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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Annotation

This article examines the importance of the education sector in economic development. It highlights how investment in education contributes to the formation of a skilled workforce, increases productivity, and supports innovation and technological progress. The study also analyzes the relationship between education quality and economic growth, emphasizing that countries with strong education systems tend to achieve higher levels of socio-economic development. Furthermore, the article discusses the role of government policies and reforms in improving access to education and ensuring its relevance to labor market needs.

Key words

Education, economic development, human capital, productivity, innovation, workforce, economic growth, education policy, skills development, socio-economic development.

Education is widely recognized as one of the most important factors influencing economic development. In today's rapidly changing global economy, countries that invest in education tend to achieve higher levels of growth, innovation, and competitiveness. A well-educated population contributes to the development of human capital, which is essential for increasing productivity and improving the overall quality of the workforce.

The role of education in economic development goes beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills. It also fosters critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability, which are crucial in responding to modern economic challenges. Moreover, education helps reduce poverty and inequality by providing individuals with better employment opportunities and higher income potential.

There is no doubt that the changes taking place in the field of education in our country — including the adopted laws, decrees, resolutions, and orders — have a positive impact on the development of our society. These measures are important factors in enhancing the country's intellectual potential and in training qualified, competitive specialists who meet the requirements of the national education standards.

In this regard, on September 24, 2024, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev reviewed proposals on the development of vocational education and the reform of the national qualifications system. During the presentation, he pointed out several shortcomings that need to be addressed, including the stratification of vocational education institutions, the lack of continuity between educational programs, inefficient use of existing capacities, the subordination of institutions to various ministries and agencies, the absence of international educational programs, the lack of a dedicated electronic platform for the system, and the insufficient progress in reforming the National Qualifications System. He gave specific instructions and directives to eliminate these issues.

It is worth noting that, in order to educate the youth of New Uzbekistan in accordance with the demands of the time and to create a solid foundation for their future, the following new decrees and resolutions aimed at developing the vocational education system have been adopted.

By the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated September 30, 2024, "*On Further Development of the National Qualifications System of the Republic of Uzbekistan*," the Institute for the Development of the National Qualifications System was established under the

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Project Office of the “*Center for Education Sector Projects.*” The establishment of this institute serves several purposes: to advance the National Qualifications System in the country, to develop professional standards in a meaningful and high-quality manner, to implement a unified digital platform for the National Qualifications System, to develop proposals and recommendations for the improvement and advancement of the system, to provide methodological services, to improve the qualifications of members of sectoral councils and staff of qualification assessment centers, and to form and maintain national and professional standards registries for individuals with certified qualifications.

In addition, the decree assigns the Project Office of the “*Center for Education Sector Projects*” the following responsibilities: launching professional development courses aimed at improving the National Qualifications System; preparing relevant proposals; developing methodological guidelines for creating result-oriented educational programs based on professional standards; providing methodological support to qualification assessment centers, including the development of core assessment criteria; establishing and implementing a unified digital platform for the National Qualifications System; developing, reviewing, and coordinating draft professional standards with stakeholders; and ensuring the development and implementation of professional standards covering 1,800 occupations, based on leading international practices.

In the Presidential Decree No. PF-158 of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 16, 2024, “*On Measures to Further Improve the System of Training Qualified Personnel in Vocational Education and Implement International Educational Programs,*” the main directions for improving the vocational education system were outlined. These include the introduction of a unified network of multi-disciplinary educational institutions providing training at all levels of vocational education, ensuring their academic independence, creating a specialized electronic platform, equipping institutions with the most modern technologies, providing necessary educational materials and digital content, gradually digitalizing the educational process, introducing a modern management system and international educational programs in the field of vocational education, and fundamentally reforming the system for assessing graduates’ skills and competencies.

The adopted Decree and Resolution will greatly contribute to the consistent development of the vocational education system in our country. As a logical continuation of the ongoing reforms in the national education system, the following measures will be implemented based on these normative-legal documents:

- the training of personnel will be organized in accordance with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) and the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework of Uzbekistan;
- training programs will be launched at the primary, secondary, and specialized secondary vocational education levels, and short-term training courses will be organized based on qualifications and competencies;
- training under primary vocational education programs will be provided free of charge (on a state grant basis) for students who have completed the 9th grade of general secondary education, while other applicants with at least general secondary education will be enrolled on a paid (contract) basis.
- training under secondary and specialized secondary vocational education programs will be organized on the basis of both state grants and paid (contract) enrollment;
- alignment and continuity between vocational education programs of different levels will be ensured, and the duration of study will be determined based on the modules previously mastered by the student;
- graduates of specialized secondary vocational education programs will be allowed to continue their studies at the appropriate stage of the bachelor’s degree program, based on

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the modules they have completed, the credits they have earned, and their Grade Point Average (GPA) as determined by the higher education institution.

- if the necessary methodological and pedagogical resources, classrooms and laboratories, workshop equipment, practical training bases, and employer demands are available, it will be permitted to initiate training at educational levels that were not previously offered;
- vocational education programs will be developed based on professional standards and implemented only after being coordinated with sectoral councils for skills development, associations of business entities, major employers, and professional organizations;
- final assessment of graduates will be conducted in the form of demonstration exams with the participation of industry experts, sectoral councils for skills development, assessment organizations, employers, associations, and representatives of business entities.
- a unified procedure for issuing state-recognized documents to graduates of vocational education institutions will be introduced. In this case, individuals who complete vocational education programs will be awarded diplomas, while graduates of short-term courses will receive certificates confirming the acquisition of relevant competencies (qualifications) based on the modules they have completed;
- all legal entities and individuals will be granted open and free access to the “Vocational Education” platform;
- higher education institutions will be assigned the responsibility of providing methodological support to the technical schools affiliated with them, improving the quality of education, and enhancing their material and technical base.

Starting from the 2025/2026 academic year, technical schools will be allowed to:

review and revise their working curricula and syllabi developed within the framework of educational programs, including integrating subjects based on the proposals of employers, and modify up to 30 percent of the total hours allocated for specialized and general vocational subjects (modules);

introduce paid joint educational programs, in coordination with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, in cooperation with leading foreign educational institutions;

enter into direct contracts with local and foreign employers for the training of personnel and the organization of short-term training courses on a paid basis, and independently determine the language of instruction and tuition fees for these programs and courses;

organize short-term training courses in professional skills, foreign languages, and entrepreneurship for citizens of various age groups and unemployed individuals, funded by the State Employment Promotion Fund.

permission has been granted to use vocational skills centers as practical training bases free of charge.

Starting from the 2025/2026 academic year, international educational programs will be introduced in 14 technical schools across the country, and these institutions will be granted full academic independence. Training will be organized in 12 qualification areas. Students who study under international educational programs and successfully pass the examinations will be awarded both a diploma (certificate) in accordance with the international program and a state-recognized diploma in vocational education.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation has been authorized to engage foreign organizations for the implementation of international educational programs in technical schools through direct contracts based on the selection of the most suitable proposals. Additionally, the Ministry has been designated as the responsible authority for implementing a unified state policy in the vocational education system.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, in coordination with the Ministry of Economy and Finance, has been granted the authority to determine the tuition fees for paid (contract-based) education in state technical schools.

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A procedure for selecting candidates for the positions of director and deputy director of technical schools through an open competition has been introduced, which will be conducted via a special electronic platform of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation. Directors and deputy directors will be employed under a three-year labor contract based on the strategic plan they submit. Upon the expiration of the contract, it may be extended for another three years depending on the fulfillment of the tasks outlined in the strategic plan.

In order to provide financial support for the ongoing reforms in the system of training mid-level specialists, a Vocational Education Development Fund, without the status of a legal entity, will be established under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation.

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