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THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN AZERBAIJAN AND THEIR REFLECTION IN TEXTBOOKS

The present study explores successful integration of education with Sustainable Development Goals in Azerbaijan and the content of English textbook series which have the potential to be useful resources for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. The objective of this study was to examine English textbooks to better understand whether their content is reflective of the values of sustainable development and to raise awareness of the importance of including such content in English language teaching textbooks used widely in Azerbaijan. The framework for the content analysis in this study was constructed by considering the requirements directly related to the Sustainable Development Goals set by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan for preparing textbooks. Azerbaijan has made significant efforts to follow the Sustainable Development Goals and integrate them into its national development plans. The government has shown commitment to aligning its policies, programs, and initiatives with the Sustainable Development Goals. The Azerbaijani government recognizes the importance of education in achieving sustainable development and has taken various steps to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals into its education and school textbooks. Regarding Azerbaijan's efforts in education related to the SDGs, the country has made progress in aligning its national policies and strategies with the SDGs. The Azerbaijani government recognizes the importance of education in achieving sustainable development and has taken various steps to incorporate the SDGs into its education and school textbooks. The findings of current research reveal that the themes of sustainability are present in English textbooks to a good extent. However, the results suggest that there must be a more even distribution of such themes throughout the textbook series used in public schools which will be discussed in the article.

Key words: *the Sustainable Development Goals, quality education, textbook, research, educational institutions, reflection of SDGs textbooks.*

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ЦІЛІ СТАЛОГО РОЗВИТКУ В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНІ ТА ЇХ ВІДОБРАЖЕННЯ В ПІДРУЧНИКАХ

У цьому дослідженні досліджується успішна інтеграція освіти з Цілями сталого розвитку в Азербайджані та зміст серій підручників англійської мови, які можуть стати корисними ресурсами для реалізації Цілей сталого розвитку. Метою цього дослідження було вивчити підручники англійської мови, щоб краще зрозуміти, чи відображає їхній зміст цінності сталого розвитку, а також підвищити обізнаність щодо важливості включення такого вмісту в підручники з англійської мови, які широко використовуються в Азербайджані. Основу для контент-аналізу в цьому дослідженні було побудовано з урахуванням вимог, безпосередньо пов'язаних із Цілями сталого розвитку, встановленими Кабінетом Міністрів Азербайджанської Республіки для підготовки підручників. Азербайджан доклав значних зусиль для досягнення Цілей сталого розвитку та інтеграції їх у свої національні плани розвитку. Уряд продемонстрував готовність узгодити свою політику, програми та ініціативи з Цілями сталого розвитку. Уряд Азербайджану визнає важливість освіти для досягнення сталого розвитку та вживає різноманітних заходів для включення Цілей сталого розвитку до своєї освіти та шкільних підручників. Що стосується зусиль Азербайджану в галузі освіти, пов'язаної з ЦСР, то країна досягла прогресу в узгодженні своєї національної політики та стратегій з ЦСР. Уряд Азербайджану визнає важливість освіти

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для досягнення сталого розвитку та вживає різноманітних заходів для включення ЦСР у свою освіту та шкільні підручники. Результати поточного дослідження показують, що теми сталого розвитку значною мірою присутні в підручниках англійської мови. Проте результати свідчать про більш рівномірний розподіл таких тем у серіях підручників, які використовуються в державних школах, про що йтиметься в статті.

Ключові слова: цілі сталого розвитку, якісна освіта, підручник, дослідження, навчальні заклади, відображення ЦСР підручники.

Introduction to the problem. The successful attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relies on ensuring the rights of children. Over 100 Member States have reaffirmed their dedication to upholding children's rights within the framework of implementing the SDGs. UNICEF collaborates with governments, partners, and other United Nations agencies to assist countries in ensuring that the goals yield tangible outcomes for every child, both now and for future generations. By working together, the aim is to create an inclusive and equitable world where children's rights are upheld, enabling them to thrive and contribute to sustainable development.

The main aim of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to invest in children and young people with the objective of creating a more equitable, just, and sustainable world that benefits everyone. Recognizing the importance of the younger generation, the SDGs prioritize the well-being, development, and empowerment of children and youth.

By investing in children and young people, societies can ensure that future generations have access to quality education, good health, and essential services. It involves creating an enabling environment where children and young people are provided with equal opportunities, protection from harm, and the support they need to reach their full potential.

Furthermore, investing in children and young people contributes to achieving the broader objectives of the SDGs, including eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, promoting gender equality, fostering economic growth, and addressing climate change. By prioritizing their needs and rights, we can build a sustainable world that not only benefits the current generation but also leaves a positive legacy for future generations.

Through investments in education, healthcare, social protection, and inclusive policies, the SDGs aim to ensure that children and young people have the necessary resources, skills, and opportunities to actively participate in society and contribute to its sustainable development. By recognizing their importance and investing in their well-being, we can work towards a more equitable, just, and sustainable future for all (How the UN is supporting The Sustainable Development Goals in Azerbaijan, 2023: 1). So, the path to this goal starts with education.

The degree of the problem development. There has been a significant amount of research conducted on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since their adoption in 2015. Researchers from various disciplines, including economics, social sciences, environmental studies, and public policy, have focused on understanding the SDGs, assessing progress, and exploring strategies for their implementation.

The degree of research about SDGs can be seen in the growing body of literature, academic publications, reports, and policy briefs dedicated to examining different aspects of the goals. Researchers have explored topics such as the economic impact of SDGs, social and environmental indicators, policy frameworks, case studies of successful implementation, and challenges faced in achieving the goals.

Moreover, research institutions, think tanks, and international organizations have been actively engaged in analyzing and monitoring progress towards the SDGs. They provide valuable insights through reports and data-driven assessments, which contribute to the global understanding of the SDGs and inform policy-making processes.

There are some prominent organizations and researchers who have contributed significantly to the field of SDGs. Here are a few examples:

United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) is a global initiative launched by the United Nations to promote research and solutions for sustainable development. They have a network of researchers and institutions working on various SDG-related topics (What are The Sustainable development Goals?, 2023: 2) which serves to inform people.

1. Many successful projects on the Sustainable Development Goals have been signed in various countries including Azerbaijan in the fields of education. In this regard, the Institute of Professional Development of Educational Workers continues to do successful work in Azerbaijan. The institute goes out of its way to support educators in this endeavor by creating lesson plan samples about the SDGs and providing them to teachers to ease their job (Professional Development Institute, 2017: 3).

Various aspects of the topic have attracted the attention of many researchers. The article by researcher M. Hashimov is devoted to the analysis of state expenditures on measures to achieve the Sustainable

Development Goals in Azerbaijan, which examines the state strategy for the development of education in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the strategy for the development of Azerbaijani youth. The collective monograph published in Baku in 2019 is devoted to the study of social, philosophical, economic, and environmental problems of sustainable development. The book, along with Azerbaijani researchers, presents articles by scientists of the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan and Mongolia devoted to philosophical problems of sustainable development. D. Mikailov, F. Hasanov and S. Yusifov are among the researchers who pay special attention to the economic aspects of the problem. L. Kasimova studies social and educational values. Researchers Bazavlutskaya L.M., Volkova E.V., Konyaeva E.A. analyzed the ways to implement the SDGs, paying special attention to issues related to the SDGs in education. Numerous studies carried out both in our country and in other countries have shown that by the end of the twentieth century the world had reached an ecological threshold requiring a radical change in the value-ideological, economic, technological foundations of social development. It is in this regard that the «Concept of Sustainable Development» was approved at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. In this regard, in his research Mammadov and some other Russian researchers draw attention to the essence of the SDGs, explore its socio-ecological and economic aspects, linking the foundations of sustainable development directly with the economy. Jeyhun Mikayilov, Fakhri Hasanov, Sabuhi Yusifov can be mentioned among the researchers who focus on this topic from economical point of view (Mikayilov C., Hasanov F., Yusifov S., 2014: 4) in Azerbaijan. In addition, Lazifa Gasimova, Doctor of Pedagogy, should be mentioned regarding values and their instillation in schoolchildren through textbooks (Qasimova L., 2005: 5).

Moreover, according to the decisions adopted at the state level, the SDGs are also reflected in these rules for the preparation of school textbooks in Azerbaijan: Decision No. 67 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated February 25, 2020 on approval of the “Procedure for the preparation of textbooks, teaching aids and other teaching-methodical tools for general educational institutions” (“Ümumi təhsil müəssisələri üçün dərsliklərin, dərs vəsaitlərinin və digər tədris-metodik vasitələrin hazırlanması qaydası”nın təsdiq edilməsi haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Nazirlər Kabinetinin 25 fevral 2020-ci il tarixli 67 nömrəli qərarı, 2023: 6) and Decision No. 361 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated September 29,

2020 on amending Decision No. 103 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated June 3, 2010 «On approval of the state standard and programs (curricula) of the general education level» (Ümumi təhsil pilləsinin dövlət standartı, 2023: 7).

It is important to note that research on the SDGs is an ongoing and evolving process. As new challenges emerge and more data becomes available, researchers continue to explore innovative approaches and solutions to address the complex issues encompassed by the SDGs. How those ideas are reflected in the texts and assignments through the textbooks will be mentioned below.

The purpose and tasks of the research. The purpose of the research task is to study the essence and main characteristics of SDGs, collaboration of Azerbaijan and The United Nations over the SDGs, its influence on Azerbaijan Education, and the SDGs in the textbooks.

Methods. The main methods are literature review, comparative analysis and mixed methods which are used in the article.

Main part. One of the primary priorities for the Republic of Azerbaijan is to establish a model of sustainable development that is just, equitable, and inclusive for all. Azerbaijan has presented its third Voluntary National Review (VNR), highlighting its adoption and integration of the 2030 Agenda into national policies and development strategies. The VNR process is led by the National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Economy, with support from the UNDP country office. Various stakeholders, including the parliament, line ministries, public institutions, NGOs, the private sector, and academic institutions, are consulted during the process (Main messages, 2021: 8).

The SDGs inside the textbooks in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan has ancient and historical traditions. In addition, the Azerbaijani people have always been hospitable, multicultural, and tolerant, as many small nationalities live here. It is not accidental that these characteristics have always been passed on by the elderly to the new generation as a hereditary factor. All these features can be seen in Azerbaijani tales, epics, and ancient folk music examples. Throughout history, Azerbaijanis, as a nation that respects women and the elderly, respects differences, and lives in friendly relations with other nations, have always shown sensitivity to human rights (Qasimova L., 2005: 5). Perhaps, it is the reason that Azerbaijan has taken such big steps in a short period of time to easily achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. One of the most important steps that Azerbaijan has taken in this regard is the integration of Continuous

Development Goals into the school textbooks. To keep up with the rapidly evolving world education system, textbooks in Azerbaijan have been revised and reprinted to meet modern requirements. Currently, the latest edition textbooks align with the Continuous Development Goals. All these processes are progressing directly under the supervision and instructions of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan actively participates in the development of modern textbooks and monitors the process. When preparing textbooks, authors must strictly follow the requirements set by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and these requirements should be reflected in the textbooks. It is not surprising that the most prominent requirements among them are directly related to the SDGs (“Ümumi təhsil müəssisələri üçün, 2023: 6). Here are some examples which have been mentioned in decisions by Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan (“Ümumi təhsil pilləsinin dövlət standartı 2023: 7):

- 1) Information about human rights
- 2) Safety for children
- 3) Abolition of all forms of racial discrimination
- 4) Prevention and elimination of gender-based sexual selection
- 5) Elimination of discrimination against women in educational materials and depiction of women in directory positions
- 6) Education about the negative consequences of early marriage and marriage between relatives
- 7) Issues related to religions
- 8) Protection of biological diversity and information about the environment
- 9) Disaster risk reduction

The above-mentioned examples are just a part of the objectives set by Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the writing of textbooks. As it can be seen from the requirements mentioned above, these are directly or indirectly related to the human rights (1-7) and environmental issues (8 and 9) which are related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Here are some of the SDGs that directly address human rights issues:

1. SDG 1: No Poverty – This goal aims to eradicate extreme poverty, which is considered a violation of the right to an adequate standard of living.
2. SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being – This goal focuses on ensuring access to healthcare services for all, which is linked to the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.
3. SDG 4: Quality Education – This goal emphasizes inclusive and equitable education, which is tied to the right to education for all individuals.

4. SDG 5: Gender Equality – This goal promotes gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls, aligning with the principles of non-discrimination and equal rights as part of human rights.

5. SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth – This goal advocates for promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, ensuring decent work opportunities, and protecting labor rights.

6. SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities – This goal addresses inequalities within and among countries, focusing on promoting social, economic, and political inclusion and reducing discrimination, which are essential aspects of human rights.

7. SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions – This goal emphasizes promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions. It encompasses several human rights principles, including the right to justice, freedom from violence, and the rule of law.

8. SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals – This goal highlights the importance of global partnerships to achieve sustainable development, including collaboration with human rights organizations and promoting human rights-based approaches in development efforts.

Fourth and sixth topics of 6th grade English textbook are completely dedicated to universal values and reflect global problems. Topic 4 is based on instilling students with love for animals and other living things. There are the stories about friendship of children and animals like dog, rabbit, turtle, parrot, fish, etc. Being careful and treating animals and other living things with care plays a special role in developing a sense of care and responsibility in children. Topic 6 is about protecting or saving the world. The information presented here is related to global issues and steps taken by all member states of the United Nations in 2015 to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and build a more peaceful and prosperous society, protect nature, reduce water scarcity and hunger by 2030. It is directly related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are aimed at solving global problems (Heydarova K., Qurbanova G., Mammadova S., 2021: 14).

At the same time, in Topic 8 of the 5th grade English textbook, as shown in the terms given above, the topics against the elimination of gender discrimination is also reflected as the description of the role of men and women in housework (Heydarova K., Qurbanova G., Mammadova S., 2020: 96). Moreover, the paragraph on the abolition of all forms of racial discrimination, which is mentioned in the 6th

paragraph, is also included throughout the book. As a human image given in all topics, people are depicted in different colors and represent different races. The picture given on page 123 is a reflection of 8th term (Heydarova K., Qurbanova G., Mammadova S., 2020: 15) Here, women are depicted as doctors, firemen and singers. The image of a female firefighter is a vivid example of stereotype absence about the place of a woman in society.

Topic 3 of the 7th grade textbook is about different skills. In the text on page 48 of this topic, Leyla is trying to prepare a birthday present for her friend. But she could not finish knitting the doll alone. In this text, we learn about Leyla and her family, the unity and support in her family, and the fact that the whole family, regardless of gender, help Leyla to weave the doll. It can be seen in this text that family values are very important for Azerbaijani people, also there is no gender discrimination between children and the division of work in the family is not subjected to gender discrimination.

The 2nd topic of the same textbook about technology provides information about people who made new technological discoveries and their inventions. It is gratifying that information about our compatriots is also reflected here. An example of this is our compatriot Reyhan Jamalova, the founder of Rainergy, which converts rainwater into energy and uses this energy for lighting purposes. As mentioned in the text (Heydarova K., Qurbanova G., Mammadova S., 2022: 25), she made this discovery taking into account poor countries in the world.

While these goals have specific targets and indicators, they are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, aiming to ensure a holistic approach to sustainable development that respects and protects human rights for all individuals.

Several environmental issues have been mentioned among the listed demands in writing of textbooks as well which are closely related to some of the SDGS. Here are some of the goals that specifically address environmental concerns:

1. SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation – This goal aims to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, addressing water pollution, wastewater treatment, and water scarcity issues.

2. SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy – This goal focuses on promoting access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all, while increasing the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.

3. SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities – This goal emphasizes making cities

and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, including aspects such as sustainable transport, waste management, air quality, and green spaces.

4. SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production – This goal promotes sustainable consumption and production patterns, encouraging resource efficiency, reducing waste generation, and managing chemicals and hazardous materials sustainably.

5. SDG 13: Climate Action – This goal addresses climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience, aiming to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change.

6. SDG 14: Life Below Water – This goal focuses on conserving and sustainably using marine resources, addressing issues such as marine pollution, overfishing, and ocean acidification.

7. SDG 15: Life on Land – This goal aims to protect, restore, and sustainably manage terrestrial ecosystems, combat desertification, halt biodiversity loss, and promote sustainable land use.

Additionally, other goals such as SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) also have environmental dimensions and contribute to sustainable development in relation to the environment too.

Thus, the Sustainable Development goals are directly or indirectly among the goals that should be instilled in students at the state level and are taken into account when writing school textbooks. However, the path to the goal is not limited by this. In addition to the materials in the textbooks, lesson overviews dedicated to each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the UN were prepared and made available to educators, according to the project implemented by the Institute for Professional Development of Educators (Professional Development Institute of Educational Workers, 2017: 3).

The Result. The United Nations (UN) and its partners in Azerbaijan are working together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a set of 17 interrelated and ambitious goals that address key development challenges facing people in Azerbaijan and around the world. To achieve these goals, Azerbaijan is taking great steps and signing successful projects in the field of education. For instance, The Ministry of Education has developed a new project called ‘Supporting students according to their learning needs» to reduce the negative impact of the COVID-19 on education. 1,300 students from 18 schools in 6 districts were supported in accordance with their learning needs. In order to

overcome the negative impact of coronavirus on education, the project identified students' learning needs and the program took into account children with disabilities. According to the decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 17 Sustainable Development goals, including human rights and environmental goals, are widely included in textbooks intended for use in public schools.

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