

HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT STRATEGY IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: General Background: Human capital development is a critical factor for national growth and competitiveness, influencing various sectors such as education and healthcare. Global approaches to human capital development offer diverse strategies and frameworks that can be adapted to national contexts. **Specific Background:** This article examines the global strategies for human capital development, with a particular focus on Uzbekistan's approach. It reviews the strategic goals and tasks outlined by Uzbekistan, especially in relation to its 2030 vision, and assesses their application across key sectors including education and healthcare. **Knowledge Gap:** Despite extensive research on global human capital development strategies, there is a limited understanding of how specific national strategies, such as those of Uzbekistan, are operationalized and their effectiveness in addressing sector-specific challenges. **Aims:** The primary aim of this article is to analyze and evaluate the global approaches to human capital development, assess the strategic goals and tasks adopted by Uzbekistan, and explore their implementation and impact across various sectors. **Results:** The analysis reveals that Uzbekistan's human capital development strategy, as outlined in the Uzbekistan-2030 plan, prioritizes key areas such as education and healthcare. The implementation of these strategies has shown significant progress, although challenges remain in fully realizing their potential across all sectors. **Novelty:** This article provides a detailed evaluation of Uzbekistan's human capital development strategy within the context of global approaches, offering new insights into the effectiveness of sector-specific implementations and their alignment with broader strategic goals. **Implications:** The findings underscore the importance of targeted human capital development strategies in achieving national growth objectives. They highlight the need for ongoing assessment and adaptation of strategies to ensure that they effectively address sectoral needs and contribute to the broader goals outlined in national development plans.

Keywords: human capital, development, education, strategy, methodology, innovation, science, partnership, intellect, tradition.



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Introduction

According to the World Bank's conclusions, 64% of growth in developing countries is attributed to the quality of human capital, compared to 76% in the United States and 74.2% in European countries. The research in this area indicates that each dollar invested in human capital development could yield a return of between 3 and 6 dollars for the country in the future.

Uzbekistan is the most populous country in the Central Asia region. According to data from the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, in 2023, the average age of the population is 29 years, and the average life expectancy is 74.7 years. Over 60% of the 37 million people are youth [1]. According to the Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research [2], Uzbekistan has observed a sharp increase in births over the past 5 years. According to forecasts, the birth rate will continue at a steady rate (approximately 900,000 to 950,000) until 2030, and the population will exceed 41 million.

We are not citing these numbers without reason. There is a significant opportunity in our country to develop human capital and achieve major successes and accomplishments in the future.

Main part: It should be noted that over the past 7 years, Uzbekistan has been implementing a series of strategic measures aimed at transforming human resources into human capital and achieving national development. In particular, the President of Uzbekistan issued a decree on February 7, 2017, regarding organizational measures for implementing the “Action Strategy on Five Priority Areas for the Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021” [3], as well as a decree on January 28, 2022, concerning the “New Uzbekistan Development Strategy for 2022–2026” [4]. These programmatic documents outline the trends in human capital development in the near and medium term and set forth the priority tasks in this area.

While the Action Strategy began with implementing major reforms in every sector, the Development Strategy continued these reforms while ensuring their continuity. Based on accumulated experience and opportunities, the reforms were further refined with increased firmness and pace, leading to an improvement in the effectiveness coefficient and overall efficacy of the reforms. Specifically, in the past 5 years, a number of reforms have been carried out in Uzbekistan’s healthcare system. 1,373 rural medical centers were reduced, and in their place, 793 rural family clinics, 441 emergency medical service branches, and day hospitals were established. New specialized clinics and 1,200 emergency medical service branches have been set up in 306 urban and district hospitals. Multispecialty medical centers in the regions have been equipped with 14 stationary and mobile digital X-ray machines and 8 MRI scanners. The Republic and 6 regional oncology centers have been provided with 15 gamma therapy devices worth 6.5 million USD.

The attention being given to the protection and enhancement of public health at the level of state policy is certainly not without reason. Indeed, the health of the population and the robustness of the national gene pool are considered significant assets of the state. The development of human capital is directly linked to the physical and mental health of individuals. Establishing a high-quality healthcare system and creating conditions for the upbringing of a healthy generation are priority directions of state policy.

The number of higher education institutions producing highly skilled professionals for the healthcare sector has increased from 7 to 9, and the quotas for medical education institutions have been raised to 72% at the undergraduate level and 92% at the master’s level. Forty-seven of the country’s medical colleges have been transformed into Abu Ali ibn Sina Public Health Technical Schools, the salaries of medical personnel have been increased by a factor of 3.3, and compulsory labor for these professionals has been abolished.

It is worth noting that in order to improve the quality of emergency medical services provided to the population, the Ministry of Health has established the Emergency Medical Assistance Development Fund. Additionally, in the emergency medical system, the funds allocated per call for medicines have increased from 500 som to 7,700 som. The number of emergency medical service branches has grown from 818 to 1,666, the number of emergency medical teams has increased from 1,648 to 2,685, and the number of reanimobles has been raised from 24 to 435.

Research Methods

To implement the prioritized tasks related to safeguarding and enhancing public health within the framework of the Development Strategy, the following objectives are set for the next 5 years:

firstly, establish medical clusters in Namangan, Fergana, Sirdarya, Kashkadarya, Navoi, Tashkent regions, and the city of Tashkent;

secondly, widely implement the electronic prescription system;

thirdly, increase the funds allocated from the state budget for medicines and medical supplies by threefold;

fourthly, raise the share of domestic production of medicines and medical supplies to 80%;

fifthly, increase the private sector's share in medical services to 25%;

sixthly, organize primary health care services in regions based on the "one-step" principle;

seventhly, aim to raise the salaries of qualified doctors to the equivalent of \$1,000.

Promoting physical education and sports has been designated as one of the important directions of state social policy in the country. Therefore, in recent years, necessary conditions have been created for the population, especially the younger generation, to regularly engage in physical education and mass sports.

In the districts and cities of the republic, 203 priority, 206 prospective, and 199 developing sports have been established, while 112 higher education institutions have specialized in 293 Olympic, 17 national, and 25 other sports. As a result, the proportion of the population engaged in sports has reached 27.6%. A notable achievement is that the Uzbekistan delegation succeeded in recording its best-ever result at the 32nd Summer Olympics held in Paris in 2024, where the strongest athletes from 206 countries competed. Our victorious athletes secured a total of 13 medals, including 8 gold, 2 silver, and 3 bronze, through intense and uncompromising contests.

To advance the field of physical education and sports to a new level, the Development Strategy aims to increase the proportion of the population regularly engaged in sports from the current 27.6% to 33%, develop national sports and traditional games, raise the share of highly educated coaches to 85%, and secure at least 10 licenses for the Winter Olympics and at least 20 licenses for the 2030 Olympics.

Within the framework of the Action Strategy and its logical continuation, the Development Strategy, efforts to enhance human capital in Uzbekistan, including comprehensive support for education and science, creating conditions for the population, especially youth, to engage in physical education and sports, and strengthening public health, have led to a 4.3-fold increase in government budget expenditures.

Results and Discussion

In addition, the Program for Further Improvement of the Preschool Education System for 2017–2021 and the Concept for Developing the Preschool Education System until 2030 were approved. These initiatives aim to fundamentally enhance the activities of preschool institutions, strengthen their material and technical base, and build new kindergartens, with the goal of increasing the coverage level of preschool education to 80.8% by 2030.

To continually improve the education system like developed countries, provide quality education and training, and prepare skilled personnel, the Ministry of Preschool Education was established to implement a unified state policy in the field of preschool education. As a result, the number of preschool institutions increased from 5,211 to 19,316, and the number of schools grew from 9,719 to 10,289. Between 2017 and 2022, the coverage level of preschool education rose from 27.7% to 67%.

By 2026, within the framework of the Development Strategy, the task has been set to increase the coverage level of preschool education to 80% and to establish over 7,000 new non-governmental preschools.

On April 29, 2019, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's Decree on "Approval of the Concept for

the Development of the Public Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030” was enacted [5]. This document sets the task for Uzbekistan to achieve a position among the top 30 leading countries in the world by the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) international student assessment program ranking by 2030.

In the last 5 years, the share of qualified teachers with higher education in schools increased from 81.8% to 87.8%. Reforms in general secondary education have progressed rapidly through the establishment of new specialized schools.

The 41st goal of the Development Strategy sets the following tasks:

- Create an additional 1.2 million student places in the public education system by implementing the National School Development Program;
- Develop and implement a national program aimed at building new schools, increasing private schools, and improving the quality of education;
- Increase the number of student places to 6.4 million by the end of 2026 [4].

Additionally, within the framework of the priority areas for reforming higher education, the Concept for the Development of the Higher Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030 has been approved. Moreover, during 2017-2021, the number of higher education institutions doubled, and the admission quotas for higher education increased threefold, reaching 28%. Uzbekistan improved its position in the Global Innovation Index ranking from 122nd to 86th place.

The systemic reforms being implemented in Uzbekistan have addressed many long-standing shortcomings and issues in the fields of science and innovation. The tangible results of these reforms are reflected in the recognition of international ranking organizations. For example, according to the Global Innovation Index report, the republic’s ranking reached 86th place out of 132 countries.

The 50th goal of the Development Strategy specifies the following:

- Increase the scope of sending free and creative-thinking youth to prestigious foreign universities through the “El-Yurt Umidi” Foundation by a factor of 2, with 50% of these students to be educated in technical, natural sciences, and IT fields;
- Conduct open selection competitions for undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral education at the most prestigious universities in foreign countries;
- Announce and conduct open competitions organized by the Foundation for participation in undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral programs at foreign higher education institutions.

On September 11, 2023, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the “Uzbekistan-2030” Strategy marked the beginning of a new phase in the reforms aimed at developing human capital.

This document was developed based on the experience gained during the implementation of the New Uzbekistan Development Strategy and the results of public discussions.

In the “Uzbekistan – 2030” strategy, “Creating suitable conditions for every individual to realize their potential” has been selected as an initial priority area. The effectiveness indicators for the goals to be achieved in the education sector by 2030 are defined as follows:

- Ensure that all state preschool education institutions are equipped with computer classrooms to develop basic computer literacy skills among children;
- Attract 500 foreign specialists with language proficiency to educational institutions annually;
- Implement vocational training courses in all general secondary education institutions;
- Integrate the educational methodologies of Presidential Schools and specialized schools into the curricula of all general secondary education institutions;

- Send 1,000 preschool teachers and educators abroad for professional development and internships;
- Implement projects to expand the network of general secondary education institutions with a total investment of \$2 billion, financed through public-private partnerships and international financial institutions;
- Increase the enrollment rate of youth in higher education to at least 50%;
- Establish at least 50 joint educational programs with foreign universities ranked in the “Top-500” to implement a “dual diploma system”;
- Enhance the effectiveness of scientific research in higher education institutions and raise scientific potential to 70%;
- Allocate 3 trillion som for fundamental research;
- Create over 2,500 new scientific developments based on practical research results;
- Ensure that Uzbekistan is included in the Top-50 countries in the Global Innovation Index;
- Increase the number of researchers to 2,000 per one million people.

The “Uzbekistan – 2030” strategy also outlines several tasks for ensuring public health:

firstly, increase the average life expectancy to 78 years;

secondly, double the amount of funding allocated to healthcare;

thirdly, provide comprehensive treatment for 350,000 diabetes patients and 1.5 million cardiovascular disease patients;

fourthly, reduce the incidence of hereditary diseases among children by half;

fifthly, provide free micronutrient powders to children aged 6-23 months, special medications for the prevention of helminthiasis to children aged 2-10 years, iodine supplements to children aged 3-15 years, and multivitamins, iron, and folic acid to women aged 15-35 years;

sixthly, halve the proportion of children under 5 with growth delays, underweight, or excess weight;

seventhly, completely ban the import, preparation, and sale of products containing high levels of trans fats, salt, and sugar in educational and healthcare institutions;

eighthly, achieve 100% digitization of medical institutions.

The “Uzbekistan – 2030” strategy outlines the following directions for continuing reforms in youth policy and sports:

- Ensure that school graduates acquire at least 2 foreign languages and 1 profession;
- Develop the talents of at least 2 million young people by involving them in scientific and innovative activities, intellectual games, and learning foreign languages;
- Send 500 talented youths annually to prestigious foreign universities;
- Increase youth participation in sports to over 8 million by organizing mass sports events;
- Raise the proportion of the population engaged in sports activities to 36%;
- Establish at least 5,000 sports facilities in local communities for physical education and mass sports;
- Increase the number of young people regularly participating in sports education institutions to 1 million;
- Achieve a position among the top 15 countries in the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Conclusion

Suggestions: Uzbekistan has set clear and important priority tasks for the development of human capital by 2030. These are very significant and ambitious goals. During the implementation

process, it is natural to ask what aspects need attention and what shortcomings and problems in society might hinder progress. In this matter, we propose the following suggestions:

1. In developing human capital, it is necessary to establish and widely promote an effective time management system for every citizen, as well as for enterprises and organizations, and to implement measures to improve it (as most people do not value time and lack skills for its effective use);
2. Increase public interest in science and education and enhance respect for intellectuals in society;
3. Establish collaborative activities with scientific centers in every field;
4. Create an open and transparent system for the effective use of funds directed towards science, education, and medicine (including measures to strengthen anti-corruption controls);
5. Completely change the approach to the education and upbringing of children in families;
6. Create and implement effective mechanisms for encouraging citizens who continuously work on self-improvement and achieve scientific results;
7. Focus on expanding the use of foreign and international funds and investments for developing human capital;
8. Develop and implement clear strategic programs for directing human capital towards future-oriented fields.

The development and support of human capital in Uzbekistan have become a national movement. Indeed, all these efforts aim to significantly improve the state and the life of the Uzbek people, increase the well-being of the population, and position Uzbekistan among the developed countries.

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