

DRAFT

CONCEPT

ON PROMOTION OF LIFELONG LEARNING IN UZBEKISTAN

Tashkent 2018

The DVV International expert group, with the participation of UNESCO Tashkent Office, National Commission of Uzbekistan for UNESCO Affairs, and representatives of UNESCO Institute elaborated this drafted Concept for Lifelong Learning (UIL, Hamburg). It represents an initial policy document for achieving common vision and understanding of Lifelong Learning (LLL) promotion in Uzbekistan.

The document is addressed to decision makers, as well as a wide range of experts and stakeholders for further elaboration of a LLL promotion policy.

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INTRODUCTION

Lifelong learning as a global challenge of the current time

In the 21st century humanity has to deal with a range of issues including the reduction of poverty, ensuring a sustainable economic growth, creation of new jobs, promotion of diversity and equality, ensuring public security, as well as solving problems pertaining to demographic transformations, migration, climate change and environmental challenges. These issues must be tackled at different levels: international, regional and national levels, and at the individual citizen level.

In 2015 at the Summit on Sustainable Development, the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which sets ambitious goals on transforming our world and balancing economic, social and environmental dimensions. The Agenda defines 17 new global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a continuation of both benchmarks of all previous UN documents on sustainable development and Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

The 2030 Agenda is based on a transformative human rights-based concept of “a just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met”. The 2030 Agenda covers all dimensions of our life. One of the priorities is the Goal 4 (SDG 4) – “**ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**”.

SDG 4 is based upon the idea that lifelong learning has the potential to transform people’s lives. Though international discourses and relevant documents have given attention to the subject of LLL for quite some time now, the fact that the call for LLL promotion was reflected in SDGs can be considered as a new paradigm for transformation/reorientation of national education systems. The new development model of the 3rd millennium can only be created with the help of education and enlightening.

SDG 4 presents a range of challenges to national education systems. It requires a critical evaluation of existing education structures, and states the necessity to look for new education models that would compensate for shortcomings and gaps. Education organisers, decision-makers, and managers of education structures must initiate new approaches, so as not to lag behind modern trends. They must also introduce relevant changes, which, among others, include the following. Firstly, there should be maximum flexibility in the offered education. Secondly, various key competences need to be developed with due regard to the educational needs of socially disadvantaged groups. Thirdly, educational programmes need to be made more accessible, for example by bringing educational institutions closer to the learner’s places of residence. Finally, the necessary conditions must be created for a given population to develop its human capital in accordance with new economic and social demands.

As a rule, lifelong learning means any purposeful learning (formal, non-formal, and informal) undertaken regularly to improve one’s knowledge and skills, and that facilitates personal and social development, as well as potential for employment. UNESCO defines lifelong learning as rooted in the integration of learning and living, covering learning activities for people of all ages (children, young people, adults and elderly, girls and boys, women and men) in all life-wide contexts (family, school, community, workplace and so on) and through a variety of modalities (formal, non-formal and informal) which together meet a wide range of learning needs and demands.

Lifelong learning entails the learning undertaken both within and beyond the formal education system in a wide variety of contexts. It means that a person’s ability to expand their knowledge and acquire new skills is not just confined to formal education.

Some countries have already implemented the idea of lifelong learning in their national education policies as a holistic and sector-wide approach. This approach covers all sub-sectors and levels of education by involving everyone, regardless of their age. These countries enjoy economic return on such investments, and ensure the development of the nation's human capital. Not to mention, they see great improvement in the lifelong learner's quality of life. Unfortunately, the majority of countries are still a way off from such a reality, while **only those societies that are learning continuously are innovative and successful in global competition.**

Relevance for Uzbekistan

As a full member of the UN Uzbekistan committed itself to the implementation of SDGs and has already taken some steps on localization/adaptation of internationally agreed target indicators.

In 2017, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan set an action plan ("Development Strategy") for five priorities of the country's development in the period 2017-2021, one of which is a social dimension including the education and science reform:

- To continue the course of further improvement of the **continuous education system**, improvement of accessibility of high quality education services, training of well-qualified human resources in accordance with modern labour market demands;
- To undertake targeted measures to improve facilities and resources of educational institutions through their construction, reconstruction and complete repair, provision of modern learning and laboratory equipment, computers, textbooks;
- Expansion of a network of pre-school educational institutions and fundamental improvement of conditions in these institutions for a comprehensive intellectual, aesthetical and physical development of children, to ensure accessibility and substantial expansion of coverage of children with pre-school education, to increase the level of pedagogues and specialists professionalism;
- Radical improvement of quality of general secondary education, in-depth foreign language learning, IT, other crucial and popular subjects including math, physics, chemistry and biology;
- Construction and reconstruction of existing sport facilities for children and children's music and art schools to attract children to mass sport and draw their attention to the world of music and art;
- To improve works on training and employment of vocational college students in accordance with occupations that meet the requirements of economy and needs of employers;
- To improve quality and effectiveness of higher education institutions activity through the introduction of international standards of learning and teaching quality assessment, to gradually increase a quota for admission to higher education institutions;
- To encourage scientific research and innovative activities, to create effective mechanisms to put scientific and innovative achievements into practice, to establish specialized science and testing laboratories, hi-tech centres and science parks under universities and research institutes.

Uzbekistan government considers the action plan as a “road map” for implementation of SDGs in Uzbekistan.¹

The document uses a term “continuous education” which in many post-soviet countries is regarded as a synonym to the term “lifelong learning”. However, there is a fundamental difference between these two terms, as LLL has a wider meaning and includes different dimensions of learning stemming from the four pillars of education in the future²:

Learning to know, by combining a sufficiently broad general knowledge with the opportunity to work in depth on a small number of subjects. This also means learning to learn, so as to benefit from the opportunities education provides throughout life.

Learning to do, in order to acquire not only an occupational skill but also, more broadly, the competence to deal with many situations and work in teams. It also means learning to do in the context of young peoples’ various social and work experiences, which may be informal, as a result of the local or national context, or formal, involving courses, alternating study and work.

Learning to live together and with others, by developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence - carrying out joint projects and learning to manage conflicts - in a spirit of respect for the values of pluralism, mutual understanding and peace.

Learning to be, so as better to develop one’s personality and be able to act with even greater autonomy, judgement and personal responsibility. In that connection, education must not disregard any aspect of a person’s potential: memory, reasoning, aesthetic sense, physical capacities and communication skills.

Such a vision should be guiding policy elaboration in the field of education. At present in Uzbekistan, this sector is undergoing many changes, alongside the elaboration of the Country Development Strategy 2035. For this reason, it is important to contribute to the development of the system with an emphasis on lifelong learning. In this way the significance of various education forms, which cover all age groups, can be recognised, so that all citizens (vulnerable members of our society in particular) have an opportunity to satisfy their lifelong educational needs and play an active role in economic and public life.

The agenda raises the question of understanding the role of society, human capital and individual citizens in the process of current reforms and setting long-term goals. Uzbekistan can achieve success only if its citizens will constantly learn throughout their lives, re-learn, and update their knowledge in order to be creative, productive and successful. Without this, no society and no country can provide for long-term sustainable development and cannot take its rightful place in global competition.

The 21st century is a century of knowledge, information and communications, an era characterised by rapid technological inventions. **The occupations of tomorrow require much more skills and knowledge than today's education systems are able to provide.** Understanding this reality requires countries to build effective national education systems that encourage lifelong learning to provide all members of society (regardless of their age) with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills to cope with the challenges of today's rapidly changing world.

¹ Action-oriented Roadmap on Further Cooperation between Uzbekistan and the United Nations System for 2017-2020 http://www.uz.undp.org/content/dam/uzbekistan/docs/NewLegalDocuments/Roadmap_2017-20_GOV%20-%20UN%20signed%20%20eng.pdf, p. 2.

² UNESCO (ed.): Learning: The Treasure within. – London, 1996.

In addition, international experience shows that the development of society and human capital was a top priority for all countries, which, after certain crises or stagnant periods, took the path of reforms and modernisation to achieve unquestionable success.

In order to build a successful LLL-system in Uzbekistan, it is important to have a clear understanding that learning takes place in different environments and in different forms (formal, non-formal, workplace, family, community, etc.). Accordingly, the formation of policies to encourage each person to learn requires the involvement of a large number of stakeholders, efficient coordination of actions, and the sharing of responsibilities. These stakeholders could be governmental agencies responsible for education, labour, finances, economic development, social welfare, culture, agriculture, representatives of local and regional authorities, as well as representatives of associations of employers, trade unions, civil society actors, etc. It is important for each of these parties to have the right to articulate their interests and to influence elaboration of policies for the whole sector.

The establishment of a lifelong learning system requires changes that affect the scope, content and delivery of educational services.

Dimension	Traditional model	Lifelong learning model
Scope	Formal schooling from primary to higher education	Learning throughout the lifecycle - in schools, on the job, after retirement
Content	Acquisition and repetition	Creation, acquisition, and of knowledge and application of knowledge
	Curriculum driven	Diverse sources of knowledge
		Empowerment of learners Competency driven
Delivery	Limited learning options and modalities	Multitude of learning options, settings, and modalities
	Formal institutions	Multitude of learning
	Uniform centralised control	New pedagogical approaches
	Supply driven	Technology-supported delivery
		Pluralistic, flexible decentralised system Learner driven

Table 1: Scope, Content, and Delivery of Education and Training in Traditional and Lifelong Learning Models.³

³ The World Bank (ed.): Lifelong Learning in the Global Knowledge Economy: Challenges of Developing countries. – Washington, D.C., 2003, p. 58.

Background (*what has been done in Uzbekistan so far*)

Over the years, DVV International and the UNESCO Tashkent Office, in cooperation with national partners, and in close cooperation with the National Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan for UNESCO Affairs, organised a number of activities aimed at key specialists and decision-makers, to raise awareness on international trends in adult education and LLL. Some of the most significant are as follows:

1. Regional conference “Education for all – lifelong learning in Central Asia”, June 4-5, 2003, Tashkent. Around 180 representatives from Asian, CIS and European countries participated in the conference.
2. National forum “Education for all”, November 15-17, 2011, Tashkent. In total more than 120 representatives of governmental, state, non-state, private and international organisations from Tashkent, regions and Karakalpakstan participated in the forum.
3. National conference “Rethinking education in the context of current reforms in Uzbekistan: policy, quality and lifelong learning”, December 14, 2017. State partners, representatives of private sector and development partners, international and national experts participated in the conference (around 120 people).

All these events concluded with the adoption of final documents, which contained recommendations on development and policy on adult education (AE) and LLL and expressed a consensus of discussions between various stakeholders representing state, non-state and private sectors. As a result, the professional national discourse emerged, which a priori recognised the need for a comprehensive public LLL policy in Uzbekistan.

Hearings of two senate committees of Oliy Majlis (on education and foreign relations) that took place in summer 2016, in cooperation with UNESCO and DVV International, made a considerable contribution to the process – they resulted in a shared understanding of the importance of deliberate AE and LLL policies.

As a result, during governmental consultations with the UN organisations in Uzbekistan this challenge was recognised as one of the key challenges in education and was reflected in the “UN Development Assistance Framework for Uzbekistan” (UNDAF) for the period 2016-2020 as a specific objective in education. This document, signed by Uzbekistan’s government, entrusted UNESCO with the responsibility of achieving this objective, with DVV International as an active partner.

Thus, the agenda raises the question of elaborating a policy document establishing the LLL-approach. The present document is an attempt to develop a concept for the sector that guides further policies and the implementation of strategic actions.

VISION, GENERAL OBJECTIVE AND BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING LIFELONG LEARNING PROMOTION POLICY

Along with the formal education system (kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, vocational training and re-training institutions, higher education, and professional development institutions) LLL also includes non-formal and informal education and learning in all their varieties.

Opportunities for acquiring new knowledge and skills, other than educational institutions of different types, usually exist in the workplace, in extra-curricular activities of students, in youth work, in the activities of civil society organisations, or in the virtual space where a person can study individually or together with others. Various social networks, cultural institutions, military service, home environment and much more - all play a role in developing and supporting the curiosity and motivation to learn, as well as in shaping study habits and value judgements.

The overall objective of the establishment of a successful LLL-promotion policy should be the creation of learning opportunities for every resident of Uzbekistan (for children and young people, for adults and elderly people - thus, absolutely for everyone), depending on their needs and capabilities at every stage of their life. Behind this aspiration is **the vision of a learning society** where learning is an integral part of individual's approach towards life. People should realise that learning and self-development are their choice and their own responsibility. Acquired knowledge should provide them with maximum self-realisation in the society, work and family life.

Promotion of LLL and the elaboration of the respected policy should be based on the following **basic principles**:

- Learner's active participation and responsibility;
- Quality, flexibility, transparency of learning programmes;
- Credibility of information and learning opportunities;
- Consideration of special needs in the organisation of learning process and environment;
- Equity and equality of opportunities, including gender equality;
- Openness of the system, democratic and non-discriminative content;
- Sustainable development of the system / sector;
- Evidence based decision-making;
- Cooperation between providers and learning from each other;
- International cooperation.

In the process of introducing high quality and efficient LLL-programmes, along with material infrastructure and financing, the key role should be assigned to the educational staff (teachers, trainers and other professionals). These personnel include anyone who guides the learning processes and establishes the learning environment in kindergartens, general education schools, vocational training institutions, universities, interest clubs, non-formal education centres, further training and further professional development institutions, youth centres, museums, libraries and other cultural institutions.

The changing context of learning within new LLL-paradigm would implies a shift of the educational staff role from its traditional one. **Teachers, trainers and mentors must acquire new skills and learn lifelong for themselves in order to be aware of new knowledge, pedagogical trends and technologies.**

As learning will become shared, professional development of teachers is needed, which should facilitate establishment of professional networks and learning platforms/spaces at schools and institutions.

The traditional (old) learning system differs a lot for the methods, which should be applied in LLL-programmes⁴:

<i>Traditional learning</i>	<i>Lifelong Learning</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher is the source of knowledge. • Learners receive knowledge from the teacher. • Learners work by themselves. • Tests are given to prevent progress until students have completely mastered a set of skills and to ration access to further learning. • All learners do the same thing. • Teachers receive initial training plus ad hoc in-service training. • “Good” learners are identified and permitted to continue their education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators are guides to sources of knowledge. • People learn by doing. • People learn in groups and from each other. • Assessment is used to guide learning strategies and identify pathways for future learning. • Educators develop individualised learning plans. • Educators are lifelong learners. Initial training and ongoing professional development are linked. • People have access to learning opportunities over a lifetime.

The comprehensive LLL-policy should be oriented on the above-mentioned understanding, principles and overall objective, which in the case of Uzbekistan is still to be elaborated. In developing such a policy, along with the transformation of traditional education sub-sectors, and rethinking them through the LLL-context, one of the first priorities should be given to the **recognition of adult learning and education as a key element of LLL, providing it with the status of a sub-sector** and building appropriate policies.

Subsequent chapters provide a brief analysis of the sub-sectors in the context of LLL, and set out the vision for further development of measurable milestones and strategies for their implementation.

⁴ The World Bank (ed.): Lifelong Learning in the Global Knowledge Economy: Challenges of Developing countries. – Washington, D.C., 2003, p. 29.

EDUCATION SUBSECTORS FROM A LIFELONG LEARNING PERSPECTIVE

Preschool education

According to official data, about 76% of children aged 2 to 7 years are not enrolled in preschool education (as of 2017). Despite the availability of 4,893 state pre-school educational institutions and 198 non-state educational institutions (NSEI) with licenses to carry out activities in preschool education, their number clearly does not correspond to the growth rate of the country's population. The national report of Uzbekistan on Millennium Development Goals achievement, prepared in 2015, defines the problem of pre-school education enrolment as one of the key challenges and tasks for the future.

Problems in the pre-school education sector are primarily caused by neglecting this sphere of education until 2017 by the government. Since the current Government assumed office, the situation has changed significantly. At present, pre-school education is placed at the core of government policy and represents one of the education spheres where fundamental reforms are under way. For example, only in 2017 the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan enacted six resolutions directly related to the development of pre-school education.

The resolutions provide a fair assessment of pre-school education and state that over the past 20 years, the number of public pre-school educational institutions (PEI) has decreased by more than 45 percent, and infrastructure, equipment and logistics of existing pre-school institutions does not allow the full enrolment of children. In addition, the aforementioned resolutions note systemic problems related to the following aspects of the pre-school education system: training and retraining of staff, development of children's skills, and organisation of learning process based on advanced approaches and technologies, as well as monetary incentive for pre-school staff.

According to official data, the majority (76.4%) of state PEI's pedagogical staff has a secondary specialized education and only 21.9% have a higher pedagogical education.⁵ These factors can adversely affect the development and proper preparation of children for schooling. For this reason, the government instructed the special commission to analyse the pre-school education system needs for personnel with higher education by regions and prepare proposals on quotas for targeted admission to higher educational institutions of pedagogical profile. To address the problem of insufficient subject knowledge and skills of PEI directors and specialists in modern management and teaching technologies and in order to learn foreign best practices in 2017 the government established the Institute for Advanced Training of Pre-school Staff.

An important step in addressing existing systemic problems was the elaboration and approval of the Roadmap for preschool education development for the period 2017-2021, as well as the establishment of the Ministry of Preschool Education with the responsibility to implement public policy in this sector.⁶ According to the Ministry of Preschool Education, by 2021 it is expected to reach 100% enrolment of children aged 6-7 years in pre-school training. By then, it is planned that 50% of children aged 3-5 years will attend PEI. There are long-term plans to enrol 80% of children in preschool up to 2031.

⁵ <https://stat.uz/ru/433-analiticheskie-materialy-ru/2326-statistika-obrazovaniya> (request date - 01.02.2018)

⁶ Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan of September 30, 2017

Current studies show that 90% of child development takes place before the age of 5, and the first thousand days of children's life are the most important, what explains well the importance of the family and preschool education in child development. At the stage of preschool education, the child develops fully. The foundations of personal, cognitive, axiological, communicative and general cultural competencies are being laid. It is during this period of development that children gain first experience of learning, and it is important that it is positive and does not negatively affect the motivation for continuing learning at the next levels of education.

It is necessary to achieve a greater recognition of preschool education in Uzbekistan, not only at the level of decision-makers, but also at the level of communities and parents. There is a need for increasing awareness on the fact that important foundations for the further development of children's abilities to learn and to adapt to changing conditions are laid at preschool age. The development of the child takes place within the family, community and kindergarten. This fact implies sharing of responsibilities between the main stakeholders in child development.

Along with addressing the above mentioned problems related to access, staff training for the preschool education system, improving its image among the population, etc. there is a need for fundamental restructuring of the methodological aspect, introduction of advanced approaches to the work with children in order to focus on the child and his/her learning needs and interests. It is necessary to create conditions for encouraging the child to learn, and prerequisites for interesting and engrossing classes.

The development of the PEI network may have a positive impact on improving situation of women at the labour market. It can become the basis for preventing poverty among women, and especially women with children from vulnerable social groups. According to European studies, strengthening social support in childcare allows women to work to the utmost and, thereby, redistribute responsibilities between partners raising children. In countries with insufficient social support, the main burden of childcare still lies on women: they more often take maternity leaves, choose less paid jobs, work part-time, etc. This significantly affects their welfare and participation at the labour market. Accordingly, in those European countries where pre-school education and childcare facilities are less developed, there is also the highest income gap between women and men.⁷

Success of reforms in the preschool education system will also largely depend on the extent to which Uzbekistan will be able to achieve a shared consensus in the society on the goals and expected results of preschool education, including the current list of competencies required for entering the school.

Target indicators for further policy/strategy elaboration and developing measurable outcomes:

- **Achieving maximum enrolment of children.** Revise the Roadmap for the development of preschool education on the subject of higher ambitions to achieve the full coverage of children aged between 3 and 7 years, as well as encouraging the subsequent coverage of children and in the age group up to 3 years;

⁷ http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/system/files/130531_barcelona_en.pdf

- **Introduction of new learning/training approaches in the activity of PEI.** Build methodical work so that the child is at the centre of the learning process. The top priority by doing so, should be gaining positive experience from the first contact with learning;
- **Continuous development of PEI specialists.** Taking into account the fact that college graduates represent the majority of current PEI staff, to make a continuous vocational development of preschool specialists an important sub-sector priority. Organize such work under the guidance of Institute for in-service training of preschool staff, relying on both traditional courses of professional development at the institute (with maximum consideration of the students' own interests), and stimulating PEI transformation into learning organisations. At the same time using alternative forms of encouraging further professionalization, for example, through tandem training, organization of mentoring (coaching) in the workplace, paid time for self-education, and more active introduction of ICTs;
- **Transformation of regional and district preschool departments / divisions.** Changing the approach to the work of regional and district departments / division of preschool education for their transition from structures with supervisory functions to the structures that provide support (modelled on resource centres) to the further professional development of PEI staff;
- **Organization of awareness-raising campaign** that enhance awareness of the general public (especially young parents) on the importance of preschool education.

General secondary education

General secondary education refers to the education sector of the country where access problems are less frequently observed (enrolment is 98.1%), since it is compulsory and guaranteed by the state.

According to official data, 5.2 million of children attended 9.628 general schools in the 2017/2018 academic year. Despite a fairly large number of general education schools, this high enrolment is achieved through the organization of educational process in 67.2% of schools in double shifts, and in 0.1% of schools - in triple shifts.

Currently, the system of general secondary education is also in the process of fundamental reform. This is primarily due to the fact that in 2017 after extensive interviewing of ninth-grade leavers' parents and with their support, the government decided to shift to a system of 11-year compulsory general secondary education starting from the 2017/2018 school year. Starting with the 2018/2019 school year, compulsory general secondary and secondary specialized education in Uzbekistan is carried out in general education schools, including specialized schools and residential schools of arts and culture, specialized residential schools of Olympic reserve, and academic lyceums on the basis of continuous and 11-year cycle.⁸

This decision has set out for politicians and education personnel a range of tasks that require urgent action. Among these tasks, there is the opening and equipping of new classrooms for the 10th and 11th grades and the development of appropriate textbooks, selection and training of the teaching staff, search for new buildings to open schools and much more.

⁸ Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to radically improve the system of general secondary, secondary specialized and vocational education" of 25.01.2018.

The global processes and challenges of our time raise the need to define new tasks for general secondary education (in some countries such tasks are reflected in a document entitled the "National Curriculum"). This implies that school leavers should have not only the knowledge and skills needed in the modern world, but also competences that are more known in the academic world as *key competencies* necessary for life, work (regardless of profession) and study. For example, in the European Union, the following eight competencies are understood as "key" ones: *communication in native language; communication in foreign languages; mathematical competences and basic knowledge in the field of science and technology; competence in the field of information and digital technologies; ability to learn independently; social and civic competences; spirit of initiative and enterprise; cultural awareness and self-expression.*⁹

At the same time, particular attention in the context of LLL should be paid to the development of the ability to learn independently and ICT competences so that students are able to determine their needs for knowledge and information, and then to find, assess and use them effectively.

It is also important to create and develop additional opportunities in the country for non-formal and informal education of schoolchildren. Although there are 211 "Barkamol Avlod" children's centres for non-formal education, 304 children's schools of music and art and 227 children and youth sports schools, they are far from sufficient to develop non-formal and informal education for schoolchildren in a country with 32 million citizens.

Overall targets for further development of policy / strategy and formulation of measurable outcomes:

- **Develop a National curriculum** for the general secondary education in Uzbekistan with defined goals and learning outcomes, **including an own customized list of key competencies**. Whilst paying special attention to the development of critical thinking, the ability to learn independently, develop ICT competences, global citizenship, etc.;
- **Expand opportunities for non-formal education**. To raise awareness of non-formal and informal education of schoolchildren importance and increase investment in / encourage the development of out-of-school educational institutions networks and at the same time focus on accessibility (geographical and financial), quality equipment and staffing;
- **Continuous development of teachers** through the transformation of schools into learning organisations so that they become the place of permanent professional development of teaching staff;
- **Establish and develop information and consulting services at schools** to promote better career guidance and future career planning.

Vocational education

In 2017, the government decided to step aside from the 3-year compulsory vocational education, the duration of which, according to the official assessment, *was established without taking into account the complexity of the profession, labour market requirements*. Another call

⁹ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning.

*down concerned the inadequate development of the vocational training system for various population groups based on the principle "Lifelong Learning", that keeps out a significant number of adults of labour market, as well as youth and people with disabilities seeking employment.*¹⁰ This decision demonstrates government's desire to build a new, flexible system of vocational education available to all categories of the population.

The government set a goal to build a modern system of vocational education through bringing the content of education closer to labour market demands, and also by transferring successful practices of foreign countries to the reality of Uzbekistan and adapting them to the local context.

At present, in the sphere of vocational education and training in Uzbekistan there are three main trends:

- Reorganization of vocational colleges and optimization of their total number. According to the available so far unofficial information, their number will go down several-fold and will amount to approximately 400 colleges;
- Organization of vocational training for students of 10-11 grades in general secondary educational institutions through the creation of training and workshop complex in lyceums, colleges and schools (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 868 of 24.10.2017);
- Creation of vocational training centres for unemployed citizens network in all regions of the Republic - it is planned to open 11 new centres with approximately 2.640 places per year to study, with already existing 3 centres with 400 students (?) per year (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 199 of 10.04.2017).

The government's desire to reform the vocational education system with a view to improve its quality through the introduction of flexible curricula, determination of training time from 6 months to 2 years (depending on profession complexity), commitment to make vocational education accessible for people of all ages are the steps in the right direction. However, the decision to optimize the number of professional colleges and transfer training to a partially fee-based contractual basis may have a negative impact on ensuring access (especially for young people) to vocational education. This risk will exist even if the government succeeds in creating training and workshop complex for the 10th and 11th grades students (it is not yet clear to what extent developed in such complexes vocational skills will allow young people to find themselves in the labour market) and the network of vocational training centres for the unemployed, since these capacities may not be sufficient for a country with a population of 32 million.

Although the corresponding legal and regulatory documents provide vocational training diplomas for students of training and workshop complex, and vocational training centres for unemployed citizens, it remains unclear whether the competencies that have been imparted will be consistent. Assistance on the path of comparability (including with international counterparts) and transparency could be provided by the national qualification framework that determines the qualification levels in Uzbekistan in a transparent way. This labour-intensive

¹⁰ Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to radically improve the system of general secondary, secondary specialized and vocational education" of 25.01.2018.

process will surely take certain time and engagement of all stakeholders should be guaranteed (primarily social partners).

Overall targets for further development of policy / strategy and formulation of measurable outcomes:

- **Establishment of a coordinating mechanism for managing VET-system.** In connection with the ongoing reforms in the system of vocational education and training (VET) and after its opening for new target groups (adults, unemployed), the question of rethinking cooperation between the relevant ministries responsible for vocational education and training (including creation of a new agency to coordinate the entire sub-sector) becomes an issue of concern;
- **Managing the system with involvement of social partners.** It is necessary to introduce into the VET system the principle of intensive engagement of social partners (employers, trade unions, as well as professional associations and representatives of the civil sector) at all stages of vocational education and training. Establish National Council of VET for subsector overall coordination;
- **Introduction of flexible forms of financing with the maximum consideration of the interests of vulnerable social groups.** Such forms of financing could improve access to the VET for various segments of the population. This would create the basis for implementing "second chance" programs for marginalized groups of people who for a number of reasons remained outside the VET programs or have qualifications that do not match the needs of the labour market or the interests of the individual;
- **Development of National Qualification Framework.** This will, on the one hand, ensure transparency, interconnection, coherence of learning outcomes at all levels of education, on the other - create the basis for introduction of the system for validation, recognition and accreditation of non-formal education results (RVA), a system that could be very useful for Uzbekistan, especially taking into account the ongoing migration processes;
- **Development of the modular VET curricula.** This work should be carried out with the participation of social partners on the basis of a competency-based approach using recognized tools / methods that can ensure the transfer of employers' / labour market's requirements into curricula. Also, professional colleges / vocational training centres should be able to diagnose the potential of students and build a further process of professional training taking into account the analysis of both "hard" and "soft skills" of students;
- **Creation of the independent certification bodies.** The results of professional training with the subsequent professional skills certification are best assessed through the independent certification bodies, in management of which the social partners should actively participate. This would provide a good tool for transparency and quality assessment and a more adequate view at the activities of vocational training providers (both public and private);
- **Introduction of the andragogy learning approaches to the VET practice.** Working with the adult population requires the VET staff to use a special approach known in science as an andragogy model of learning / education (adult pedagogy);
- **Creation / development of the information & career-guidance service in the VET system.** Trainees (both young and adults) require such services for awareness and

good orientation among the complex landscape of education providers and the world of the professions.

Higher education

In 1991, the number of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Uzbekistan was 52, and by 2017, their number increased to 72 (except for higher military educational institutions). Apparently, the numbers of higher educational institutions during the years of independence tended to increase, although it should be noted that the population growth rate was much higher.

Among the above 72 HEIs there are 4 academies, 27 universities with 19 branches in other cities, 7 branches of foreign HEIs (Great Britain, Italy, Singapore, South Korea, Russia), and 4 higher religious educational institutions and their branches.¹¹

Despite the government's attempts to expand the network of higher education institutions, enrolment in higher education is still one of the lowest in the world. For example, at the beginning of the 2017/2018 academic year, only 80.822 people (approximately 11-12% of graduates) were enrolled to study for a Bachelor's degree, including 18.439 on a state grant-funded basis, 62.383 young people on a fee-based contractual basis. Even fewer people may study for Master's degree: out of 62.900 students who gained a bachelor's degree, only 4.857 could get an opportunity to start their masters. According to the State Committee for Statistics, in the country as of the beginning of the 2017/2018 academic year, 297.689 students attended higher educational institutions, of which 119.180 (40%) were girls. Apparently, there are certain gender disparities in the country at the level of higher education. Moreover, the representation of girls in the fields of study is uneven and there are so-called "female" professions (for example, pedagogy and medicine), reflecting at a later stage in unequal incomes between men and women.

Apart from the problems of a limited number of places at higher education institutions, there is a high cost of education, as well as the concentration of half of all universities in the country's capital - Tashkent. All these factors often lead to the fact that only those who have sufficient financial resources can afford to study at the university. The cost of contractual annual tuition in state universities varies from 8,29 (1.065 \$) to 11,58 (1.487 \$) million sums (data for 2018).

The relevant processes taking place in the sphere of higher education have a positive dynamics and demonstrate that the government has taken a course towards a gradual increase in quotas for admission to higher educational institutions with a special emphasis on improving quality and on vulnerable social groups (Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures for the further development of the Higher Education system", Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to radically improve the system of state support for people with disabilities"). With an ambitious vision of the country's development, a higher proportion of people with a higher education in society is required. In addition, international experience shows that the higher the level of education of people is, the more they tend to continue their education. This is crucial in the context of LLL and is an important factor for the further development of the society so that the country could have pride of place in a global competitive environment. In addition, the increasing proportion of people with higher education is a prerequisite for realizing the vision of a knowledge based society

¹¹ <https://stat.uz/ru/press-tsentr/novosti-komiteta/3286-osnovnye-pokazatelej-sistemy-vysshego-obrazovaniya-v-respublike-uzbekistan> (request date - 02.02.2018).

and innovation (for example, today South Korea is already striving to achieve 100% of citizens' enrolment in higher education).

According to the existing legislation, Uzbekistan's universities are providers of higher and post-graduate education programs. The experience of developed countries shows that universities can also fulfil the function of LLL programme providers for the various categories of population, and implement enlightenment activities (open universities). For example, universities in many developed countries, through the establishment of LLL centres, try to play a more active role in providing educational services to different target groups.

LLL / further education centres at the universities are usually engaged in:

- Development of additional training programmes for their own students;
- Advanced training of their own staff members;
- Development of the curricula and educational proposals aimed at increased participation of the adult population in learning and education (priority: dissemination of knowledge / values, rather than income generation);
- Chargeable educational services for various target groups (priority: income generation);

And in some cases:

- Recognition, validation and accreditation of previous non-formal education results;
- Provision of appropriate advice and consulting services on learning and career planning.

Overall targets for further development of policy / strategy and formulation of measurable outcomes:

- **Expanding the enrolment of students in higher education** through increasing investment in universities and financing expanded capacities at universities, introducing flexible educational programmes (blended learning, evening shifts, block seminars), using distance learning opportunities (including MOOCs), and encouraging the opening of private universities;
- **Encourage the establishment of LLL-Centres under higher educational institutions.** Support the universities of Uzbekistan when rethinking their role in the context of LLL and encourage the establishment of LLL-Centres. Such centres could soon play an important role in the creating in-demand educational offers (including short-term and one-day educational activities, and trainings);
- **Greater autonomy for higher education institutions.** Universities should gain greater autonomy in curricula and study programmes development, as well as in selecting the modes of study, recognising and accepting prior learning results of students. Then they will be able to create more adequate and flexible educational offers for their target groups and encourage the involvement in LLL as well as introduce new target groups;
- **Develop national success criteria, ranking, and funding HEIs upon achieved indicators.** In this case, universities that are distinguished by dynamic development and innovation could be encouraged;

- **Improve the quality of education and research, as well as the international competitiveness of universities of Uzbekistan.** In addition to such basic elements as funding and infrastructure (buildings, capacities, equipment etc.), universities do need to expand international exchange programmes for students, teachers and researchers. Moreover, it might make sense to move away from the Soviet model of separating academic activity into education (HEIs) and research (scientific institutions) and to foster merging of universities with research institutes and centres (*certainly not for the purpose of cost saving!*). In this case, in the long-term, some universities in Uzbekistan could aim at being represented in international rankings of HEIs (for example, in the list of the world's 500 top universities), since they would greatly improve some indicators (i.e., citation in scientific papers) based on which international rankings are created.
- **Promote development of new directions in teaching and research.** The country needs research and staff training in certain fields, where no experience up to date exists. In the context of LLL these new directions of activities could be crucial. This primarily applies to research and staff training in educational policy studies, andragogy (pedagogy for adults), etc. These fields are very practical and could contribute to the professionalization of staff and managerial decisions in the sector.

ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

Adult Learning and Education as the core component of Lifelong Learning

Specific feature of adult learning and education (ALE) as a separate field of education is, when practicing and having different forms of implementation, ALE as a separate educational subsector in many countries including Uzbekistan is not institutionalized at decision - and policy-making level. At the same time, in a number of developed countries ALE has already passed the stage of institutionalization and functions as a generally acknowledged subsector of the educational system, promoting professional and creative potential of adult citizens throughout their lives and contributing to economic development and improvement in the well-being of the population.

The definition of adult education as a special category was given in 1976 in the UNESCO Recommendations:

The "adult education" denotes the entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.¹²

Despite the fact that ALE policy-making and institutionalization as an educational subsector took place in some advanced countries in the 70s of the last century (for example, the laws on adult education were adopted in certain European countries) a wider acceptance at the international level evolved at the end of the 20th century. For example, in 1997, in Hamburg, at the Fifth World Conference on Adult Education under the auspices of UNESCO (CONFINTEA V), adult education was described as the key to the 21st century¹³, emphasizing the importance and particular contribution of ALE to the progressive development of mankind. Over the past few decades, the understanding of adult education has been enriched and expanded, as reflected in the updated UNESCO Recommendations of 2015:

Adult learning and education are the core components of lifelong learning. It comprises all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work. It denotes the entire body of learning processes, formal, non-formal and informal, whereby those regarded as adults by the society in which they live, develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, in both their own interests and those of their communities, organizations and societies. Adult learning and education involves sustained activities and processes of acquiring, recognizing, exchanging, and adapting capabilities. Given that the boundaries of youth and adulthood are shifting in most cultures, in this text the term "adult" denotes all those who engage in adult learning and education, even if they have not reached the legal age of maturity.¹⁴

¹² Recommendations of UNESCO General Conference 19th session "On the Development of Adult Education", 1976, Nairobi

¹³ The fifth International Conference on Adult Education, Hamburg, Germany, July 14-18, 1997

¹⁴ Recommendations of UNESCO General Conference 38th session "On Adult Learning and Education", 2015, Paris.

As can be seen from the above definition, the term "adult education" has not only been enriched, but also, first and foremost, has evolved, including one more word - "learning", that in the Russian language style does not allow to notice a significant difference, but in English it is sensible and shows the shift of the semantic focus to the component of each person's own participation in constant filling knowledge gap and updating skills, since "learning" interprets the process of education as conscious, without external pedagogical impact. This implies particular position of an adult student who more often "learns independently" than "is being taught by someone" and is now seen as a full participant in the educational process independently determining by whom, where, what and how he will be taught to fulfil his life objectives and plans.

Since ALE covers the longest period of a person's life, it is considered to be the key component of the LLL concept. In addition, challenges of our time, technological progress, as well as the need for fast adaptation to a rapidly changing environment make the ALE one of the most important factors in the development of society, requiring each person to constantly update knowledge and retrain to meet the requirements and Zeitgeist («learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to live»). Thus, ALE on the one hand, being a subsector of education, at the same time becomes a part of everyday life of every adult and should be included in the list of priority tasks of each government.

After the LLL concept became a paradigm at the global level and was reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (*SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*), the importance of the ALE increased even more. UN Member States have committed themselves to SDG implementation, which implies, among other things, the alignment and / or development of their national ALE systems. It is necessary to take into account the specifics of this subsector, its functions, semantic (thematic) areas and existing kinds within the national context.

Among the ALE functions there are the following: developmental (satisfaction of cultural needs of the individual, needs of creative growth); compensatory (filling gaps in basic education); adaptive (fast training and retraining in the context of changing production and social environment); integrative function into an unfamiliar cultural context and the function of re-socialization.

The following main semantic (thematic) areas are usually distinguished in the ALE **content**: 1) literacy learning in a broad sense, including computer, functional, social, and the ability to process information, critical attitudes to it, knowledge of computer and other innovative technologies;

2) continuous professional education, training, retraining and advanced training without which the full-fledged activities in a rapidly changing social and working environment are impossible;

3) general cultural education, not related to working practice, but aimed at building of an active citizenship on important social issues and knowledge, allowing to have a decent life in terms of health and well-being, cultural and spiritual development. In foreign countries, general cultural education is known as "community", "popular" or "liberal" education.

Such forms of education as formal, non-formal and informal in the LLL structure (including the ALE) until recently were as a rule clearly differentiated. Formal education is usually regulated, standardized (takes requested forms) by the government and society. The methods

of such regulation are standards, fixed by legislation educational systems of a certain type, nationally recognized documents issued to graduates (certificate, diploma, qualifications) and authorizing for the certain actions. Formal education usually provides access to the next level of education. Some levels of formal education are approved by the government as mandatory for all citizens.

The concept of non-formal education includes all types of educational programs and training courses that do not give the right to obtain a certificate that provides a change in professional status. Non-formal education / learning, if desired, allows for general cultural (and sometimes professional) development of a person at all stages of his/her life, regardless of the initial educational level. It is usually associated with the field of hobbies and realization of creative potential of the individual. Sometimes non-formal education plays a compensatory or adaptive role for people who for various reasons have not been able to or do not want to get a formal education.

The informal (that is, outside of any form) means learning, directly "embedded" in the life of every person and received in the course of communication, work, under the influence of the media, enlightenment activities, while reading books, analysis of the own experience and experiences of others, etc.

The continuity of formal education levels forms a vertical of the LLL, where a transition from level to level is expected along the bottom-up education (preschool, school, vocational, university, postgraduate). The horizontal line of the LLL is more represented by non-formal and informal education, which can sometimes be carried out simultaneously with the formal one. Integration of these two directions ensures the continuity of all educational processes, including ALE. In many countries, which pay significant attention to the development of the ALE sub-sector, recently all three forms of education (formal, non-formal, informal) are overlapping more often, the boundaries between them are blurred, providing a constant and continuous learning pathway "as long and wide as a life". Some researchers sometimes mention the third vector of the educational movement - "life-deep learning", which means conscious self-knowledge and cultural / spiritual development of a person. All three pathways represent a kind of volumetric "area" within which there are all opportunities for the harmonious development of people for sustainable development and world progress.

Challenges, faced by adult education and learning in Uzbekistan

Who needs ALE?

Both in international and national legislative documents of Uzbekistan, each person has the right to education and learning, not limited by age. Adults, having graduated from the educational institutions and having received certificates and diplomas, remain in need of learning for as long as they live, staying in any status. Thus, working people learn with the purpose of constant improvement of professional skills and career growth. For those who are looking for jobs there are training and retraining courses for the unemployed and programs to enhance self-confidence in the labour market. In addition, due to the rapid development of technology and globalization, there are programs of general cultural and civic education for the entire population.

However, there are specific categories of citizens who are in acute need of professional and other ALE programs: women are underrepresented in the total labour force, since they are (or have been for a long time) busy with the care of children and the elderly; people desperate to find a job (especially young people and representatives of the age category 50+); returning labour migrants; employees freed up due to structural changes in the economy; with special needs who require an inclusive approach; vulnerable social groups (persons released from penal institutions, people with low income, mothers raising children without a father, etc.).

It is widely assumed that since 99% of Uzbekistan population can read and write, such ALE direction as "literacy learning" is a back burner. However, functional illiteracy is quite common. Many people, especially in rural areas, do not have the knowledge and skills necessary for a fulfilling life and interaction with other members of society. Representatives of older generations without special training often cannot become literate consumers, users of household appliances, Internet, bank customers.

LLL problems and their causes

Representatives of different target groups do not always realize how important ALE is for them, and therefore it is necessary to develop mechanisms for encouraging population engagement in educational and learning processes. However, because there are no governmental ALE administration bodies and no defined scope of their competences, such mechanisms are not available. Moreover, the ALE sub-sector itself (officially is not defined as a separate block, but nonetheless, actually exists in various types at different levels of education) is not represented by a sufficiently wide network of diverse educational institutions and other educational structures for adults. All this reduces access to the adult ALE programs.

There are Centres for training and retraining of the unemployed population under the Ministry of Labour, Institutes for the advanced (in-service) training of different fields of study for adults in Uzbekistan and all of them are state-funded. In addition, there are fee-based courses for non-working population at vocational colleges, training programs provided by the non-governmental educational institutions (NGEI) on a fee basis and free educational programs on the basis of non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs), as well as various courses organized by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Business Women's Association and other organizations, but their number is insufficient for the 32 million population of Uzbekistan, and the policies that support the development of these ALE providers are not uniform and deliberate and focused mainly on vocational education (retraining, advanced training). As a result, almost no one is responsible for management decisions in this area. This is exacerbated by the fact that the ALE is not considered and highlighted in legislative documents as a separate education subsector. There is no legal framework, and the term "adult education" is not used in current legislative documents. The term "continuing education" used in the legislative acts partly includes the aspects reflected in the international understanding of the ALE and LLL concept, but in general, the subsector visibility, both in educational policy and in the entire society, does not correspond to its meaning and could be much higher.

All this makes it possible to conclude that one of the most serious challenges facing the ALE is the lack of subsector institutionalization, which is so diverse that is in need of an intersectoral governing body in which involvement of various stakeholders will be ensured.

Another problem is low enrolment rates in the ALE. A positive fact against this background is a list of professions for which periodic advanced training is required (teachers, doctors, pilots

and many others). As noted above, funds are allocated from the state budget to update the knowledge and skills of representatives of these professions. However, the motivation of the trainees attending advanced training courses is often quite low, since the development of programs for them is excessively centralized and is not flexible. Institutions for advanced training are located mainly in big cities and disadvantage residents of rural areas.

As for the business sector, big and medium-sized companies are able to invest certain funds in staff training, however small business is left without such an opportunity. Non-formal training for members of various professional associations is held periodically, but they are also concentrated mainly in the capital of the country, and therefore participation in ALE programs in provinces is much lower. The results of such educational activities are frequently not documented and not reflected on the "educational accounts" involved (for example, when changing job) as additional qualifications.

The activity of various non-governmental educational institutions slightly improves the participation of population in the ALE. A training component or educational activity (study tours, trainings, seminars, round tables, promotion of a healthy lifestyle, etc.) is also included in the activities of various international projects. However, in general, the coverage of the adult population by educational programs in comparison with the developed countries is rather low.

There is no statistical data on the degree of population participation in the ALE programs. But on the basis of long-term observations of experts from the sector, it can be argued that in terms of age the ALE coverage of population is quite uneven. Participation of the older people remains at a low level (compared to European countries). Various educational courses, lectures, clubs, etc. are mostly attended by school kids. Communities in social networks periodically conduct educational activities (excursions, thematic meetings, lectures, etc.). Young people and a small part of the average age group of the population (30-40 years old) also participate more often.

In the market of educational services, public is mainly interested in the areas of ALE activity which are successfully implemented in the non-formal sector of education: vocational training for employment; language classes; computer literacy courses; accounting courses; courses on personal development. Many of these areas are implemented in NGEIs, culture and leisure centres, NGOs (educational activities), etc. Until recently, the non-formal ALE in Uzbekistan was a fairly liberal sphere, alienated from the general system of formal education. Starting from 2004 it is a sphere with clearly regulated rules for the work of NGEIs, providing services on a fee basis. In provinces, the number of these providers (in view of complicated procedure for NGEIs licensing) is considerably less than in the capital.

Culture and leisure centres for population, created on the basis of former "Houses of culture", being state organizations by form of ownership, mainly operate in the non-formal sector and offer a variety of cultural and educational services (hobby groups, art and discussion clubs, meetings with cultural figures and others). However, they do not have enough experienced staff (experts in andragogy) who can work with adults, as well as competent methodologists and developers of training programs.

Museums, libraries, theatres, cinemas and art galleries are still positioning themselves as cultural institutions, but some of them (National Library of Uzbekistan, Zero-Line gallery, etc.)

are gradually beginning to perform some functions of educational institutions, offering their visitors various lectures of educational and enlightening nature.

In general, ALE share and importance outside the framework of formal education is very small. At the same time, according to UNESCO's assessment, 85% of EU working population has acquired the necessary knowledge and skills beyond the formal education.

Another challenge for the republic's ALE is the lack of training of specialists and teachers for this sub-sector. Now adults are trained by specialists who has graduated from the higher educational institutions with a pedagogical departments or completed training in various programs of institutes for advanced training, NGEIs and associations (their own training programs for trainers), international projects (trainings for trainers). Complex procedures for licensing NGEIs activities lead to their limited number and less opportunities to participate in the adult education. In addition, educational institutions hardly use the opportunities for distance learning. All this has a significant effect on reducing the access of the population to the ALE programs.

Profession of the "Andragogue" is not included in the Classification of Occupations and Employment; there is no training for this profession at universities either in studying for bachelor's degree or for master's degree. As a consequence, the scientific and practical research of the ALE sphere is poorly developed; there is no information and consulting system for the subsector. The situation is aggravated by the lack of a mechanism for collecting and analysing statistical information on the ALE for a qualitative evidence based policy-making in this area.

In Uzbekistan, the indicator of education funding in total is quite high, but the share of public funds for the ALE is scanty. Training and retraining of the unemployed is underfunded. Insufficient is financing of state institutions for advanced (in-service) training. Almost no innovative multi-channel forms of financing are used. Organizations working in the field of ALE and non-formal education are hardly encouraged. Local authorities play a minor role in the ALE financing, although international experience indicates the success of such financing scheme (Germany, South Korea, etc.).

Thus, the main challenges facing the ALE system of Uzbekistan are the following: lack of subsector institutionalization, a small number of educational organizations / providers for adults and, accordingly, a low level of participation in the educational programs, lack of public financial support for this subsector, no staff training for this sector.

Overall targets for further development of policy / strategy and formulation of measurable outcomes:

The development of adult education and learning system in Uzbekistan should be supported by a consistent public policy. This policy can be based on UNESCO's recommendations (2015) on five areas: 1) policy, 2) governance, 3) financing, 4) participation, inclusiveness, equality, and 5) quality. These same aspects of the ALE reform and development are listed in the "Belém Framework for Action" adopted at the 6th World Conference on Adult Education

(CONFINTEA VI).¹⁵ In addition, it is necessary to determine the priorities in this subsector for the next 12 years in accordance with the Sustainable Development Program 2030, and also use the accumulated experience gained at various conferences in Uzbekistan¹⁶, which resulted in the adoption of the final recommendatory documents. Analysing and summarizing international and national recommendations, it is possible to propose the following key milestones for the transformation of the ALE in Uzbekistan in the light of the LLL.

Policy and governance

- The ALE policy should be comprehensive, inclusive and overarching, taking into account different types and forms of education / learning and a wide range of spheres, including economics, social sphere, culture, technology and environment. All political decisions must be sound and rely on facts as evidential basis. Therefore, it is necessary to streamline data collection in the ALE subsector and include it in the country's statistics, developing indicators of participation and progress that can be used to evaluate changes, and share best practices with other countries.
- The ALE policy should aim to improve coordination, cooperation and governance in this subsector. Creation of the National Council on the ALE and engagement of various stakeholders (government authorities, academia, civil society organizations and private sector) as partners, giving them an equal number of votes, could be a good initial decision, followed by defining an agency responsible for the subsector or creation of a new one. Transfer of the ALE competencies to the local and regional authorities would correspond to international best practice.
- The adoption of a separate legislative document regulating this sub-sector would facilitate the development of the ALE in the country. It could be the Law on the ALE (or a separate chapter in the new version of the Law on Education), both in formal and non-formal education systems.
- Introduce national qualification frameworks for education for the recognition, validation and accreditation of all forms of education in the formal, non-formal and informal systems, including the adult education. This would significantly advance the development of the ALE in the country, make it more flexible, and remove the barriers of the educational trajectory at the intersection of different sub-sectors.
- Choose in the pilot mode a site for creating a learning area (this could be a city district or an entire city) following the UNESCO concept of "Learning cities" (it is possible to combine this concept with the concept of "Smart city").
- To promote the development of lifelong learning culture, disseminate information about its various types and forms, as well as existing opportunities for population. Continuously publicize and promote adult education and lifelong learning in the mass media.

Financing

¹⁵ Framework for Action adopted at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in Belém.

¹⁶ 1) Regional conference "Education for all – lifelong learning in Central Asia", Tashkent, 4-5 June, 2003. 2) International conference "Quality Assessment in Adult Education". Uzbekistan, Bukhara, September 22-23, 2010 3) National Forum "Adult Education", Tashkent, November 15-17, 2011. 4) National Conference "Adult Education in Uzbekistan: Today and Tomorrow", Tashkent, September 24-25 2014 5) Regional Seminar "Successful Policy Development in Adult Education at the International Level", Tashkent, November 27, 2015 6) National Conference "Rethinking Education in the Context of Current Reforms in Uzbekistan: Policy, Quality and Lifelong Learning", Tashkent, December 14-15, 2017

- Attract and allocate sufficient financial resources to support expanded and effective participation in adult learning and education. Initiate pilot funding for the support of the ALE programs for those target groups, the consensus on which will be reached with the involved stakeholders / parties concerned (for example, within the National Council);
- Take into account that financing of the ALE besides central authorities could be taken over by the local authorities, employers and the students themselves (trainees of different courses). The government should play a key role, but local authorities are closer to the needs of learners and can respond more quickly to their demands. It is necessary to streamline the distribution of financial responsibility for the ALE subsector and determine the competencies of each party engaged in financing, with a special role assigned to local authorities;
- Consider the possibility of implementing some programs for the training of adults by non-governmental educational institutions with appropriate public funding (for example, by introducing per capita funding), and issuing of nationally recognized documents confirming the competence;
- Encourage the collaboration and facilitate the optimization of different providers / learning structures. For example, the Business Women's Association and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry could refuse to run their own expensive centres, and order courses at one Centre specializing in the ALE. This will allow more efficient use of resources;
- Facilitate the joint multi-channel financing and creation of incentive mechanisms. Support, on the one hand, the "supply" (providers of education), and on the other hand, the "demand" (consumers of educational services), thereby affecting the landscape of the ALE. For example, at the local government level, the support of providers could be to allocate buildings for learning activities free of charge or to provide institutional funding, and support for the "clients" of this subsector could be to use tools such as subsidies (vouchers and scholarships), paid leaves for professional training, etc. This will create competition between providers and improve the quality of educational services without the need for external measuring systems.
- Financially encourage private companies / enterprises (especially small ones) to help them regularly upgrade the qualifications of their employees and work out mechanisms for reflecting learning outcomes in the biography (on individual "educational accounts") of each trainee.

Participation, inclusiveness, equality

- Ensure the participation, inclusiveness and equality, so that no one is excluded from adult learning and education, and that all women and men, regardless of their age, social status, culture, language, economic status, education or other factors, have quality education and learning opportunities;
- Pay special attention to the promotion and expansion of access to quality education for the vulnerable social groups, in particular disadvantaged youth, migrant workers, the unemployed, the disabled, prisoners, the elderly, stateless persons, etc.;
- Apply the approaches to adult learning that respect and take into account the diversity of languages and national traditions of learners, and pay special attention to the programs or initiatives that promote gender equality;

- Ensure conditions under which received additional education would not be only recognized but also valued, would impact on the income and status of a person;
- Encourage the development of working people's skills, focusing in the future on schemes used in developed countries (German, Italian, French models);
- Create and develop institutional structures, such as community learning centres with a view to developing local communities. In Uzbekistan, such structures are hardly found, but in many successful countries, they function effectively. In international practice they are known as Community Learning Centres (CLCs); in considering the landscape of the ALE institutions in Uzbekistan, lack of such institutions is immediately apparent. At the same time, those established in rural areas could significantly level the geographic imbalance of the ALE institutions;
- Develop the measures to increase motivation and ensure universal access to adult education. Encourage general education / cultural programs that "give a second chance" to people who have missed it or fell short of any knowledge in school education, poorly informed about environmental, health and civil values, so that they begin to play a more active role in the economic, social and cultural life of the country. In this case, consider vulnerable social groups as a priority target group.
- Ensure the development of high-quality information and guidance services that will promote the use of adults learning opportunities and help to increase the visibility and benefits of such learning;
- Promote and encourage a greater and more sustainable community participation in the ALE through a culture of lifelong learning and reduced barriers to participation in such learning.

Quality

- Encourage the creation of quality assurance mechanisms within the institutions / providers of the ALE and refrain from assigning the non-formal education quality control function to any state supervisory bodies. Promote the dissemination among the general public of information on service providers / learning providers who have implemented internal quality assurance mechanisms at their bases;
- Conduct an analysis of programs effectiveness and efficiency by assessing the extent to which they ensure achievement of intended goals, including with respect to learning outcomes;
- Promote a flexible transit between formal and non-formal education and learning paths.
- Create and improve the system of learning, conditions of employment and professionalism of trainers working with adults (andragogues). Introduce training of andragogues at universities of the country. Develop and promote the andragogy as a scientific field and profession;
- Provide adult learners with the opportunity to acquire and expand knowledge, experience and skills through a flexible system of participation and accumulation of knowledge at various stages;
- Ensure recognition, validation and accreditation of learning outcomes from the non-formal and informal ALE system as equivalent to the same learning outcomes obtained within the formal education system (in accordance with the national qualification framework) in order to ensure equal opportunities for further education and access to labour market;

- Introduce the principles of andragogy in training, retraining and advanced training programs for specialists, as well as student-centered approaches based on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and open educational resources;
- Encourage and support the use of international experience and latest achievements for managerial decisions to build and strengthen the knowledge and skills of adults needed in the labour market of the 21st century.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FORMATION OF HOLISTIC POLICY IN THE SPHERE OF LIFELONG LEARNING

To build a successful lifelong learning system, the state, as it has been noted several times above, must make significant changes. At the same time, forming the policy for a unified cross-cutting vision of the lifelong learning system, it is possible to highlight the following aspects relating to the whole region, rather than its separate sub-sectors:

When elaborating the lifelong learning policy, **creation of an inter-sectoral coordinating link** is an important task in Uzbekistan (for example, the National Council for lifelong learning, or the State Commission for Skills Development, or the State Agency for lifelong learning with a management body staffed by different stakeholders). The secretarial functions of this coordinating institution could be entrusted to the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education or, even more important, to establish a secretariat under the Cabinet of Ministers.

Involvement of different stakeholders is of great importance not only for lifelong learning as a whole, but also for individual subsectors (vocational education, ALE). In the relevant sections of this document on education subsectors, the need for coordinating mechanisms was already noted. However, the functions of such sectoral coordinating bodies could be covered by one common National Council (governmental commission, agency, etc.), which includes the consideration of thematically different aspects or organizing sectional work on sub-sectors within the general body.

After the **approval of the Concept on the policy elaboration for the lifelong learning**, it is necessary to work out a **Strategy for the development of the lifelong learning** (with certain priorities) and an **Action plan for the next five years**. In addition, it is important to ensure the presence of the human resource / human capital development component in all strategic documents on the country's development, as well as in the plans and strategies for the development of individual sectors.

Along with the development of policy documents in the lifelong learning sector, an important aspect is also the **adoption of the Law on Education in a new edition**, interpreting the **lifelong learning as the main goal for the organization of the educational sector** and defining clear interconnections among different subsectors of the system with a single cross-cutting vision. In addition, for the promotion of the lifelong learning, it seems necessary to **adopt the Law on Adult learning and Education**, covering and institutionalizing, thus, a politically uncovered educational subsector.

The formation of the lifelong learning policy requires professional managerial decisions. At first, such decisions can be made on the basis of priorities and identified problems, which articulation would be carried out by stakeholders and experts (for example, within the framework of the coordinating mechanism proposed above). Over time, it is necessary to **base and justify these decisions on factual material, research and priorities** formulated in the strategies and development plans of the country.

To provide decision makers with evidence base and evidence based policy making, it is necessary to initiate both the **collection of certain statistical data** (preferably in terms of the parameters adopted in international practice for comparability) and to **promote research on different aspects of the lifelong learning policy**. In addition, Uzbekistan's participation in

internationally recognized assessment programs on knowledge and competencies obtained at different levels of education would have made it possible to compare the success of the national system with the systems of other countries (despite the criticized methodologies and the limited information available from these evaluation programs).

Overcoming the challenges on providing access for the broad strata of the population to the lifelong learning, the **definition of competences / powers of local and regional authorities for different education subsectors** is crucial, since it is the local authorities that are best aware of the needs of the population. After giving them the right at first to encourage access to the lifelong programs (this right could be used by financially better-off regions and cities), and after a while - by obliging them to do so. Involvement of local authorities in the lifelong learning could occur through the **establishment of municipal educational structures**, for example, the local Community Learning Centers (**CLC**), modeled on existing in many developed countries of Europe and Asia.

In the long term, it would be desirable to **unify the three ministries coordinating education** (Ministry of Preschool, Public and Higher Education) in order to make better use of budgetary funds, better coordination between them and continuity of students at different levels of education.

Labor activity is one of the most important aspects of life, because it ensures well-being, satisfaction with life and self-affirmation of a person. Proceeding from this - the success and employment of citizens are important for the country, not only from the economic point of view. In this case, lifelong learning plays a key role, as it helps (re-) integrate into society and / or contribute to ensuring the workplace safety. Since the development of skills and qualification play an important role in the lifelong learning context, it can be concluded based on the practice of other countries that the **creation of the National qualification framework (NQF)**, where the qualification levels are clearly distributed and the mechanisms of transition from formal to informal learning forms (and vice versa) are listed, provides this process a fundamental basis. Availability of qualification frameworks can greatly simplify the promotion / movement among different types and levels of education programs. In the context of Uzbekistan, where significant migration processes are observed, the importance of **creating a system for recognizing, validating and accrediting** previously acquired competences is added as well.

Better access to high-quality lifelong learning requires, both the **increased investment in the sector, and more efficient use of existing resources**. The costs for education cannot be covered solely by public funds, although the **government shall continue playing the leading role in funding**.

Until now, the vast share of the public funds allocated for the education are spent on training citizens of the country under the age of 25, which on average makes only a one-third of human life (taking into account the average life expectancy in Uzbekistan is 74 years).¹⁷ **In this regard, the issue of changing the spending structure of the sub-sectors is also relevant.**

Development of the country and the announced future plans require, as a matter of urgency, additional financial injections into the sector. This is not an easy task for countries trying to pursue a prudent financial policy, and in particular - to limit public spending. Seriousness of

¹⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uz.html>

the current situation and emerging problems, require decisive measures and it is worthwhile to consider the possibility of **attracting additional credit resources and donor assistance**.

At first glance, the need to resort to such unpopular measures may be alarming, but given the current still relatively low level of Uzbekistan's external debt (according to estimations for 2017, it makes up 14.1% of the country's GDP²⁰, while international experts and analysts consider the external debt up to 60% of the country's GDP as acceptable), as well as a high economic return on additional investments in education, this step can undoubtedly be justified.

Moreover, of course, Uzbekistan can count on expert support and targeted financing of pilot projects in selected education subsectors at the expense of international donor funds attracted by state and non-governmental organizations of the country. This would limit the budgetary burden on investment in education.

The modern system of education in the context of lifelong learning, in addition to the above mentioned aspects of economic efficiency, should fulfill an additional but integral function of social justice - to provide equal access to quality education, **giving priority to vulnerable groups of the population**, including those living in rural areas of the country. The lifelong learning system should create opportunities for people who found themselves in difficult life situations, especially vulnerable women and children, those who have not completed compulsory education, people with disabilities, unemployed, labor migrants, persons released from prison, etc. to get a second / additional chance for basic professional and life skills. This principle should become fundamental for the formation and implementation of a lifelong learning system and can be traced at all levels of both formal and non-formal education.

Involvement of broad sections of the population in the lifelong learning depends not only on the functioning of the landscape of various providers of education and access to educational services, but also on the motivation of citizens. In order to stimulate and / or develop the motivation of target groups, it is necessary to continuously **cultivate and promote the lifelong learning culture**. Every resident of the country must realize that learning does not have age limits, and must continue throughout life. Learning should be perceived by the population of the country as an indispensable condition for achieving success in life, and at the same time it should be accessible to everyone at every level of education.

To help stakeholders in the orientation among the various lifelong learning programs, auxiliary tools and mechanisms of information-consultative nature (**guidance**) are needed. Particular emphasis should be placed on online resources so that potential students find it convenient to receive information about the availability of interesting programs, trends and demand of the labor market, and, if necessary, quality advice / guidance.

Taking into account the fact that education in the modern world is ubiquitous, in different situations and forms, the state can no longer be the only source of education. However, it is a human right to get an education and in most countries is perceived as a public good provided by the state. Accordingly, the role of the state, even when encouraging the involvement of other actors in the provision of education - should remain the leading.

Besides, **civil society organizations can make a huge contribution to enlightenment activities**, especially for vulnerable groups of the population, thereby expanding their access to quality education.

Transformation of the education system cannot do without **rethinking the role of information and communication technologies (ICT)** in the sector. ICTs greatly contribute to learning: they increase the coverage of the population by programs, reduce costs, provide more flexible and mobile forms of education. They can significantly increase the information resources available to students, thereby changing the relationship between the teacher and the student, making the students more independent and self-sufficient in the search and gaining knowledge. ICTs can facilitate collaborative learning and provide quick feedback to students. Furthermore, creation of a specific learning environment can also contribute to social networks.

However, these results are not achieved simply by introducing computers into the learning system. **It is required an appropriate political framework where ICTs are used to solve educational and management problems.** Significant investments shall be made to advance the training of teachers and managers, and update their professional methodology. Access to the Internet and modernization of material and technical equipment is a requirement for achieving particularly positive results and will make them sustainable.

At the same time, intensive application of ICT at all levels of the lifelong learning system will allow to conduct more accurate and financially less costly analysis of the participation and success of students, and the rational use of the resources provided by educational organizations.

PRIORITY ACTION AREAS

Developing a successful policy to encourage the involvement of citizens in lifelong learning programs is an easy process. Understanding of the lifelong learning in the country among policy-makers is relatively low and therefore, even with a strong desire it will be difficult to create a comprehensive strategy for the whole sector, due to the lack of experience in this sphere and the lack of factual data on important aspects of the sector.

Despite this, it is possible to begin the process with the initial steps and implementation of pilot projects. Most countries, serving as an example, undergo this process the same way. It is not possible to cover everything from the first time and it is necessary to reconcile with this. Nevertheless, at the initial stage it makes sense to **establish a monitoring and evaluation system** in order to assess the success of the actions undertaken, analyze the miscalculations and record the impact of the policy on the sector / target groups, etc.

From the point of view of the developers of this document, it is necessary to carry out the following priority actions within the sector:

- To carry out **revision of the legislation** that creates the basic framework for the lifelong learning sector – to revise the Law on Education, to adopt the Law on the lifelong learning, etc.
- **Institutionalize the dialogue of stakeholders** - to establish a coordination mechanism (for example, national council) to initiate the formation of a comprehensive policy in the lifelong learning area.
- To **increase responsibility of the local and regional authorities for the lifelong learning and non-formal training**, and to promote the creation of municipal educational structures (for example, Local Community Learning Centers (LCLC)) for the implementation of the lifelong learning programs in cities and in rural areas.
- To **identify the most vulnerable groups** seeking support to engage in training and **initiate pilot government programs** to meet their educational needs. Following the example of professional (re) training programs for the unemployed population, such educational proposals could have specific recipients, be implemented near the places of residence of target groups (for example, based on LCLC), and provide training courses for the development of personality, life skills, entrepreneurial competencies, citizenship, language and ICT training, as well as counseling, support, etc.
- To **use the competencies of higher educational institutions for the lifelong learning** – 1) to increase access to university programs; 2) to initiate the lifelong learning programs in the universities (for example, under the university centers for the lifelong learning); 3) to develop research and teaching activities in the field of lifelong learning (policy in the sector, quality, andragogy, etc.)
- To **improve coordination and management in the field of vocational education** and personnel training – to revise the competences of the responsible state subsector departments (Ministry of Labor vs. Center for Secondary Special, professional

Education), to assist in elimination of duplication of functions and consider the possibility of establishing a separate state agency for the system management.

- To review all professional (re) training programs with an emphasis on aspects that encourage the **development of key competencies**, as the most important for both work and life and learning.
- To proceed with the **development of the National Qualification Framework** and, as a matter of priority, to **introduce mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation** of acquired knowledge and skills in the informal and formal educational sectors.
- To promote **further liberalization of legislation on the activities of NGOs** a la the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan of May 4, 2018 to encourage educational activities of civil sector actors.