

The Role of Education in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract. *This article analyzes the interrelationship between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and education. Education is seen as an important tool in ensuring sustainable development in the social, economic and environmental spheres. It also discusses the contribution of the education system to sustainable development, its role in educating the younger generation as conscious citizens, and the importance of education in solving global problems.*

Key words: *Sustainable development, education, social justice, environmental sustainability, economic development, innovative education, equal opportunities, young generation.*

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of strategies aimed at solving social, economic and environmental problems on a global scale. They are the basis of the 2030 Development Agenda adopted by the United Nations in 2015. These goals include such important areas as ensuring quality education for all,

creating equal opportunities and increasing social justice. Education, in turn, is the foundation of sustainable development, as it plays a major role not only in increasing the intellectual potential of the individual, but also in forming the universally recognized values of society.

Education creates opportunities to instill environmental awareness and civic responsibility in the younger generation, develop innovative thinking and ensure socio-economic stability. It is also possible to strengthen the principles of justice and equality in society through education systems, as well as form the knowledge and skills necessary to find solutions to global problems. Therefore, the role of education in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is invaluable. This article provides a detailed analysis of the role and importance of education in the process of sustainable development.

Methods and analyses

The following methods were used to write an article on the role of education in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals:

- Existing scientific articles, books, and reports were analyzed to study the connection between the Sustainable Development Goals and education in Uzbekistan and internationally;
- Statistical data were collected to identify the connections between education and the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Education systems in different countries and their success in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals were compared.

Discussion

The UN and its partners in Uzbekistan are working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals: they consist of 17 interrelated and ambitious goals aimed at addressing the key challenges facing Uzbekistan and the world's population. Uzbekistan has confirmed its commitment to a comprehensive approach to multi-stakeholder partnerships to meet the challenges set out in the global agenda for the period up to 2030 and to achieve 16 national targets in the field of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The current medium-term plan, the national action strategy for 2017-2021, serves as a programmatic framework for implementing the SDGs. To ensure that the SDGs are a priority for all ministries, in October 2018 the government adopted a resolution on the 2030 Agenda, which confirmed its commitment to aligning the SDGs with national strategies and programs. The government has approved 16 national MDGs, 125 targets, and 206 indicators to facilitate their implementation.

In the process of strategic reforms, Uzbekistan has set itself ambitious goals and plans.

To implement them, Uzbekistan needs mature personnel and specialists who are in line with the pace of rapid reforms.

Therefore, a lot of effort and funds are being directed to the comprehensive development of the education system in Uzbekistan and the training of qualified personnel.

Qualitative changes are taking place in the activities of preschool education, school and higher education systems, and scientific and research institutions.

An analysis of the reforms implemented in the education system in the country in a historically short period of time shows the following positive trends.

First, the approach to the education sector has fundamentally changed. In particular, the development of school education under the slogan “New Uzbekistan begins at the school threshold” has become a nationwide movement. The workload in schools has been optimized, and the practice of involving teachers in forced labor has been abolished. In this regard, traditional approaches were abandoned and modern technologies and advanced foreign experience were actively introduced.

Secondly, the basis of reforms in the education system was to raise the status of teachers in society and radically change the attitude towards them.

In this regard, material support for teachers was determined, including the provision of preferential loans to them, and the introduction of bonuses for teachers working in remote regions.

Thirdly, a legal space was created commensurate with the new stage of development of Uzbekistan and modern trends in the field of education. In particular, the legal status of teachers was firmly established for the first time in the newly amended

Constitution of the country. According to it, “In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the work of a teacher is recognized as the basis for the development of society and the state, the formation and upbringing of a healthy, harmonious generation, the preservation and enrichment of the spiritual and cultural potential of the people. The state takes care of the protection of the honor and dignity of teachers, their social and material well-being, and professional growth” (Article 52). Also, based on today's requirements, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Education” was adopted in a new edition. In addition, our Basic Law provides for specific mechanisms aimed at expanding the opportunities for children with disabilities to receive quality education as special obligations of the state in the field of education. In particular, Article 50 of the Constitution introduces a social norm on the provision of inclusive education in educational institutions for children with special educational needs.

Fourth, under the leadership of the President of the country, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, comprehensive strategic reforms have been implemented in the system. Current tasks in the field are reflected in conceptual and strategic documents.

In particular, these include the Strategy of Actions in Five Priority Areas of Development of our Country in 2017-2021, the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026, the “Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy, the “Digital Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy, the “Concept for the Development of the Public Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030”, the “Concept for the Development of the Preschool Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030”, and the “Concept for the Development of the Higher Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030”.

Importantly, their basis is the development of the potential of young people, their comprehensive support, and the creation of appropriate conditions for their education and upbringing. After all, the words of the great enlightener, prominent writer and educator Abdulla Avloni: “Education is a matter of life or death for us, salvation or destruction, happiness or disaster,” are relevant for all times.

Fifth, according to statistical data, the population of Uzbekistan is currently 37 million. people. According to demographers' forecasts, by 2030 the country's

population will exceed 40 million. people. At the same time, experts assess the dynamics of population growth, including the growth of the share of young people, as a period of “demographic dividend”, and, in their opinion, its rational use will serve the development of the country in the future. In this regard, the reforms being implemented in Uzbekistan are focused on ensuring “human dignity”, and as a final result, on the development of human capital. This is a requirement of the times. After all, the effectiveness of any reform depends on highly qualified specialists who have received high-quality and modern education. In other words, human capital is the most important foundation of any modernization and economic success.

Another important direction of state policy in the field of education is the creation of all necessary conditions for young people to acquire modern professions. For many years, the fact that 50% of school graduates enter the labor market without having any profession was one of the problems waiting for a solution.

In order to solve this problem, a new program is being implemented starting in 2023. According to it, European vocational education standards have been introduced in 1 technical school in each region. In the next five years, all colleges and technical schools will be covered by this system.

Sixth, quality education is the most effective and shortest path that determines the development of the country. In his Address to the Oliy Majlis and the people of Uzbekistan on December 20, 2022, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized that “Improving the quality of education is the only correct way to develop a new Uzbekistan” and declared 2023 the “Year of Attention to People and Quality Education”.

Seventh, in recent years, the amount of funds allocated from the state budget to the education sector has been increasing. In particular, in 2021, 2.9 trillion soums were allocated to the higher and secondary education system, and 22.1 trillion soums to public education. sums were allocated, in 2022 these figures amounted to 4.1 trillion. and 25.8 trillion. sums, respectively.

In general, the amount of spending on education, including the social sphere, accounts for more than half of the total cost of state budget expenditures. In

particular, spending from the state budget for these reforms has increased by 4.3 times over the past 6 years.

At the same time, in the process of reforming the public education system, the salaries of secondary school teachers were increased by 3 times, and qualified specialists were attracted to schools. As a result, the share of teachers with higher education in the 2016/2017 academic year was 81.8%, while in the 2020/2021 academic year this figure reached 87.8%.

In addition, in order to encourage the work of teachers working in remote areas of the country, clear criteria were set for paying them an additional 50% monthly salary. Also, the practice of providing school teachers with preferential loans for housing, vehicles, household appliances, etc. was introduced.

Naturally, not every country can afford such huge expenses, but no matter how difficult it is, the necessary funds and resources are being allocated for this. The Head of Uzbekistan considers these expenses not as expenses, but as the most effective investment in the future, emphasizing that the level and quality of education are an important factor determining the prospects of any country.

Eighth, reforms in the field have begun to bear positive results in a short time. In particular, if in 2017 only 27% of children in Uzbekistan were covered by preschool education, then over the past seven years the level of coverage of children with preschool education has reached 74%, and today about 2 million children are attending kindergartens.

Also, in recent years, the number of higher educational institutions has increased to 210 (for comparison: in 2016 - 77), and coverage has reached 42%. The material and technical base of higher education institutions has been strengthened. Within the framework of joint educational programs with foreign countries, training of specialists in 64 new professions has been launched.

At the same time, branches of prestigious higher education institutions of more than 30 foreign countries (USA, Great Britain, Italy, Finland, Korea, India, Singapore, Russia, etc.) have been opened in Uzbekistan.

In general, as a result of the reforms, the number of students studying in higher education institutions has increased by 2.2 times. In particular, in 2016, 268.3

thousand students studied, while in 2023 their number will reach 1.03 million people.

Ninth, in order to fundamentally reform the management system in this area, introduce modern forms of management, coordinate similar and overlapping functions of organizations operating in the education system, and ensure their effective activities, the Ministry of Preschool and School Education was established by merging the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, the Ministry of Preschool Education, and the Ministry of Public Education on the basis of the Ministry of Higher Education and Innovative Development.

Tenth, taking into account the special role and influence of male teachers in the effective implementation of educational work, as a result of specific measures taken, more than 44 thousand male teachers returned to the public education system.

A new system for training talented young people abroad was also introduced. In particular, the "El-yurt Umidi" Foundation was established to train highly qualified specialists abroad, to search for, select and encourage talented and promising civil servants, to help form a new generation of personnel and attract them to the civil service. Today, more than 504 scholarship holders of the Foundation are studying at the most prestigious educational and research, innovation and practice centers in the USA, Great Britain, Germany, France, Canada, Japan, Spain, South Korea and other developed countries.

Results

Also, the country has launched the activities of Creative Schools, Abu Ali Ibn Sino, M. Ulugbek, Muhammad al-Khwarizmi specialized schools. One of the latest reforms aimed at further improving the country's education system was the adoption of the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On additional measures to accelerate reforms in the field of education" (02.02.2024 No. PQ-54). The following were identified as the main areas of activity of the project office: - development of measures and promising initiatives to reform the education sector; - analysis and generalization of recommendations from international organizations, financial institutions, consulting companies and experts, ensuring the effective implementation of acceptable initiatives; - preparing proposals for improving

educational standards, curricula and programs based on advanced foreign experience, with the broad involvement of leading experts, consultants, advisors and the public;

- ensuring coherence and continuity between types and levels of education, establishing coordinated activities of ministries and departments in the development of state educational standards and curricula;
- forming a culture of quality education in educational organizations, providing comprehensive assistance to ministries and departments in international accreditation of curricula;
- updating curricula and programs in mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and foreign languages in schools based on international standards;
- developing teaching methodologies aimed at developing students' knowledge, analytical, critical and creative thinking, and skills in finding solutions to problems and applying them in practice.
- gradual introduction of recognized foreign programs (such as A-level, IB), international experiences in assessing the knowledge of students and teachers (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS); - strengthening international relations in the field of monitoring the quality of education, expanding cooperation with foreign and international assessment organizations.

It should be noted that today reforms in Uzbekistan have become irreversible, and changes in the education system are their basis. It is important to note that reforms in the field are of a strategic nature, and the state has set itself major tasks in the near future in order to systematically improve them based on modern trends. In particular:

- bringing the preschool education system to a new level and ensuring full coverage of children.
- implementing the "Environment for Education" program in the general secondary education system. Within its framework, it is planned to launch free buses for students of 715 general secondary educational institutions located in remote and remote areas.

- bringing the general secondary education system to a new level. In particular, creating about 700 new textbooks, exercise books, methodological guides for teachers and mobile applications.
- introducing vocational training courses in all general secondary educational institutions. In particular, the educational methodology of Presidential schools and specialized schools will be introduced into the educational processes of all general secondary educational institutions.
- actively involving the private sector in the process of developing general secondary education, including increasing the number of non-state general secondary educational organizations to 1,000.
- allocating preferential loans in the amount of 1 trillion soums to establish the activities of non-state general secondary educational organizations in the next five years. Starting from 2024, conclude contracts for the construction of at least 100 general secondary educational institutions annually on the basis of public-private partnership.
- increase the share of students studying in non-state general secondary educational institutions by 3 times. On the basis of public-private partnership and at the expense of funds attracted from international financial institutions, implement projects to expand the network of general secondary educational institutions worth \$2 billion, etc.

The goal is to further expand the network of preschool educational institutions, strengthen their material and technical base, and build new kindergartens in order to increase the coverage of preschool education to 80.8% by 2030.

It should be noted that the reforms in the field of education in the country, the inclusion of young people in the education system, are recognized by the world community. In particular, the World Population Review analyzed the situation in 154 countries to compile a ranking of the most literate countries in 2021. According to the ranking, Uzbekistan is one of 4 countries with 100 percent literacy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that human capital is an important factor in ensuring economic growth. In this regard, quality education is undoubtedly the most

effective and shortest way to ensure the development of the country. It can be said with full confidence that in recent years, reforms in the education system of Uzbekistan have been gaining positive momentum and will bear fruit in the medium and long term.

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