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PROMOTING TOLERANCE AND CIVIC-MINDEDNESS WITHIN THE NATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Abstract

This article emphasizes the importance of social, moral, and ethical education in modern society, and particularly highlights the crucial role of instilling tolerance in youth. It analyzes the United Nations' global "Sustainable Development Goals," especially their principles related to human rights, peace, inclusion, and justice. It describes how these goals are being implemented in Uzbekistan in harmony with the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan, and how this effort supports human dignity across seven priority areas.

Keywords: Tolerance, inter-ethnic harmony, interfaith dialogue, inter-denominational communication, freedom of conscience, humanitarianism, culture of tolerance, enlightenment against ignorance, moral education, lessons in the pedagogy subject, educational concept, inclusive education, educational reforms, active citizenship, universal human values, national traditions, development strategy, New Uzbekistan, Strategy of Action, Constitution, Sustainable Development Goals, Tashkent Declaration, priority directions of state policy, information aggression, virtual messengers, Uzbekistan as a crossroads of civilizations, cradle of philosophical thought, universal values, ancient monuments, etc.

The article also illustrates that Uzbekistan has long been a home to diverse civilizations, religions, and cultures, and that tolerance is an integral part of the Uzbek nation's spiritual heritage. It points out that topics of tolerance are widely covered in secondary school curricula, especially within civic and legal education, and in grades 10–11 pedagogy classes, which include lessons on world religions, confessional harmony, and inter-ethnic unity. It further discusses the necessity of forming a moral "immune system" against information aggression, and highlights the Tashkent Declaration's approach to inclusive education based on tolerance.



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Building a strong civil society depends, above all, on raising socially, morally, and ethically aware citizens, especially among young people. International organizations and many countries have set ambitious new educational goals for global implementation by 2030: improving educational system management, raising standards and quality evaluation, and developing reliable mechanisms for measuring outcomes. The UN's Sustainable Development Agenda (Sep 25, 2015, New York) includes 17 goals and 169 targets aimed at establishing a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable future worldwide .

These goals cover poverty reduction, healthcare, education, gender equality, clean water, environmental sustainability, peace, and justice. Their underlying philosophy is built on tolerance, human rights, inclusivity, and leaving no one behind. In particular, Goals 16 ("Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions") and 10 ("Reduced Inequalities") explicitly advocate building peaceful, inclusive, and equitable societies based on tolerance and equality.

In Uzbekistan, these global aims align with the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan (2022–2026), which continues the "Strategy of Action" through seven priority directions:

1. Enhancing human dignity and advancing a vibrant civic society to build a welfare-oriented state.
2. Establishing justice and the rule of law as essential pillars of development.
3. Developing the national economy at levels meeting modern standards.
4. Implementing fair social policy and strengthening human capital.
5. Ensuring spiritual and moral development and thoroughly reforming this sector.
6. Finding national solutions to universal challenges.
7. Strengthening national security and defense capabilities along with proactive foreign policy.

The overarching idea is the protection of human dignity. Amid intensified globalization and rising threats to peace and stability, moral and spiritual development has been declared a core state policy priority.

Social and religious tolerance is one of the most important foundations for ensuring lasting peace and security. Today, people of various confessions live in Uzbekistan, each with their own religious organizations and ceremonies. They operate under the



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“Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations.” Uzbekistan—traditionally known as a land of religious tolerance—has taken on this role with honor.

Tolerance is a long-standing virtue among peoples living in Uzbekistan. As a crossroads of civilizations in Central Asia, the region has hosted diverse customs, cultures, languages, lifestyles, and religions. Regardless of ethnicity or beliefs, respect for human dignity, deference to elders, and honor toward others have been regarded as high moral values. This legacy—passed from generation to generation—has shaped local interfaith and interethnic harmony at both political and grassroots levels.

One of the initiatives in general education schools aims to deepen tolerance in students’ hearts and minds and to build competencies aligned with enlightenment against ignorance. Starting from grades 8–11, state civic and legal education textbooks incorporate international norms and standards on freedom of religion, including Uzbekistan’s own “Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations,” the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Furthermore, the thematic content of the “Pedagogy” subject (grades 1–11) spans topics related to tolerance, peace, active citizenship, and patriotism—addressing them comprehensively. For instance, the 10th–11th grade curriculum devotes 18 hours to world religions, denominations, and the role of religion in society:

- In grade 10: “The role of religion in human life; world religions and their views on life’s purpose; exaltation of humane virtues in sacred texts; religion in social life; significance of religious traditions to national development; religious holidays; divine scriptures; humanitarian ideas in world religions; good vs. evil; threats disguised as religion (extremist ideologies); the need to counter ignorance with enlightenment; attitudes toward disruptors in sacred texts.”
- In grade 11: “Church-state relations in Uzbekistan; culture of religious tolerance and inter-confessional communication; the need to foster religious harmony; how to maintain religious-secular co-existence; media promotion of religious tolerance; etiquette in visiting holy sites; religious and national values; aligning national traditions with universal human values; significance of religious holidays in moral



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education; religious tolerance; faith and goodness; extremism, terrorism, proselytism; their impact on youth minds; international missionary organizations and their geopolitical motives; digital media's role in religion; religion and cinema; religion and literature; virtual messaging platforms and their exploitation by extremist currents; national efforts to prevent information aggression."

The moral education initiatives in schools also include designated weekly themes: Monday as "Economic Awareness Day," Tuesday "Sports & Wellness Day," Wednesday "Legal Literacy Day," Thursday "Parents' Day," Friday "Spirituality Day," and Saturday "Freedom Day," each paired with related events.

Under the guiding slogan "From National Revival to National Advancement," the nation has embraced comprehensive reforms. Despite significant progress, systemic challenges remain in the social, economic, and political spheres—hindering the effectiveness of moral and spiritual reforms.

In recent years, the President has emphasized the need to establish a modern, rational education and upbringing system—with updated teaching methodologies, standards, textbooks, and manuals; to benefit from advanced foreign experience; and to ground moral education in national traditions and values.

The official educational concept aligns with the Action Strategy's five priority areas, the national Concept of Continuous Moral Education, and both national and international best practices, adapting to current sociopolitical changes. It serves as the foundation for primary and secondary education standards (qualification requirements). The Concept defines the development stages of the "Pedagogy" subject, its curricular content, and related competency standards. At each stage, students are taught to respect national and universal human values.

In November 2022, Tashkent hosted UNESCO's second World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education. This event brought together around 2,500 participants from 147 countries in about 40 sessions. Its outcome—the "Tashkent Declaration"—set four major developmental directions up to 2030:

1. Expanding access to inclusive, quality services for all.
2. Enhancing the image and skills of childhood educators and teachers.
3. Fostering innovation and digitalization in the sector.
4. Improving governance, financing, and policy frameworks.



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Inclusive education for children of all backgrounds—regardless of race, language, disability, or social status—is a concrete expression of tolerance, recognizing and protecting the value of every child. The Tashkent Declaration is more than an education reform—it is a step toward building a society where every child is valued and protected. Its principles are based on tolerance, equality, and human dignity.

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