

ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN: ANALYSIS OF THE STATE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIRLS

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15336221>

Bozorova Saxobat Abdujapparovna

Tashkent State University of Economics.

Associate Professor of Labor Economics Department. PhD

E-mail: s.abdujabbarovna@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7815-4245>

Abstract

This article analyzes the current situation in Uzbekistan in terms of ensuring gender equality in education and science, and examines in detail the successes and problematic aspects of creating equal opportunities for girls. At the end of the article, proposals and recommendations are given to ensure gender equality in education in Uzbekistan.

Keywords

Gender equality, opportunities in education, women's and girls' education, STEM fields, human capital, Sustainable Development Goals, education reforms in Uzbekistan, social stereotypes

INTRODUCTION

The global community recognizes gender equality as an integral part of sustainable development. In particular, the issue of creating equal opportunities for women and girls in the fields of education and science has been identified as one of the global priorities in recent years. This issue is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015. In particular, Goal 4 is dedicated to “Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and create lifelong learning opportunities for all citizens”, and Goal 5 is dedicated to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”[1]. Achieving these goals is one of the urgent socio-political tasks not only at the global level, but also at every national level, including in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

In recent years, the Republic of Uzbekistan has implemented a number of state programs and initiatives aimed at increasing the participation of women and girls in education, increasing their interest in science, especially in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields.

Currently, women's rights to education are guaranteed in national legislation, and a number of reforms are being implemented in this area. The resolution of the

Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On approval of the Strategy for achieving gender equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan by 2030", adopted on May 28, 2021, is one of the most important initiatives in this direction [2].

At the same time, existing institutional barriers in the education system, socio-economic factors, cultural stereotypes and problems in the entry of girls into high-tech fields remain relevant. One of the main factors preventing girls and women from entering STEM fields is social stereotypes. These stereotypes lead to the fact that society does not form a correct and fair attitude towards women and girls in technological and scientific fields. Research shows that in many societies, women and girls face many clear obstacles to achieving success in the fields of science and mathematics.

Effective solutions to these problems can only be achieved through the correct orientation of public policies. To do this, first of all, it is necessary to create equal opportunities for every girl at all levels, from school to higher education. At the same time, it is important to implement special programs, scholarships and motivational projects to increase the participation of women in STEM fields. Information on programs aimed at the development of women and girls is required to work in this area.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Globally, the issue of ensuring gender equality in the fields of education and science is considered an important factor in the sustainable development of society and increasing the potential of human capital. Research has been conducted by foreign and domestic scientists in this regard.

Amartya Sen's work "Development as Freedom" considers education to be the main tool for developing human "freedom". He states: "Educating women and girls not only expands their personal capabilities, but also brings social and economic benefits to the entire society" [3].

Martha Nussbaum's book "Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach" presents human development based on the theory of values, showing education as a means of developing the true potential of people. According to the scientist, gender equality allows women to acquire "values" in various fields through education, education not only helps to develop society, but also empowers women, allows them to be independent in life and ensures gender equality. The purpose of education is to empower people and ensure their true freedom [4].

Nancy Fraser's "Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition" discusses feminist politics and the need to ensure gender equality in education. According to her theory, gender equality in education is not only about

providing equal rights to women, but also about removing social barriers. As Fraser points out, promoting feminist politics through ensuring gender equality in education, that is, ensuring women's equal rights in social and economic spheres, guarantees human rights. These views encourage the creation of equal opportunities in education for all groups in society [5].

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* discusses women's opportunities in education. Beauvoir argues that education is an important mechanism for overcoming existing social stereotypes and discrimination against women. Beauvoir believes that education is essential for combating gender roles in society and ensuring women's independence. Gender equality not only helps women to get an education, but also helps to determine their rightful place in society [6].

Laura Bertin's study, *Gender, Competition and Educational Opportunity*, focuses on gender equality in education in terms of competition and opportunity. The scientist's views are that the participation of women and girls in science, technology and engineering is important for creating equal opportunities in education. Bertin argues that by achieving gender equality in education, women's participation in technological fields can contribute to the innovative development of society. This is one of the important aspects of gender equality [7].

Alice Evans's work "Gender and Development" highlights the impact of education and gender equality on social development. She argues that education not only creates economic opportunities, but also helps to change the social role of women. As Evans argues, achieving gender equality in education helps women make independent decisions for themselves, choose new directions in life, and achieve social and economic stability [8].

Charlotte Hogg's study "Technological Education and Gender Equality" focuses on digital technologies in education and their role in ensuring gender equality. She argues that digital education and online learning platforms help to support equal and reciprocal relationships in education for women. As Hogg argues, digital educational technologies can expand women's educational opportunities and enable them to actively participate in technological fields [9].

The work of scholars has deeply analyzed the gender imbalance in education, its social and economic consequences, and the mechanisms for creating equal opportunities for girls. Based on these studies, it becomes clear that the issue of creating equal opportunities for girls in education and science is of great importance not only as a matter of justice, but also as part of the national development strategy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to analyze the status and prospects of ensuring gender equality in education and science in Uzbekistan, especially equal opportunities for girls. The scientific approach used in the research process was systematic analysis, comprehensive assessment, comparative analysis, empirical data analysis and clustering methods. Empirical methods were also used in the study, and opportunities and obstacles for girls were analyzed based on official data from educational institutions and ministries.

MAIN RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Creating equal opportunities for girls and women has a direct impact not only on realizing their personal potential, but also on increasing the national human capital potential. In particular, increasing the participation of girls in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields plays an important role in ensuring gender balance in the labor market, forming new innovative potential, and creating a competitive human resource pool in the economy. In this context, it is urgent to reform the education system in an inclusive and gender-sensitive direction, and to implement national programs and concepts that encourage the involvement of girls in science.

The issue of ensuring gender equality in education and science in Uzbekistan is becoming crucial for the sustainable socio-economic development of society.

In particular, the share of women in the medical system is more than 77 percent, in education - almost 74 percent, in trade - 49 percent, in economic sectors, industry and production - about 46 percent, in culture and sports - 45 percent, in agriculture - more than 42 percent, in finance and insurance activities - more than 37 percent, in information and communication services - 35 percent, in professional, scientific and technical activities - about 34 percent, in public administration and defense - more than 27 percent. In the current academic year, the share of women studying in higher educational institutions of the republic was 52.2 percent.

Our country's achievements in the field of gender equality are deservedly recognized at the international level. Uzbekistan scored 72.8 points in the Gender Equality and Governance Index in 2024. As a result, it managed to rise from 103rd place to 51st place, taking 52nd place. This index covers 158 countries and allows you to identify successes and shortcomings in achieving gender equality [10].

In recent years, the measures taken in Uzbekistan in the field of education, in particular, to ensure gender equality and create equal opportunities for girls, are clearly reflected in statistical indicators and social analysis. The increase in the amount of funds allocated to educational institutions in the period 2021-2023 and initiatives aimed at ensuring gender equality have had a direct impact on the positive development of this process (Table 1).

Table 1

Analysis of the number of male and female students in higher education institutions (2019-2023)

Territories	2021 yil year		2022 year		2023 year		Percentage of women in 2023 compared to 2021 (%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Republic of Uzbekistan	439391	369048	547342	494758	657925	656617	49,7	77,9
Republic of Karakalpakstan	22479	24106	28626	28877	30792	33354	36,9	38,3
Andijan region	24432	23219	29088	29224	31552	34649	29,1	49,2
Bukhara region	22508	21451	27290	30194	36929	46022	64,0	114,5
Jizzakh region	15682	14273	18549	18402	17543	20025	11,8	40,3
Kashkadarya region	26768	17454	30605	26821	40756	37641	52,2	115,6
Navoi region	8948	12762	12645	17649	15712	23101	75,5	81,0
Namangan region	21408	20421	26982	25337	29938	32590	39,8	59,5
Samarkand region	41828	28944	46774	37965	48774	41814	16,6	44,4
Surkhandarya region	20301	19608	24737	25897	32043	35363	57,8	80,3
Syrdarya region	7745	9019	9950	11574	10107	13083	30,5	45,0
Tashkent region	25551	17277	33665	26734	37393	35183	46,3	103,6
Fergana region	28741	33591	35542	42180	36602	48294	27,3	43,7
Khorezm region	12509	16232	16861	25909	20701	33242	65,4	104,7
Tashkent city	160491	110691	206028	147995	269083	222256	67,6	100,7

From the data in Table 1, we can see that in 2021, the number of women in the republic was 369,048, while by 2023 this figure had reached 656,617. This represents an increase of 77.9%. The number of men also increased from 439,391 to 657,925 (49.7%). In 2021-2023, the number of women grew faster than that of men. This indicates the effectiveness of the state policy to achieve gender equality in higher education.

By region, the regions with the highest growth in the percentage of girls studying in higher education institutions were Kashkadarya (115.6%), Khorezm (104.7%), Tashkent region (103.6%), Tashkent city (100.7%), Bukhara (114.5%). The number of women in these regions increased by almost 2 times or more. There is a great interest in higher education among girls here, infrastructure and

opportunities are extensive. Centralized educational institutions, additional benefits, and increased interest in the technical and IT sectors played an important role in the city of Tashkent and the region. The regions with a moderate increase in the share of girls in educational institutions are Navoi by 81.0%, Surkhandarya by 80.3%, Samarkand by 44.4%, Syrdarya by 45.0%, Andijan by 49.2%, Fergana by 43.7%, and Namangan by 59.5%.

The growth in these regions is also very good. For example, in Surkhandarya and Navoi regions, girls are actively participating in higher education, where socio-economic reforms, new universities and distance learning opportunities are bearing fruit.

The regions with a relatively low increase in the share of girls are Jizzakh by 40.3% and Karakalpakstan by 38.3%. There is also growth in these regions, but slower than in other regions. At the same time, it is an important factor that in Jizzakh the growth of women is four times higher than that of men. In Karakalpakstan, the growth is stable, but still at a low level compared to other regions. In general, the number of women in all regions has grown faster than that of men. Kashkadarya, Bukhara, Khorezm, Tashkent city and region are the leading regions in girls' education. Moderate growth was observed in Surkhandarya, Navoi, Samarkand, Fergana, Namangan. Regions that require attention are Karakalpakstan and Jizzakh, which need additional motivation, support through grants and programs. This is a positive result of the state policy on gender equality in higher education in Uzbekistan. Especially in Kashkadarya, Bukhara, Khorezm, and Tashkent city, the number of women has more than doubled. Growth is also noticeable in rural areas (Jizzakh, Karakalpakstan, Navoi) - this is due to the expansion of educational infrastructure.

Table 2

Analysis of the number of students in basic doctoral studies in higher education institutions in Uzbekistan

Classifier	2016 year	2017 year	2018 year	2019 year	2020 year	2021 year	2022 year	2023 year	% in 2023 compared to 2016
Number of students (total)	1370	1632	1764	2247	2674	3880	5747	7323	4 times increased
Number of students (male)	896	1048	1135	1423	1634	2525	3375	3880	3 times increased
Number of students (female)	474	584	629	824	1040	1355	2372	3443	6 times increased

Table 2 analyzes how the share of female students engaged in research at the post-graduate level in Uzbekistan changed between 2016 and 2023. In 2016, the share of female students in the total number of basic doctoral students in higher education institutions in Uzbekistan was around 36%, while in 2023 this figure reached almost 50%. This is a significant increase and indicates the equalization of women's participation in higher education. This result clearly demonstrates that in our country, wide opportunities have been created for female students in the field of education, and their interest and participation in education have increased.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In recent years, the participation of women in higher education in Uzbekistan has been increasing sharply. In all regions, the growth rate of the number of girls is higher than that of men, which is a practical result of state policy aimed at ensuring gender equality and creating equal opportunities in education.

Creating equal opportunities for women in education, increasing the number of educated women, increasing the competitive and qualified workforce in the labor market, and increasing the quality of human capital through women's participation in education and employment.

In addition, when women are created with equal opportunities in education, their chances of participating in the labor market increase sharply. This expands the labor pool and leads to more active human capital in the economy. The active participation of women in various sectors - education, healthcare, finance, industry, tourism, etc. - increases the volume of national production.

Women and girls are expanding their employment opportunities by learning new professions, skills, and modern technologies through education. This, in turn, increases the number of active participants in the labor market and encourages work in the formal sector. With women in employment, unemployment rates decrease, especially among young people and rural women. Employed women also ensure family well-being, which strengthens overall economic stability.

Education is the basis for human capital development. The widespread involvement of women and girls in education not only increases their personal potential, but also through them, the intellectual, spiritual, and professional potential of future generations increases. Women play a key role in raising children in the family, therefore, their literacy and knowledge determine the quality of the human capital of the entire society. Factors such as a healthy lifestyle, giving importance to education, and early development in children are directly ensured through educated mothers.

Educated and professionally trained women show high efficiency in the workplace. They are able to master complex tasks faster, adapt to technological

innovations, and contribute to the optimization of work processes in the organization. For example, educated women show high results in areas such as healthcare, information technology, and business administration. Such labor efficiency increases production volume and economic efficiency throughout the organization and sector.

After receiving education, women will have the opportunity to acquire a specialty and get decent jobs. This will help stabilize their source of income and actively contribute to the family budget. Educated women can also start their own businesses, which will lead to the creation of new jobs through entrepreneurial activity. As a result, the poverty rate will decrease and social equality will be ensured. Education, acting as a social elevator, will lead women from the low-income stratum to prosperity.

We put forward several proposals that will ensure gender equality in education and expand the educational opportunities of women and girls:

- In order to ensure equal opportunities for girls in rural and remote areas in education, it is necessary to introduce special admission quotas on a regional basis, expand the system of educational grants and scholarships for girls from disadvantaged families, and create opportunities for distance and hybrid education.

- In order to ensure gender equality in higher education institutions, it is advisable to develop a "Gender Equality Index" consisting of special indicators based on such indicators as specialization, level of success, and social activity, evaluate the activities of institutions based on this index, create a rating, and introduce mechanisms for grants or material incentives based on the results.

- Widely promote successful women in various fields as realistic and inspiring role models for girls, organize meetings and spiritual and educational events with their participation, and take measures to strengthen girls' professional dreams and confidence through special projects at the local and national levels.

- In order to expand the participation of women in STEM fields, it is necessary to hold events, Olympiads, and coding courses that interest girls in science and technology from school age, allocate special grants for girls who choose to study in this direction at university, and also establish mentoring platforms with the participation of female specialists.

These proposals will serve to create equal opportunities in education for our girls.

LIST OF REFERENCES USED:

1. United Nations. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). New York: UN Publishing House. 2015.
2. Resolution of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On approval of the Strategy for achieving gender equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan by 2030" No. SQ -297 – IV – adopted on May 28, 2021.
3. K.S. Amartya. Development as Freedom. Alfred A. Knopf. 1999.
4. Nussbaum, M. Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach. Harvard University Press. 2011.
5. Nancy Fraser Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition. Routledge. 1997.
6. Beauvoir, S. The Second Sex. Alfred A. Knopf 1949.
7. Burton, L. Gender, Competition and Educational Opportunity. Journal of Educational Equality. 2013.
8. Evans, A. Gender and Development. Polity Press. 2010.
9. Hogs, Sh.. Technological Education and Gender Equality. Journal of Educational Technology and Society 2015.