6.7%), while only a few respondents were from grade 5 (1.4%).

Duration of Students' Experience with the 100-Point Grading System
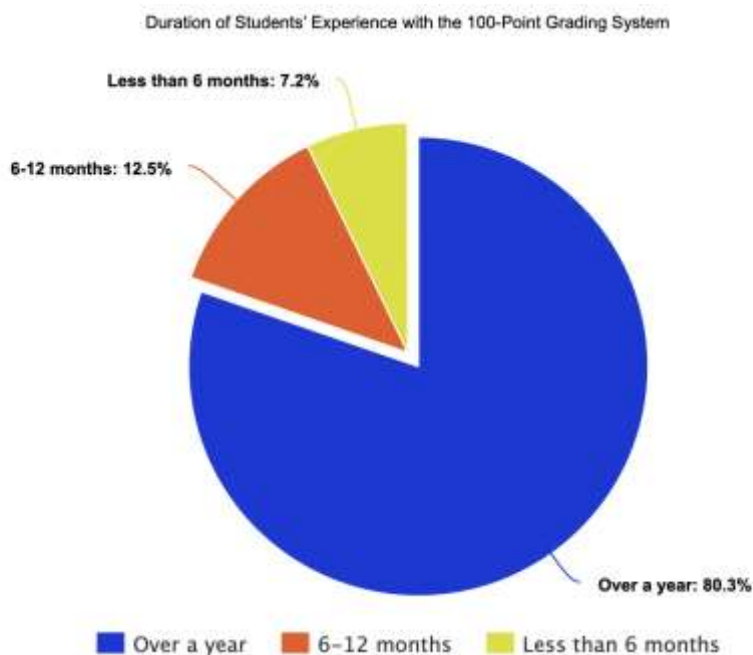
In terms of experience, the **80.3**% of surveyed students had studied under the 100-point grading system for over a year, indicating strong familiarity with its procedures. Another 12.5% reported 6–12 months of experience, while 7.2% had used the system for less than six months. This distribution suggests that most respondents had sufficient exposure to evaluate the reform's clarity, fairness, and motivational impact.

Distribution of Respondents by Grade Level

Students' Perceptions of Clarity

Students were asked which grading system they found clearer and whether the 100-point scale more accurately reflected their academic performance. The results show a continued preference for the traditional approach. That is, 60.1% of

respondents indicated that the five-point system remained clearer to them, while only 22.6% favored the 100-point scale. About 17.3% considered both systems equally clear. This pattern suggests that, despite increased exposure to the new system, familiarity and simplicity still influence students' perceptions of clarity.
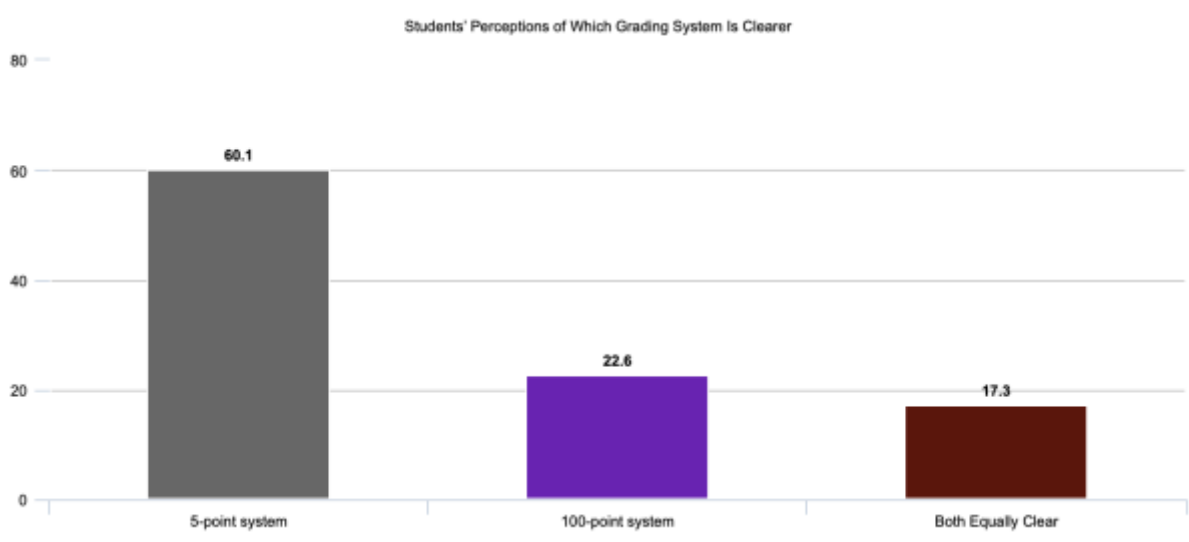
Students' Perceptions of Accuracy

When evaluating accuracy, opinions were more divided. Nearly half of the students (45.2%) stated that the 100-point system does not provide a more accurate reflection of their performance, while 39.9% believed that it does. A further 14.9% reported uncertainty. These findings highlight that while the reform aims to enhance precision and objectivity, many students remain unconvinced that the expanded scale offers a clearer or fairer measure of their abilities.
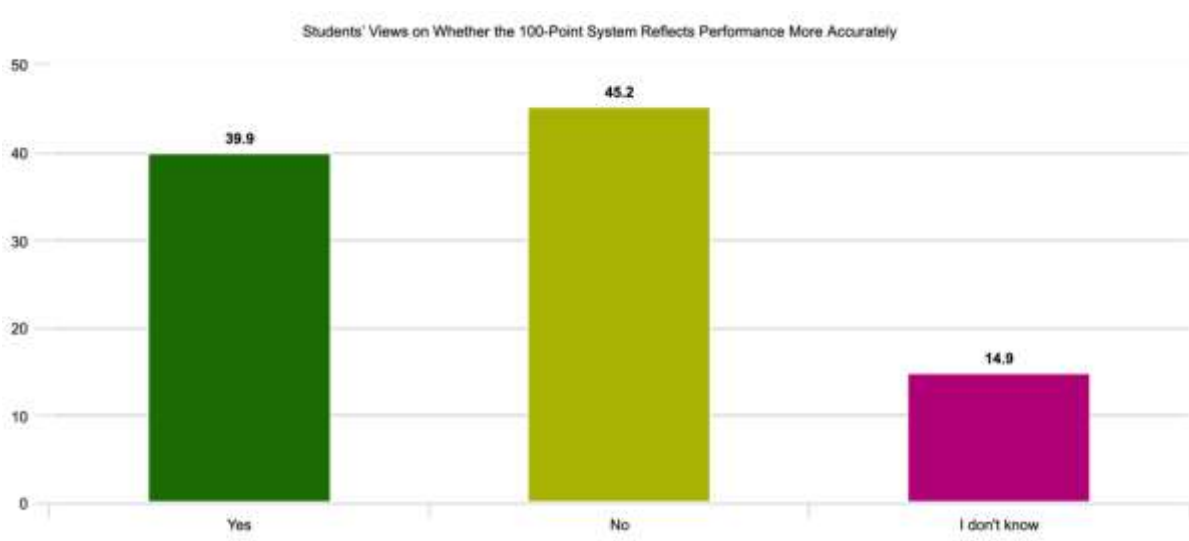

Perceptions of Fairness

Students were next asked whether they viewed the 100-point system as fairer than the previous five-point model and whether it influenced their motivation to

study. Responses revealed considerable variation in opinion. Regarding fairness, only 21.6% of respondents felt that the new scale was *a lot more fair*, and 15.9% considered it *somewhat fairer*. By contrast, 32.2% perceived *no difference* between the two systems, and 30.3% judged the 100-point system to be *less fair*. Taken together, nearly two-thirds of students (62.5%) did not view the reform as a clear improvement in fairness, suggesting that policy objectives related to transparency and equality are not yet fully realized in classroom experience.
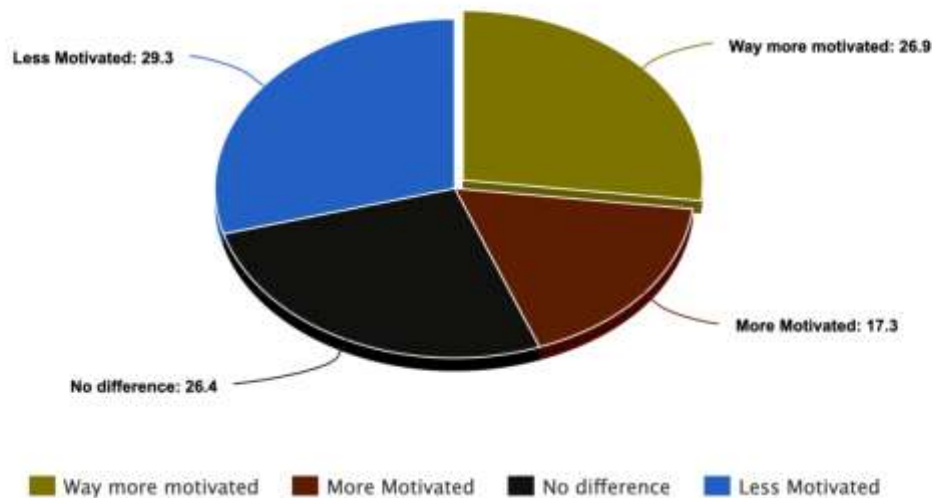

Students' Perceptions of Fairness under the 100-Point Grading System
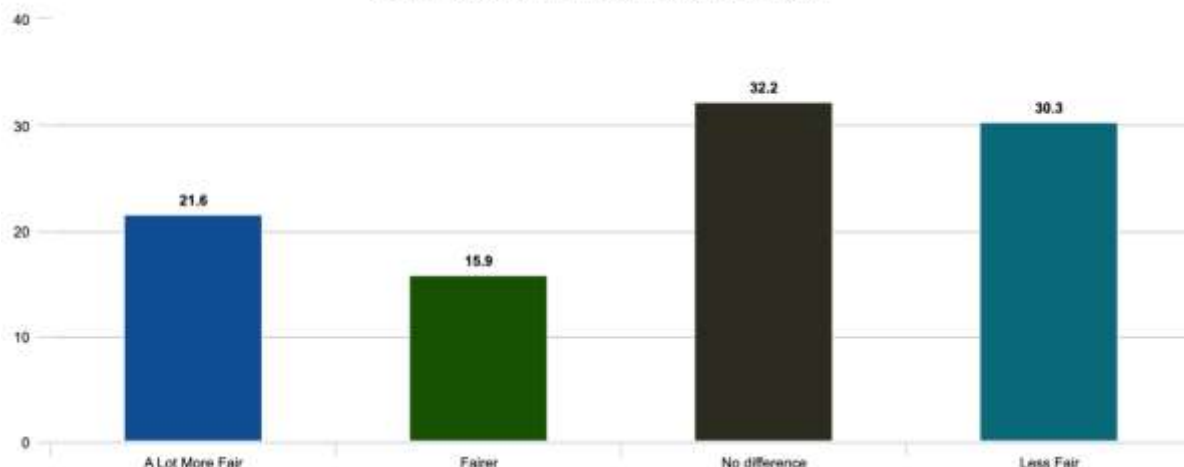
Student Motivation

Perceptions of motivation followed a similar pattern of division. While 26.9% of respondents reported feeling *much more motivated* and another 17.3% said they were *somewhat more motivated* under the new grading scale, an almost equivalent proportion–26.4%–felt *no difference*, and 29.3% indicated that they were *less motivated* to study. Overall, slightly less than half of the students (44.2%) reported increased motivation, whereas a majority (55.7%) experienced stagnation or decline. These results suggest that the detailed and performance-sensitive nature of the 100-point scale may energize high-performing students but simultaneously discourage others who perceive it as demanding or stressful.

Effect of the 100-Point System on Student Motivation

Less Motivated: 29.3
Way more motivated: 26.9
More Motivated: 17.3
No difference: 26.4

■ Way more motivated   ■ More Motivated   ■ No difference   ■ Less Motivated

Student Stress

Students' experiences with the 100-point grading system revealed notable differences in perceived stress and clarity of implementation. More than half of respondents (54.5%) reported that the new system felt more stressful, including 37.9% who found it *way more stressful* and 16.6% who found it *a bit more stressful*. By contrast, 33.2% noticed *no difference* in stress levels, and only 12.3% considered the 100-point system *less stressful*. These findings indicate that while the reform aims to promote more accurate evaluation, its detailed and frequent assessments may also be contributing to heightened academic pressure among students.

Students' Perceived Stress under the 100-Point Grading System

Less Stressful: 12.3%
Way More Stressful: 37.9%
No difference: 33.2%
A bit more Stressful: 16.6%

■ Way More Stressful   ■ A bit more Stressful   ■ No difference   ■ Less Stressful

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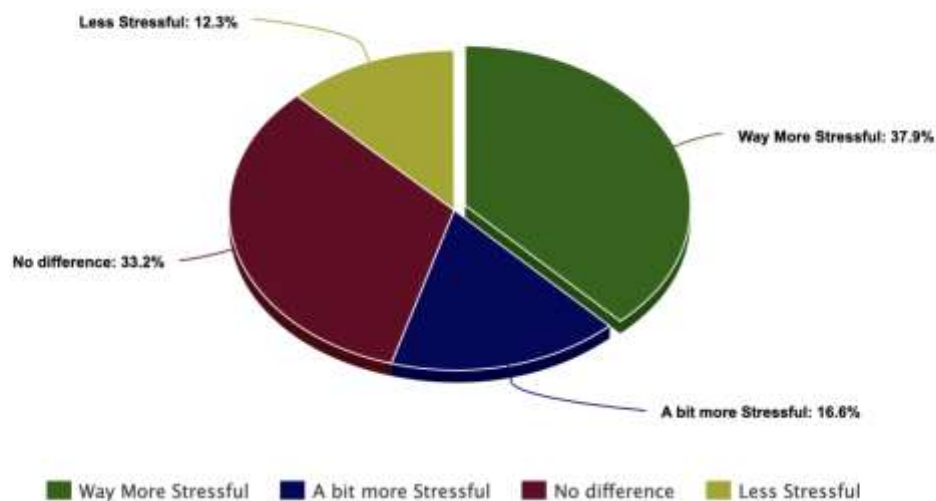
Clarity of Implementation

When asked whether teachers explained the new system clearly, most students expressed satisfaction. About 33.6% stated that teachers explained it *very clearly*, and 40.3% said explanations were *clear*. However, 18.0% reported that the system was *not clear*, and 8.1% said it had *not been explained at all*. These results suggest that although communication between teachers and students regarding the new grading procedures has been relatively effective, a significant portion of students still experience confusion.

Clarity of Teachers' Explanations
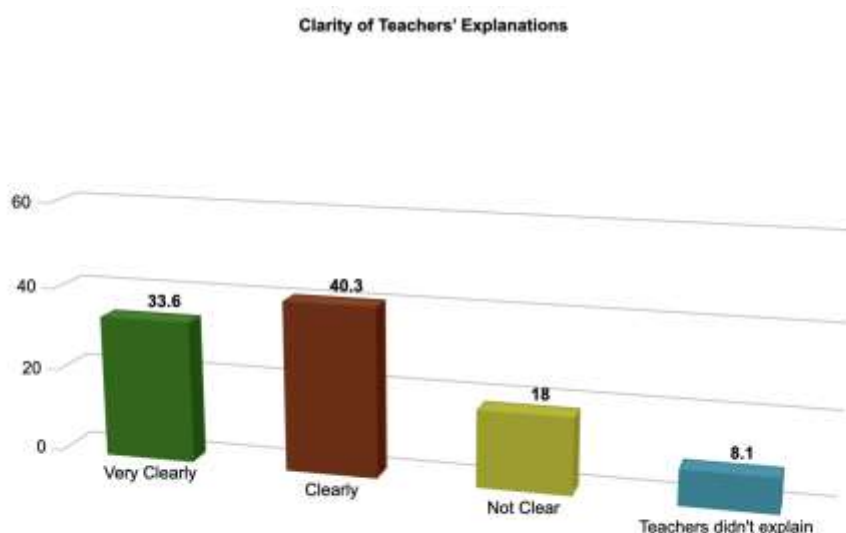
Perceived Consistency of Grading Across Teachers

The final multiple-choice question examined whether students believed that grades under the 100-point system were assigned consistently by different teachers. Responses revealed a relatively even distribution of opinions. About 22.3% of students stated that grading was *always the same* across teachers, while 26.5% said it was *most often the same*. However, 33.2% indicated that grades were *sometimes different*, and *18.0% reported that grading was *most often different*. Overall, slightly more than half of respondents (51.2%) perceived at least some inconsistency in teachers' grading practices. These findings suggest that, despite the Ministry's efforts to standardize assessment, the 100-point system's implementation may still vary considerably across classrooms.

Perceived Consistency of Grading Across Teachers under the 100-Point System
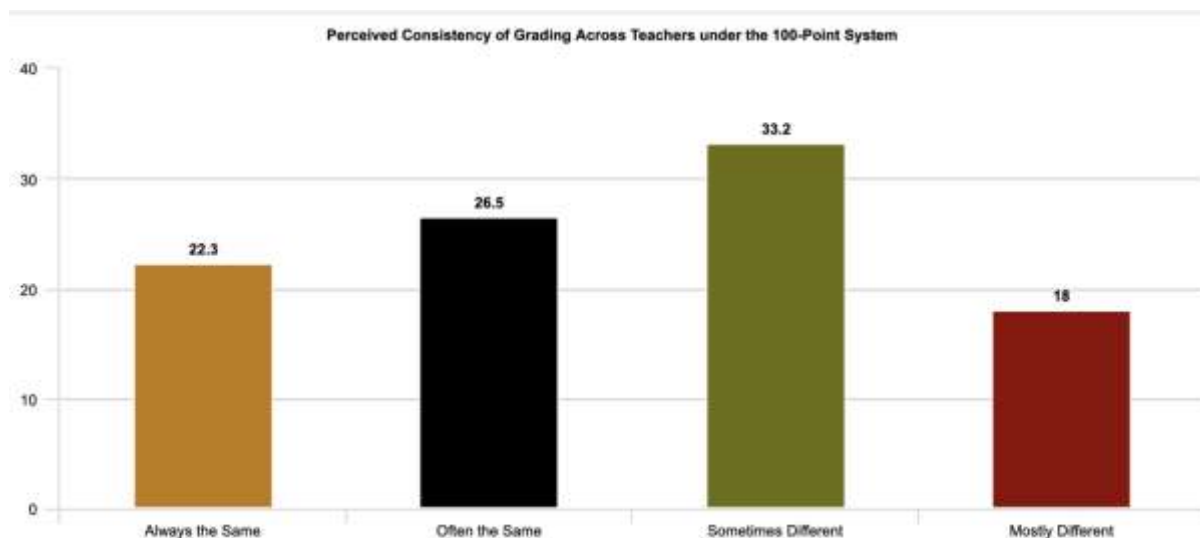
Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of the 100-Point System

Students expressed a range of opinions about the transition to the 100-point grading system, highlighting both its perceived strengths and its challenges. On the positive side, many respondents emphasized greater precision and fairness. They described the new framework as *"more accurate," "clearer,"* and *"better at illustrating performance."*Several students appreciated that the 100-point scale provided narrower grade intervals, which allowed for a more detailed reflection of their progress. Others noted that the addition of new assessment forms such as *SOR* and *SOCH*exams improved variety and encouraged continuous study. A number of students also mentioned increased motivation, explaining that the more granular scoring system *"gives more motivation to study harder"* and helps them prepare for future university-level evaluations.

However, many students also reported notable difficulties. The most frequent concern was that the new system made it harder to achieve high grades. Comments such as *"very hard to get good grades"* and *"difficult to score high"* appeared repeatedly, suggesting that students perceive the grading criteria as more demanding. Others pointed out that the 100-point scale introduces greater stress and uncertainty, as it is *"difficult to predict grades beforehand"*and *"too complex to comprehend."* The SOR and SOCH exams, though valued by some for promoting rigor, were also criticized by others as *"too difficult," "stressful,"* or *"confusing."* A few respondents mentioned unequal weighting of assignments, noting that homework and classwork seem to have a smaller impact on final grades than before.

Overall, students' qualitative feedback indicates a mixed but insightful response to the reform. While many acknowledge that the 100-point system is more transparent and motivating, they also experience it as more stressful and

demanding in practice. These findings suggest that the reform's success may depend less on the system itself and more on ensuring clear communication, teacher consistency, and student support during implementation.

Student Suggestions for Improving the Grading System

In the final open-ended question, students were invited to suggest ways to improve the 100-point grading system. Responses revealed four main areas of concern. The most frequent suggestion, mentioned by nearly **half of the respondents (around 50%)**, was to **reduce the overall difficulty and stressfulness of the system**, particularly by simplifying *SOR* and *SOCH* exams. Many students described these assessments as excessively demanding and felt that easing their difficulty would make the grading process more manageable and fair.

Approximately **30% of students** emphasized the need to **train teachers in fair and consistent grading practices**. These students believed that uneven grading, rather than the system itself, is the primary source of dissatisfaction. They stressed that proper teacher preparation is essential for ensuring objectivity and fairness across schools.

The remaining **20% of responses** focused on calls for **clearer explanations of the grading structure** and suggestions to **simplify the system's design**. Students in this group expressed confusion about how different assessment components contribute to the final grade and requested more transparent communication from teachers and administrators.

Taken together, these findings show that students are not resistant to the 100-point reform itself but believe its **implementation and communication** need improvement. Their suggestions emphasize the importance of clarity, teacher readiness, and emotional balance in ensuring the reform's long-term success.

Overview of Results

The findings indicate that **Uzbekistan's transition from a five-point to a 100-point grading system** has received a **mixed response among students**. Most respondents (**80.3%**) had used the new system for more than a year, suggesting a high level of familiarity. Despite this, **60.1%** still found the traditional five-point scale clearer, and **54.5%** described the 100-point system as more stressful. Perceptions of fairness and motivation were divided: only **37.5%** viewed the reform as fairer, and **44.2%** felt more motivated to study, while the remainder reported no improvement or decreased motivation. Opinions on grading consistency were similarly split, with roughly half of students perceiving at least some inconsistency across teachers.

Qualitative responses echoed these patterns. Many students praised the reform's **precision**, **variety of assessments**, and **motivational potential**, yet others

criticized its **complexity, difficulty,** and **pressure**. Common suggestions included **training teachers for fair grading**, **simplifying SOR and SOCH exams**, and **clarifying the grading structure**. Overall, the results suggest that students support the reform's goals but remain concerned about its **demanding and uneven implementation**.

Discussion

The findings of this study offer important insights into the ongoing education reform in Uzbekistan. The transition from a five-point to a 100-point grading system has brought measurable benefits, including **greater precision, transparency, and alignment with international standards**. However, student responses reveal that the reform's success depends not only on technical structure but also on **how effectively it is implemented and communicated**. Many students acknowledge the system's potential to assess performance more accurately, yet they continue to experience stress and confusion as they adjust to new expectations. This suggests that **policy reform alone cannot guarantee positive outcomes** without adequate institutional and psychological support.

Similar patterns have been observed in **other countries introducing detailed, performance-based grading systems**, such as South Korea and Japan, where students initially struggled with motivation and pressure before gradually adapting. These parallels indicate that Uzbekistan's experience fits within a broader global trend: educational reforms tend to generate initial resistance before leading to long-term improvements in fairness and accountability. In this context, the stress and confusion reported by Uzbek students may be viewed as **a natural stage of adaptation rather than a sign of policy failure**.

The results also have significant implications for **teachers and policymakers**. Students' feedback shows that much of the dissatisfaction stems from **inconsistent grading practices and unclear communication**, not necessarily from the grading system itself. Therefore, **teacher training and standardized evaluation practices** should become the government's top priorities. Effective teacher preparation will ensure that grades are applied fairly and uniformly, while communication campaigns can help students and parents better understand how the system works. Such efforts would not only reduce anxiety but also increase trust in the reform process.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. The survey sample was limited to **seven public pilot schools in Tashkent**, where the 100-point grading system has been implemented. As the reform has not yet been introduced in rural areas or private institutions, the findings cannot be generalized to the national level. Moreover, the research focused exclusively on **student perspectives**,

without incorporating insights from teachers or administrators. **Future studies should examine teacher experiences, implementation practices, and long-term student outcomes** to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the reform's impact and inform its potential nationwide expansion.

Overall, this study shows that Uzbekistan's grading reform is both a **promising and demanding step toward educational modernization**. While the 100-point system introduces challenges in fairness and stress management, it also lays the foundation for a more transparent and performance-oriented education model. Its long-term success will depend on **continued investment in teacher capacity, clear communication, and consistent monitoring**–ensuring that the reform ultimately achieves its goal of fostering both excellence and equity in education.

Conclusion

This study set out to analyze Uzbekistan's transition from a five-point to a 100-point grading system, exploring its rationale, perceived effectiveness, and student experiences. The results reveal that the reform has made significant strides in modernizing assessment and aligning it with international standards, yet its success is tempered by challenges in communication, teacher training, and student adaptation. Most students recognize the system's potential to deliver greater fairness and precision, but they also describe it as stressful and complex, reflecting the tension between technical progress and human adjustment.

From a policy perspective, the findings underscore that effective educational reform requires more than legislative change. True progress depends on the capacity of teachers to implement reforms consistently, the readiness of students to adapt to higher expectations, and the clarity with which reforms are communicated. The 100-point system, therefore, should not be seen as a finished product but as a continuing process of refinement.

For Uzbekistan, this reform represents a turning point toward a more transparent, merit-based education system. If supported with practical measures–such as nationwide teacher development programs, orientation sessions for students, and stronger feedback mechanisms–the 100-point framework could become a cornerstone of fair and effective learning assessment. Beyond its immediate context, this research highlights a broader lesson for policymakers: educational modernization succeeds not through policy design alone, but through empathy, communication, and consistent support for those implementing it.

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