

**CURRENT TRENDS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM
OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN:
CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS**

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Abstract: *The article is devoted to the consideration of the reforms and achieved results in the higher education system in Uzbekistan. In addition, having analyzed the regulatory framework within the issue under consideration, the authors highlight the importance of education in achieving the United Nations (UN) sustainable development goals.*

Keywords: *education, higher education, university, United Nations (UN), sustainable development goals, gender equality.*

Introduction. Recently Uzbekistan has been implementing a significant transformation of the education system. The primary goal of this transformation is to improve the quality of the process of training highly qualified personnel. Current conditions impose new requirements for university graduates in mastering modern knowledge based on advanced cutting-edge information and educational technologies, which are required to improve the quality of life of both each individual and society as a whole.

Literature review. It should be noted that issues of the higher education system have always been the focus of attention of the government of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The relevance of the topic under consideration is reflected in the adopted decrees and resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In particular, within the framework of the problem considered it is necessary to note the Decrees of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan №PD-27 “On the state program for the implementation of the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022 - 2026 in the “Year of Care for People and Quality Education” dated February 28, 2023, №PD-5847 “On approval of the Concept for the development of the higher education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030” dated October 8, 2019, as well as the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On approval of the National Program of Education in the Field of Human Rights in the Republic of Uzbekistan” dated February 7, 2023.

In particular, the following priority objectives have been determined: “development of public-private partnerships in the field of higher education, raising the level of enrollment in higher education to more than 50 percent based on organizing the activities of public and non-public higher educational institutions in the regions, creating a healthy competitive environment in the field; inclusion of at least 10 higher educational institutions of the republic in the first 1000 positions of the list of higher educational institutions in the ranking of internationally recognized organizations (Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings, Times Higher Education или Academic Ranking of World Universities); implementation of advanced standards of higher education, in particular, a gradual transition from education which curricula are aimed at obtaining

theoretical knowledge to an education system aimed at developing practical skills in reliance upon the international experience; raising the essence of higher education to a qualitatively new level, establishing the system for training highly qualified personnel capable of finding their place in the labor market and making a worthy contribution to the stable development of the social sphere and economic sectors; gradual implementation of the “University 3.0” concept, which provides for a close connection between education, science, innovation and activities for the commercialization of research results in higher educational institutions” (Decree, 2019).

In addition, the issues of the higher education development have been investigated in the research papers of a number of scholars and researchers. The majority of scholars highlight the significance and necessity of reforms, which must be implemented in the higher education sphere to raise it to a new level. “Under conditions of active social and demographic processes in modern society, the educational system is undergoing significant changes. Recently, our pedagogical community has come to understand that many essential problems in the development of higher education can only be solved by integrating the educational process and research activities in the performance of professors, lecturers and instructors” (Senko, 2015).

According to Russian scientist A.I. Borisenko, “Education is crucially important for the development of every person. By acquiring a specialty, a person becomes a professional in one field or another, education allows one to determine one’s role in one’s life and in the life of society, to think, interact in a team, and acquire new skills” (Borisenko, 2023).

In our opinion, the book “The Higher Education System: Academic Organization in Cross-National Perspective” by Burton R. Clarke can be noted within the framework of studying contemporary problems of higher education and development prospects. It highlights the main elements of the higher education system and shows the differences between the respective systems of various countries. The author answers five main questions: “How is the work of higher education systems organized? How do they support sustainable ideas? How is authority distributed? How is the integration of such systems ensured? How do changes occur in them?” (Clark, 2011).

Speaking on September 20, 2023 at the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the President of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev has noted the following: “Development of human capital and the education of a creative young generation is one of the strategic objectives that Uzbekistan has set for itself. We are convinced that accessible and quality education for all is the most effective factor in eradicating poverty, improving the well-being of the population and achieving sustainable economic growth. In this regard, our country has accumulated a lot of experience in recent years - a radical transformation of the education system is being carried out. Over the past six years, enrollment in preschool education has increased from 21 percent to 70 percent, and in higher education from 9 percent to 38 percent. The opportunities will be created for every child to attend kindergarten, and every second school graduate to study at a university by 2030. Moreover, we are undertaking systematic activities to achieve gender equality. In particular, 49 percent of students who entered universities last year were girls” (Mirziyoyev, 2023).

Research methodology. Based on the goals and objectives of this research article such research methods as observation, comparison, analysis, synthesis, experimental survey and the method of generating ideas have been widely applied.

Analysis and Results Discussion. Among current trends that fundamentally change the foundations of the world order, the trend of transition to sustainable development is of particular importance. Climate change and mankind’s anthropogenic impact on nature have reached a critical point - their consequences in the form of fires, floods, environmental poisoning have caused the death of a significant number of species of flora and fauna, a decrease in diversity and the emergence of threats to human health and life. A number of experts believe that humanity has

entered a new era of its existence - the “Anthropocene”: this is the era of significant human impact on the geology and ecosystem of the Earth.

Education is considered one of the key tools in achieving the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals are global issues that require the joint efforts of all countries to preserve the planet and ensure the well-being of people.

In Uzbekistan, the issue of education within the framework of this issue began to be considered after the country approved the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015. This year, the United Nations announced the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which contained 17 interconnected goals as “a plan for achieving a better and more sustainable future for all” (UNDP, 2015).

The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M. Mirziyoyev has also mentioned the importance and necessity of adopting a special resolution of the UN General Assembly on raising the role of parliaments in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring human rights. Subsequently, the 17 main Sustainable Development Goals of the country until 2023 were approved on October 20, 2018 by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers “On measures to implement the National Goals and Objectives in the field of sustainable development for the period until 2030” (Resolution, 2018).

In 1987, the name of the new concept of Sustainable Development was first used in the meaning of the development in which current activities and meeting the needs of modern society do not harm subsequent generations, but find a mutual balance. Scholars and experts from various countries focus on different features of sustainable development, which is determined both by ideological and scientific foundations, and by a system of national goals. For example, sustainable development can be revealed through potential, which reflects the capabilities required for sustainable development.

Research of the sustainability issues has expanded dramatically since the mid-1980s, and in the early years of this century, the field of sustainability science has emerged as a global network of collaboration. The field as a whole is growing so quickly that any research quickly becomes irrelevant.

These 17 goals are revealed in the form of 169 specific objectives formulated in the form of recommendations of a global nature, but at the same time, the government of each country sets national goals, guided by global wishes and taking into account national conditions. Each country decides how to ensure that these global challenges are taken into account in the form of recommendations in national planning processes, policies and strategies

Currently along with research and educational activities the universities are increasingly involved in solving social problems of society. They find themselves engaged in solving the social problems of a particular territory, both indirectly through research and training (retraining) of personnel, and directly through a wide range of volunteer, charitable, educational, and socio-cultural activities. In this regard in many cases they play the role of city-forming organizations, finding themselves at the center of the infrastructure that ensures the sustainable development of individual regions and cities, including the solution of social problems.

Universities in modern conditions focus a lot of attention on the implementation of educational programs for the training of highly qualified personnel who remain in demand in the long term, which will enable them to influence the reduction of unemployment. This requires them to not only monitor the regional and national labor markets and trends in the international labor market, but also actively collaborate with both local authorities and business representatives to determine the structure and volume of demand in the labor market, taking into account predicted trends, i.e. formation of specific orders for specialists, implementation of specific targeted recruitments.

The higher education field is currently undergoing fundamental changes in terms of its role in society, principles and methods of work, organization and management. The global leading universities are in search of new models and are actively rethinking their missions.

Currently one of the most recognized models is the approach that determines the trajectory of change in modern university models towards the University 3.0 model, simultaneously implementing three missions: educational, research and innovation, aimed at the commercialization of knowledge. However, in addition to the active transition of many universities to the University 3.0 model, in modern conditions a new promising and future-oriented model of University 4.0 is being developed. Its mission is defined not only as education, science and innovation, but also as the integration of various structures of society to solve problems of sustainable development of the society.

Table 1

Specific peculiarities of the strategic guidelines of universities aimed at global or regional influence*

Model/Features	University 1.0	University 2.0	University 3.0	University 4.0
Mission	Education	Education and science	Education, science and innovations	Education, science, innovation, integration, impact on sustainable development of society
Strategic objective	Personnel training	Production of new scientific knowledge, personnel training	Influence on economic development through the introduction of innovations and personnel training	Global impact on sustainable development of society, ecosystem integration
The role and place of education	Education is the process of transferring gained knowledge	Education in the process of producing new scientific knowledge	Education in real innovation-based projects	Foresight education in research educational ecosystems
Academic curricula	Standardized academic curricula	Standardized academic curricula with a variable part	Individual educational trajectories within the framework of standardized academic curricula	Personalized learning, flexible, open, networked academic curricula
Academic technologies	Traditional active	Traditional interactive	Innovation-based offline	Innovation-based digital and online
Science	Science beyond universities	Generation of new knowledge through proactive research, "pure science"	Research for the technological development of national economies	Transnational research aimed at solving global problems
Key personnel	Faculty	Faculty and researchers	Faculty, researchers and managers	Faculty, tutors, researchers, IT-specialists
Impact on the society	Impact on the human resource development	Impact on the development of human resources and research potential	Impact on technological development of the economy	Impact on the global sustainable development processes

Thus, universities in the US and UK, which are leaders (in the top 5) in the QSWUR 2023 ranking, are highly rated for their contribution to the SDGs. 48 Russian universities were

* Developed by the authors in reliance upon the literary sources.

represented in the QSWUR 2023 global ranking. In general, out of 48 Russian universities that are represented in the QSWUR ranking, for example, Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov has been awarded a medal.

Table 2

Top 5 world universities in the QSWUR for 2023 of the World University Rankings (QSWUR) with an assessment of their impact on the SDG[†]

Ranked in QSWUR	University	Country	“Environmental impact”	“Social impact”
1	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)	USA	Gold	Gold
2	University of Cambridge	Great Britain	Gold	Gold
3	Stanford University	USA	Gold	Gold
4	University of Oxford	Great Britain	Gold	Gold
5	Harvard University	USA	Gold	Gold

In this context the relevance of education is that it plays a crucially important role in the implementation of the following UN goals:

Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education: UN Goal 4 is to ensure access to quality education for all people at all ages. Education is the foundation of human development and self-sufficiency and should be available to everyone, without distinction of age, gender or location.

Improving the level of literacy and skills: Goal 4 also includes improving the literacy and skills of the population. Education should provide opportunities to acquire basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills, as well as develop more complex skills such as critical thinking, creativity and job skills.

Promoting gender equality: UN Goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality, and education is an important factor in this area. Education should provide equal opportunities for boys and girls, and develop awareness of gender issues.

Supporting sustainable educational practices: Education should encourage sustainable development and environmental awareness. This means teaching people to care for the environment, understanding the connections between nature and humans, and promoting sustainable lifestyles.

Conclusion. In conclusion, it should be noted that currently the university is acquiring a central and significant role. This is the new mission of the modern university – a university for society. The possibility of its implementation in each specific university ensures its success and competitiveness. The ability of universities to implement the model of a socially oriented university and operate within its framework determines (determines) the success of the development of a particular region and the country as a whole.

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