

**EXTERNAL EVALUATION (APPRAISAL) REPORT  
OF THE SECOND EDUCATION SECTOR PLAN 2019–2023  
IN UZBEKISTAN**

Commissioned by UNICEF  
on behalf of the Ministry of Public Education and the Local Education Group

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## 1. Introduction

The Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2013–2017 was recognised as the first long-term plan developed with the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders and development partners<sup>1</sup>. The Government of Uzbekistan (GoU) decided in August 2017 to conduct a new ESP for the period 2018–2022. In October, as the end of the year was approaching, the GoU decided to change the period of the ESP to 2019–2023.

Uzbekistan joined the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) in 2013 and has since then received a GPE grant of USD 49.9 million, managed by the World Bank, to implement activities of ESP 2013–2017. The grant was allocated for the period 2014–2018 and extended up to June 2019. It has the following components:

1. Improving Access to Quality Early Childhood Education Opportunities
2. Improving Conditions for Better Learning Outcomes in General Secondary Schools
3. Strengthening the Capacity to Monitor the Education System

As a lower middle-income country, Uzbekistan is eligible to receive a GPE grant from the Multiplier Fund. The USD 10 million agreed with the GPE will complement the World Bank project Promoting Early Childhood Development, for a total amount of USD 60 million<sup>2</sup>. The endorsement of the new ESP by the Local Education Group (LEG) is a condition that must be met to access more GPE funds. Before finalising the ESP, an independent appraisal must be conducted. This appraisal is part of the GPE Quality Assurance Review and is performed by an independent consultant to assess, among other criteria, the relevance, feasibility, equity, and efficiency of the ESP. UNICEF in Uzbekistan, on behalf of the LEG, hired Dr Alberto Begue-Aguado as the expert to elaborate the appraisal report. The ESP was submitted for appraisal on 12 October 2018.

## 2. Methodology

The purpose of the appraisal phase (independent assessment) is to assist education stakeholders in appraising the soundness, relevance, and coherence that lend credibility to the Education Sector Plan.

The methodology utilised to collect relevant information for the appraisal was as follows:

- **Desk Review.** This appraisal included a review of the Education Sector Plan 2019–2023, Education Sector Analysis, legal framework of the education sector, and other relevant documents related to the education sector in Uzbekistan (see Annex 3).

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of Local Education Group meeting on 24 August 2017.

<sup>2</sup> USD 5 million were added to conduct learning assessments in preschool and general secondary education.

- **Interviews with Authorities and Education Partners.** Interviews were conducted in writing and in person in Tashkent from 22 October to 1 November. A list of the people interviewed can be found in Annex 2.
- **Analysis of the Education Sector Plan and Education Sector Analysis.** The given plans were analysed using the Global Partnership for Education/International Institute for Educational Planning Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Appraisal.
- **Presentation in Tashkent of Preliminary Findings and Recommendations.** These results were presented to the Local Education Group on 2 November.
- **Elaboration of the Draft Appraisal Report.** The draft report is submitted to UNICEF, who will share the report with the Ministry of Public Education, Local Education Group, and GPE Secretariat for their comments.
- **Submission of the Final Appraisal Report.**

### 3. Education Sector in Uzbekistan

At the end of 2016, a new government took office and started a rapid process of modernisation of the economy, with market-oriented reforms, a liberalisation of several sectors, and the promotion of many reforms in the country, including the education sector.

The right to education is guaranteed in Article 41 of the Constitution of Uzbekistan of 1992: ‘Everyone shall have the right to education. The state shall guarantee free secondary education<sup>3</sup>. Schooling shall be under state supervision’. The new law on education (drafted in October 2018 and pending approval by the Parliament) sets ‘the basic principles of state policy in the sphere of education, as well as to ensure the constitutional rights of everyone for education’.

General Secondary Education in Uzbekistan is mandatory and fee-free, but not free, as parents have to pay for indirect costs, such as textbooks, transportation, and uniforms. The GoU has a project to introduce one year of mandatory and free preschool education<sup>4</sup>, but at present, most parents pay fees in preschool, which is a deterrent for enrolment in remote and rural areas. At the university level, all of the universities are public, with a few exceptions, as a few private international universities have been established in the country recently. The new reform of higher education will allow public universities to have commercial branches and charge fees to students.

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<sup>3</sup> In Uzbekistan, General Secondary Education includes both primary and secondary education.

<sup>4</sup> A pilot project is being implemented in three regions.

During the period of elaboration of the ESP 2019–2023, the GoU embarked on a massive and rapid reform of the education sector. There have been several presidential decrees and resolutions to reorganise preschool education to improve access and quality, improve the situation of educational personnel, open higher education institutions that meet international standards, and create a State Inspection for the Quality of Education, among others. Each of these documents include a justification and a rationale. However, there are no studies or in-depth analysis to show the evidence of the relevance of these reforms.

In Uzbekistan, there are three ministries of education, namely, the Ministry of Public Education (MoPE), in charge of General Secondary Education; Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education (MoHSSE); and Ministry for Preschool Education (MoPSE), created in 2017 to increase the low enrolment in preschool education. The top management of the MoPE (minister, deputy ministers, and several heads of department) entered office after June 2018.

The recent changes in the structure of the education system include a redesign of General Secondary Education (from 9 to 11 years) and a competency-based curriculum and assessments for all educational levels. Another proposed reform is linked to the main challenge in the Uzbekistan education sector: the lack of information on learning outcomes. National assessments are done by teachers with some directions from the MoPE but not in a systematic way, with no link to international standards. Moreover, the results are not published. This report will include some analysis on the options to improve learning outcomes in Uzbekistan.

The government aimed to promote the participation of the private sector and public–private partnerships in education. Given the long tradition of control of the economy by the state, there is a very low participation of the private sector in education. In 2017, there were only 38 private general secondary education schools, enrolling less than 1% of students (World Bank, 2018a: 31). It is virtually zero in tertiary education. There are 259 private preschool centres, and the MoPSE expects a fast increase to 1,531 centres by 2023 (ESP, 79).

#### 4. Technical Appraisal: Analysis of the Criteria

This section will outline and examine the five criteria of the GPE/IIEP Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Appraisal<sup>5</sup>.

##### 4.1 Leadership and Participation

According to the GPE/IIEP Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Appraisal, one of the features of a credible plan is that it must be guided by an overall vision. Uzbekistan became a lower middle-income country in 2011. The GoU is aware of the important role of education in the socio-economic development of the country in the decades to come, and this ESP is aligned with the priorities of the National Action Strategy 2017–2021, in which all the main directions

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<sup>5</sup> Available at <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/guidelines-education-sector-plan-appraisal>

for the development of the education system are elaborated. A 'strategic vision' is mentioned in chapters 4 and 5, but the vision of the ESP is defined through the overall goal of '[having] children and youth prepared for life through quality education, leading to an improved quality of life, life-long learning and a consistent increase in real income and job creation' (ESP, 43).

At the international level, the ESP is also underpinned by Sustainable Development Goal #4. However, the SDG 4 indicators have not been included among the Key Performance Indicators of this ESP.

For the elaboration of the ESP, in October 2017, the MoPE together with UNICEF commissioned a consulting firm to undertake the new ESP 2018–2022, but the GPE funds only arrived in April. In October, as the end of the year was approaching, the GoU decided to change the dates to 2019–2023.

All of the persons interviewed for this appraisal (or who responded to the written questionnaire) agreed that the elaboration of the ESP was a participatory and collaborative process at the institutional level, with little participation of civil society organisation, parents, and students through the participation of organisations such as the Youth Union<sup>6</sup> and the NGO Mahalla in the Local Education Group. The private sector did not participate in the process.

The three ministries of education participated in the ESP development process. The MoPSE participated actively. The MoPE had several priorities at the time of elaborating the ESP, and most of the senior staff was new. The MoHSSE was not much involved in the ESP because it was the period of exams and they were preparing a new system of admission; nonetheless, technical officials attended. For the policy to be strong, the ESP must be the strategic plan of the entire education sector, not only the ministries of education. Other Ministries (Finances, Economy, Health, and Employment and Labour Relations), the State Inspection for the Quality of Education, and State Statistics Committee, had an active participation and provided comments in writing as well. The regional and district education authorities had a limited participation. The teacher union and the main donors also participated in the process in an active way. Civil society organisations, families, communities, and private sector did not participate in the meetings.

Despite the varied participation, the informants in Tashkent pointed out repeatedly that UNICEF and the consultants called the meetings, led the discussions, collected the information, and produced the drafts. Working groups for each sub-sector were created, and several workshops and meetings were conducted by the consultants. Most of the informants reported having participated actively under the guidance of the consultants. Therefore the leadership of the MoPE was limited.

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<sup>6</sup> The Youth Union unites students at schools and universities and has representatives in all regions.

The LEG had a limited engagement, as this group does not meet regularly. They only met three times in the ESP development process: in August 2017, to launch the process to start ESP 2, and then in May and August 2018 to discuss the progress in the process and the draft ESP. There is also some lack of coordination and dialogue among donors, and the Development Partner Groups does not meet regularly. No Joint Sector Review had ever been conducted. The ESP includes 'joint donor reviews of the education sector, conducted in collaboration with the Local Education Group' (page 57), mentioned in the risk assessment section as a way to facilitate 'acceptance and buy-in' of the ESP. In July 2018, a document with the strategic main elements was reviewed by education authorities and stakeholders in a three-day workshop. The first draft ESP in English was available on 10 August; it was translated into Russian and then shared with education authorities for comments<sup>7</sup>.

Comments were provided in writing by many of the participants, but the fact that English is not widely spoken in Uzbekistan, not even in the ministries, was an obstacle to including all of the comments. The version for appraisal, in English and including the comments from the three ministries of education and the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, and a number of donors, was submitted to the consultant on 12 October<sup>8</sup>.

This planning process occurred amidst constant institutional change, with Presidential Decrees and resolutions being announced and approved over those months. During my stay in Tashkent, the Minister of Public Education stated<sup>9</sup> that the reform is not finalised, and that new decrees and resolutions are expected in the coming months.

During the interviews, the MoPSE and MoHSSE expressed a high level of ownership over the ESP. However, there is a lower level of ownership on the MoPE linked to changes in the top management level and the ongoing reforms. A high-level official said that 'ownership was overshadowed by other issues'.

Despite the primary role played by the consultants, several informants mentioned that the process increased the capacities of the people who participated in the working groups, meetings, and workshops. In particular, the staff of the three ministries of education agreed that the ESP preparation process was used as an opportunity to develop national capacities at the ministerial level, especially regarding planning and monitoring. However, the process does not seem to have increased the capacities in costing and financing; after several months of work, the activities of the draft ESP are not costed, and the financial framework is weak<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Comments were requested by 20 September, but the Ministries of Education sent them on October 10.

<sup>8</sup> The version received on 12 October 12, in English, was not shared with the education authorities, which provided comments to the August version, shared in September in a Russian version. Some informants mentioned that their comments were not accurately taken into consideration.

<sup>9</sup> In a meeting at the MoPE with the minister, deputy minister, and heads of department on 30 October 2018

<sup>10</sup> More details will be provided in the next sections.

## 4.2 Soundness and Relevance

### Evidence-Based Education Sector Analysis

As the ESP 2013–2017, the new ESP is a full-sector plan. It includes preschool education, general secondary education (which includes primary and secondary education), secondary specialised education (similar to vocational education), higher education, non-formal education, and adult education. In section 3.3. (ESP, 15), seven educational sub-sectors are included: 1. Preschool Education (PSE), 2. General Secondary Education (GSE), 3. Secondary Specialised Professional Education (SSPE), 4. Teacher training and re-training, 5. Higher Education (HE), 6. Non-Formal Education (NFE), and 7. Education for Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). However, in chapters 4 to 7, only sub-sectors 1, 2, and 3 and 4 combined are retained (in chapter 7, SSPE is not considered). The rest are barely mentioned in programmes, activities, indicators, and financial framework.

The ESP lacks a section or any analysis on education system management. There is a goal (#3) on educational management, but it is limited in scope and related mainly to learning assessments, which should be on a separate goal on quality<sup>11</sup>.

The LEG agreed in August 2017 that the World Bank will be conducting the Education Sector Analysis (ESA) and UNICEF, the ESP. It was agreed that the ESA would be submitted at the end of November 2018, but the possibility to apply to a new GPE grant (multiplier fund) accelerated the need to finalise the ESP also at the end of November. When the ESP development process started in April 2018, as the ESA was not available, UNICEF commissioned a consultancy firm to elaborate a situation analysis, which was submitted on 24 May. On 17 May 2018, preliminary results of the World Bank ESA were presented to the education authorities and partners; the draft ESA was made available only on October 15. The preliminary findings of the ESA conducted by the World Bank were also presented in May, but they were not used by the consultants in charge of the ESP. In the ESP, there is only one mention of the World Bank ESA (footnote 81). Therefore, the draft ESP submitted for appraisal was based on the situation analysis commissioned by UNICEF. The final ESP will incorporate data from the final ESA.

Despite two education sector analyses having been conducted, available data are scarce because data collection in the education sector in Uzbekistan is limited. Therefore, there is no evidence-based programming/planning; most of the strategic goals, programmes, and activities on the new ESP are not originated in empirical evidence. Both the situation analysis and ESA include information on access, equity, and quality, but barely nothing on participation, internal efficiency, and management because this information is not collected by the GoU. The information on financing is also sparse and incomplete in both documents. The data collected on both analyses are rarely disaggregated by sex. The data for many indicators were collected

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<sup>11</sup> In this sense, the Head of Main Department of the State Inspection mentioned the separate learning assessments from the management aspects on goal 3 (Interview in Tashkent on 1 November 2018).

by region or location (urban/rural). However, the ESP does not include any differentiated strategy by region or location.

The analytical elements of both the ESA and ESP often lack explanation for the evolution of education indicators. For example, there are significant variations across several years, but there is no exploration of possible reasons. This is a critical element of an ESA, because if the causal links are not understood, it is difficult to establish appropriate strategies for improvement.

The World Bank conducted a study on early childhood development in 2013 and another on higher education in 2017, but they are not mentioned in the list of references in both the ESP and ESA. Lessons learned from past policies are not taken into account, and there is no review of the ESP 2013–2017 beyond a few paragraphs in the minutes of the LEG meeting held on 24 August 2018. No further analysis or thematic studies were recently conducted by the education authorities nor partners to complete the situation analysis.

### Relevance of Policies and Programmes

The overall goal of the ESP is broken down into seven ‘key strategic areas’ that are also the goals of the plan. There is neither theory of change nor a causal chain logically connecting the elements of the strategic framework: 7 goals, 12 programmes and activities linked to them, but with no explanation on how these programmes and activities will lead to the goals. The design of the ESP is basically reduced to the Action Plan in section 5.2. The Key Performance Indicators (KPI) associated with each goal are simply listed and not linked to any intervention in particular. Therefore, it will be difficult to measure the progress and achievements.

Even taking into consideration that the programmes and activities are deliberately not organised by sub-sector but by goals, some education levels are very present (preschool education and GSE) while others are not often considered, e.g. HE and SSE. However, HE and SSE must follow the rapid insertion of Uzbekistan in the global economy. The new legal framework would likely improve higher education institutions, eliminating the access quotas, opening the public universities to the world, setting accreditation with international standards, and increasing the number of qualified teachers, among other significant steps. The changes in SSE are delayed in comparison to other sub-sectors, and its future is still not clear. The introduction of innovative methods, linkages between the curriculum and market requirements, and qualification of teachers are still pending subjects for the professional sub-sector. The approval of a vocational education policy in a near future could be a good step further, and the ESP could anticipate the expected changes.

### Soundness of the Financial Framework

Until very recently, the finance department of the Ministries did not have much responsibility; the Ministry of Finance elaborated the annual education budgets. However, in the preparation

of the ESP, the Ministry of Finance did not have a significant participation, and it was an international consultant who prepared chapter 7<sup>12</sup>.

There is no Medium-Term Education Framework in Uzbekistan, and only this year has the GoU planned to introduce medium-term budgetary planning<sup>13</sup>. The quantitative scenario of the ESP is poorly done as the financial framework (FF) was not elaborated through a simulation model, which could have included projections on population, learners, classrooms to be constructed or renovated, teachers to be hired and trained, and equipment to be bought<sup>14</sup>. The tables do not include any formula. Therefore, it is not possible to know the origin of the figures and the assumptions made, except for a few major issues mentioned on the narrative of chapter 7. The FF includes only three tables, one each for PSE, GSE, and HE<sup>15</sup>, with very scarce information on population and learners (and with errors in the calculations<sup>16</sup>). The FF projected expenditures divided into different sets of categories with no explanation. Moreover, the MoPE stated that those are not the categories used by the ministry. The FF does not include several of the sub-sectors mentioned in section 3.3., e.g. non-formal education, teacher training, adult education, and special educational needs.

Scenarios are set on the ESP for each of the three sub-sectors, but the ESP does not mention which is the scenario retained by the GoU for the implementation of the ESP. Moreover, there is no need to keep scenarios related to the lack of increase in teacher salaries, as this is a political measure approved by the President of the Republic. Similarly, the baseline scenario for higher education is no longer valid, as the quotas were recently removed by the MoHSSE. The ESP does not include any calculation or estimate on the financial impact that the openness of higher education institutions to the private market could have in that budget. Therefore, the scenarios are a mere numerical exercise with no practical impact on the financial situation of the education sector in the period of the ESP.

The projections are based on a 2017 baseline that only includes the main budget lines, which are basically recurrent and capital expenditures. The FF does not include figures for 2023 because the consultants finalised the chapter after the change in the dates was decided by the

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<sup>12</sup> The tables on chapter 7 of the ESP indicate the Ministry of Finance as the source. However, in my meeting with the Ministry of Finance in Tashkent, a Deputy Minister said that those were not based on figures from their ministry.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.uzdaily.com/articles-id-44595.htm>

<sup>14</sup> The first ESP 2013–2017 included a basic simulation model that was not used in the second ESP.

<sup>15</sup> There is a table for the subsector 'Specialised Education and Higher Education'. However, we can read on the ESP (page 91) that for Professional Education, 'The significant changes in the structure of the system create a high degree of uncertainty over the number of students and mix (types) of programmes over the next few years. A useful projection of resource requirements will only be possible once policy options and programme strategies are more concretely defined'. Moreover, the percentage allocated to that sub-sector is 7.59% in 2018, whereas the percentage allocated only to vocational education was 19.7% in 2016 (ESP, 36). Therefore, chapter 7 does not include projections for SSE.

<sup>16</sup> As an example, in the tables in chapter 7, the population for ages 3–6 years is the same as that for ages 7–17 years.

MoPE. No one at the Ministries of Education, Finance, and Education reviewed the FF before the ESP was sent for appraisal.

The FF does not include figures from some funds created for the education sector: Fund for the Development of School Education, Fund for Assistance to Reforms in the System of General Secondary Education, Book Fund and the Library Fund, and Fund for Reconstruction, Renovating, and Equipping Educational and Medical Institutions.

For the three sub-sectors considered (PSE, GSE, and HE), despite the assumption of a 7.5% annual growth rate (ESP, page 84), the growth rates are uneven: for baseline scenario, the growth rates are 21% on year 1 in PSE, and then 2% per subsequent years; the growth rates are 4–5% in GSE, and 0% in HE. With the increase in teacher salaries, the growth rate in PSE is 39% in 2019, and then 7–10% per subsequent years; in GSE, it is 27% in 2019, and then 4–5% per year; in HE, the increases are 37%, 22%, 20%, and 19% per year. Despite the significant increase with this scenario, the chapter does not include any analysis on the impact that this will have on the overall education budget, as well as on the increase in the share of the GDP and national budget allocated to education or the risks that this rapid growth can have on the management of the education system.

The FF does not include any information on the projected allocations for each programme, and external contributions are not included. As the activities are not costed; a funding gap was not calculated in the ESP.

The education expenditure as a percentage of the GDP remained at around 6.8% in the last years; for the cycle of the ESP 2019–2023, the education budget is projected to stay at the same 6.8% of the GDP (ESP, 84), respecting the international benchmark set in the Incheon Declaration. However, considering the significant increases in the education budget owing to the increase in teacher salaries, constructions in PSE, and other increases related to the reforms, this percentage should increase during the period of this ESP, as confirmed in a meeting by the Ministry of Economy.

The overall education budget has steadily been increasing in absolute terms, but the share of the government budget allocated to education has decreased, from 41.7% in its highest point in 2009 to 34.1% in 2013 and 33.6% in 2016 (ESP, 34). This percentage is not calculated in chapter 7 for the period of the ESP. Both the Ministries of Economy and Finance mentioned that this estimate was not available as they only plan on a yearly basis. The MoF stated in our meeting in Tashkent that ‘the figures on chapter 7 are not ours’<sup>17</sup> and therefore they will need to be revised before finalising the ESP.

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<sup>17</sup> Mentioned by the Deputy Head of the Social Department of the Ministry of Finance.

The evolution of the share of each sub-sector in the education budget is only shown in the context section of the ESP, not in chapter 7. The information provided does not allow for calculations<sup>18</sup>.

In sum, it is not possible to analyse the consistency of the FF with the goals/programmes/activities as there is no calculation of the costs at any level, and the projections are only done for three sub-sectors and without any detail.

### Soundness of the Action Plan

The Action Plan is included in chapter 5.2 of the ESP. It provides a table with the key activities included in each programme, programme indicators (with no clear link to each activity), 2018 as the baseline year (while for the FF the baseline year is 2017), targets for 2022/2023, and period of implementation of each activity per year in 2019–2023. The Action Plan does not include the cost and budget to be allocated for each programme/activity. This information is not included in chapter 7 in the FF either. The Action Plan does not include the agency responsible for the implementation of each programme/activity. The description of the activities is very succinct and often insufficient to shed light on how the ministries of education will implement them, e.g. ‘develop a network of non-governmental Preschools and institutions through PPP’. Some activities are vague, e.g. ‘Ensure that school education (General Secondary level) develops in close integration with Preschool, Professional and Higher Education’. In other cases, like in programme 4 on teacher training and programme 7 on the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), activities are well defined.

The mix of activities and indicators for the different educational levels makes it difficult to have a clear picture of the accomplishment expected at each level. Moreover, there are many activities for preschool, which is an indicator of the active participation of the recently created MoPSE in the ESP development process. HE is also well represented, but GSE and SSE barely appear in a few programmes, which will make it difficult to conduct systematic and rigorous planning processes in these sub-sectors.

A good number of targets are missing, including some with baseline data. This can be an indicator of the lack of commitment of the government in the medium term but also an expression of the lack of culture of data monitoring. No indicator is disaggregated by sex on the action plan.

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<sup>18</sup> We made a calculation with the information provided in the three tables in chapter 7; the percentages in 2018 are 17.44% for PSE, 74.97% for GSE, and 7.59% for HE. These figures are not consistent with the distribution in the last years, as shown on ESP, pages 35–36.

## 4.3 Equity, Efficiency, and Learning

### Robustness and Relevance of the Strategies

The ESA identifies minimal data and key issues related to equity, efficiency, and learning. Therefore, the ESP also has poor information on these topics.

#### *Equity*

Equity seems to be a priority for the education authorities and it is included in programme 4.3. in relation to raising the level of qualification of teachers<sup>19</sup>, and as a concern regarding the public-private partnership that is to be actively promoted in the new plan<sup>20</sup>. We read on page 45 of the ESP: 'The 2<sup>nd</sup> ESP continues to regard inclusion as an issue which needs to permeate the whole educational system and all its sub-sectors'. Programme 1.4. is explicit about the importance of equity in this plan: 'Ensure equitable access to quality education, at all levels, including for learners with special educational needs, from disadvantaged communities at all levels, and for out-of-school children'. The ESP includes several references, activities and indicators related to special educational needs and inclusive education. However, equitable access seems to be mainly a priority of the MoPSE. As seen in the indicators of the programmes on chapter 5, the access gap in lagging regions, and the enrolment of children with SEN is only considered for preschools. The increase of parents and teachers' awareness of inclusive education, and the importance of having adapted learning environments is considered for all educational levels.

Programme 1.4. includes as an activity to 'Assess possible barriers to education for disadvantaged communities and develop strategies for overcoming them' (ESP, 63), but there is no explanation of how this will be accomplished, and there is no indicator to track progress. The ESP and the ESA do not include a detailed vulnerability analysis but only a reference to 'the students of small schools, located in remote, mountainous, or desert areas with small population, remain to be the most vulnerable category of children in regard to access to the quality education' (ESP, 33). However, there are no interventions for those specific vulnerable groups of children. Children from low-income families are exempted from paying fees in preschool and winter clothes are distributed to children in need. Another of those vulnerable groups is the out-of-school children (OOSC) or children who do not attend school. Despite the quote above, the reduction of the number of OOSC is more a declaration of intent than a strategic issue in this plan, as it is not included in any activity nor indicator. The argument of the GoU is that GSE is free and compulsory and therefore there is no need to discuss OOSC.

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<sup>19</sup> 'For professional education and higher education, provide training of specialists with a stronger focus on (i) subject-based training; (ii) regional equity; (iii) quality according to international standards; (iv) identified needs' (ESP, 68).

<sup>20</sup> 'The 2<sup>nd</sup> ESP will further align this strategy with equity concerns, in order to support already disadvantaged communities through subsidies to ensure that they can benefit from such PPPs in the same way as children from better-off families' (ESP, 45).

However, the NER in Uzbekistan is not 100%<sup>21</sup>. According to the World Bank, 2.4% of children in Uzbekistan (grade 1–9) are not in school, with significant differences across GSE (0.15% in grades 1–4 and 4.5% in grades 5–9) and regional disparities (7.5% of OOSC in Karakalpakstan, and around 4–4.5% in Syrdarya, Samarkand, Bukhara and Tashkent regions, World Bank, 2018a: 66). The figures of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics show that there were 33,000 children and 108,000 adolescents out of school as of 2017<sup>22</sup>. The informants from MoPE do not agree with these figures, but no official analysis has been done. The limited demographics data did not allow the ESA team to analyse potential reasons for children not participating in school, for instance early marriages, poverty, lack of transportation, etc. According to a note shared by the international consultants, the indicator ‘percentage of out-of-school children’ was removed from the last version of the ESP at the request of the MoPE.

The ESA disaggregates many indicators by region, showing significant disparities in enrolment (at all educational levels), student-teacher ratios, school infrastructures, etc., but the ESP does not focus on strategies to reduce inequities related to regions. According to UNDP, there is ‘a high disparity in living standards between rural and urban areas’<sup>23</sup>. The ESA also includes a good analysis in terms of the divide between rural and urban areas, but the ESP does not make any reference to this gap, and no indicator has been disaggregated by location. The ESP considers three lagging regions because of the level of poverty according to UNDP (Karakalpakstan, Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya), but this distinction is only considered for the access gap in preschool (ESP, page 60).

Regarding a broader perspective on inclusive education, the ESP states that ‘The issue of Inclusion, including education for learners with special educational needs (SEN), has been integrated in a cross-cutting manner into existing policies’ (ESP, 47). The GoU has committed to international conventions towards a more inclusive education system and has taken some initiatives, but ‘the reality shows that segregation still prevails’ (World Bank, 2018a: 60). Inclusion is basically limited to special educational needs (SEN) and there is a medical approach to disability<sup>24</sup> focused on physical or mental impairment rather than on a person’s actual needs (social, educational, cultural, etc.). From August 2017, special legislation was elaborated to envisage a dedicated ‘Special Interagency State Commission’ to improve the social assistance for persons with disabilities, and to ensure and improve social guarantees for children with special needs, ‘developing an adapted, conducive and inclusive learning environment in schools, including mainstream, and improving activities of special schools for children with disabilities’ (World Bank, 2018a: 60). The ESP does not include any reference to that

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<sup>21</sup> According to the ESP, ‘the combined net enrolment rate in the 2016/2017 school year amounted to 98.1%’ (ESP, 15).

<sup>22</sup> <http://uis.unesco.org/country/UZ>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.uz.undp.org/content/uzbekistan/en/home/countryinfo.html>

<sup>24</sup> Actually, some of the schools for children with disabilities are managed by the Ministry of Health.

Commission, but it includes a mainstream approach for children with disabilities in preschool, limited to 5% of children with SEN though (ESP, 63)<sup>25</sup>.

Only 1% of the school aged population in Uzbekistan was legally recognized (certified) as having a disability in 2016 (World Bank, 2018a: 60). But according to the World Health Organisation, 15% of the world population live with disabilities, and according to the World Bank, 20% of the world's poorest people have some kind of disability<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, the total number of children with disabilities in Uzbekistan could be much higher than officially reported. In Uzbekistan, 60.7% of schools include SEN children, with an average of SEN students per class of 0.79 students per school, which is considered insufficient in the plan (ESP, 31). The ESP proposes the development of a long-term strategy for ensuring equal and inclusive approaches for children with special needs, staff capacity development, and raise public awareness (ESP, 31–32). However, none of these are included in the programmes/activities. SEN are, however, considered in the Action Plan regarding construction of new schools, learning materials and learning environment (ESP, 61–64)<sup>27</sup>.

The ESP states that ‘The equality of men and women is guaranteed by the legislation’ (33). The ESA and the ESP include data on gender disparities. While gender parity has been achieved in preschool and general secondary education, disparities are still significant in academic lyceums, where only 40.5% are girls, and in higher education institutions (37.5% of girls). There are also major disparities in enrolment between urban and rural areas (World Bank, 2018a: 122). There is a gender balanced teaching workforce. However, the activities in the ESP barely mention gender issues, and many indicators are not disaggregated by sex. There are no specific strategies/programmes to encourage more girls and young women to access SSE and HE. Despite the inclusion of goal 5 on safe schools, there is no reference to Gender-Based Violence or to gender-sensitive teaching and learning materials. The ESP does not make a reference to the importance of having female teachers in schools, but there is a significant number of female teachers. In GSE, the number of female teachers ranges from 54% in Djizakh to 90% in Tashkent city. The exception is the Bukhara region, where only 19% of teachers are female (World Bank, 2018a: 89). Almost half of teaching staff in the vocational training sub-sector are women. ‘In

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<sup>25</sup> Paradoxically, ‘in Uzbekistan, official data indicates that more than half of all children with legal certified disabilities are studying in mainstream schools, while over ten percent are out of school’ (World Bank, 2018a: 61).

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/factsheet-on-persons-with-disabilities.html>

<sup>27</sup> ‘The ESA mentions some issues hindering inclusion such as: (i) unclear legislation regarding ways to include children with special and/or diverse educational needs in mainstream education, (ii) predominance of medical approach in both legislation and policy discourse, (iii) insufficient or even lack of qualified staff to provide professional support to children with special and/or diverse educational needs in mainstream schools, (iv) insufficient supply of teaching and learning materials for children with SEN, (v) weak cross-sectoral collaboration between line ministries (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Ministry of Pre-school Education and Ministry of Public Education), among others. Consequently, recommendations regarding specific interventions aiming at creating enabling environments for inclusive education should rather focus on ways to remove barriers for a wider range of learners which is not restricted only to children with disabilities’ (World Bank, 2018a: 62-63).

case of masters (practical training teachers), the share of female teachers is considerably larger at almost 70 percent' (World Bank, 2018a: 38).

### *Efficiency*

Key education indicators, such as repetition, age-grade distortion, dropout and completion rate, which are internationally widely used to measure aspects of education efficiency and attainment, are not being calculated with a systematic approach (UNESCO 2009, in World Bank, 2018a: 123). The ESP does not consider the main variables related to efficiency: repetition, dropout and transition. The ministries of education confirmed in our interviews that there is no system in place for tracking those indicators. The same argument on OOSC applies here: if GSE is compulsory and free, there cannot be dropout. However, as stated in the ESA: 'the fact that the gross graduation ratio for grades 5–9 is below 100 percent likely reflects grade repetition (which delays graduation relative to the theoretical graduation age), as well as some degree of school dropout' (World Bank, 2018a: 98).

### *Learning*

The new law on education has a strong focus on 'quality and harmonised monitoring for assessing quality of education and learning outcomes' (ESP, vi) but the approach of the ESP is limited to proxies on the quality of education. The ESP includes a variety of programmes and activities to improve quality in education, which are mainly focused on the review of the curricula at all educational levels, teacher training, provision of teaching and learning materials, and improvement of the learning environment (renovation of schools, water points...). However, the plan does not include any indicator to measure the learning outcomes expected at the different levels at the end of the ESP. The education system in Uzbekistan does not use standardised learning assessments. It is symptomatic that the National Action Strategy 2017–2021 does not make any reference to the need to improve the learning outcomes in Uzbekistan. Only recently, some development partners (UNICEF and World Bank) have supported the Ministries of Education in designing learning assessments in preschool and general secondary education.

The only information on learning outcomes in the ESP is in footnote #56 (page 47): 'the latest available official learning assessment data from MOPE (2013) shows that only 63.4 percent of the tested students were able to meet the minimum standards set by the government for learning, with huge variations across regions and over the years'. The only standardised assessment so far has been conducted by UNICEF recently in grade 4 (document to be published).

The ESP proposes to participate in PISA and TIMSS<sup>28</sup>. An agreement was signed with the OECD<sup>29</sup> in August 2018 for the participation of Uzbekistan in PISA 2020/2021. We do not have enough elements to evaluate that decision, but PISA is a costly test<sup>30</sup>, designed for high-income countries (with recent adaptations to other countries), and it measures only 15-year old children. In the current context of lack of data on the learning outcomes in Uzbekistan, the ESP still does not include any national assessment across all educational levels<sup>31</sup>. In 2018, UNICEF conducted a pilot TIMSS in 255 schools and 8,000 4<sup>th</sup> grade students (World Bank, 2018a: 97–98).

Overall, the main challenge in Uzbekistan related to the learning outcomes is the lack of reliable data. Each Ministry of Education conducts some quality monitoring, but with no standardised assessment or systematic approach.<sup>32</sup> Learning assessments in Uzbekistan do not follow international standards. Therefore, the MoPE does not know the level of learning outcomes in the General Secondary Education schools. The same applies for the MoPSE and MoHSSE. UNICEF recently elaborated a learning assessment of grade 4 using the methodology MELQO. The World Bank has included a learning assessment component in its new project for preschool, which will also assess students in GSE. According to the World Bank, ‘in no country does testing cost more than 0.3 percent of the national education budget at the basic education level’<sup>33</sup>. An early grade reading assessment (EGRA) can cost around USD 200,000, while an international assessment costs around USD 750,000<sup>34</sup>.

### Change in Strategies

The proposed programmes are not based on a results chain. As mentioned, the lack of a results framework or a theory of change made it difficult to understand how the interventions on the ESP will allow the GoU to achieve the seven goals and engender a positive effect on greater

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<sup>28</sup> PISA is the Programme for International Student Assessment. TIMSS is the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study.

<sup>29</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

<sup>30</sup> The cost for the participation in PISA for one year was estimated by UNICEF at USD 4 million (Interview with Chief of Education, Tashkent, October 29, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> There is an activity in programme 3.1. (‘improve the system of evaluating learners’ achievements’), but the only indicator is ‘PISA and TIMSS results’. This means that the results are very limited as PISA only evaluates 15-year-old children and TIMSS evaluates grades 4 and 8 in mathematics and science.

<sup>32</sup> ‘No standardized student learning assessment exists in Uzbekistan. The evaluation framework consists of evaluations applied by teachers, who conduct on-going, intermediate and final examinations to assess students. And the Ministry of Education provides the rules and guidelines to conduct these examinations. In addition, the State Exam Commission of the Ministry of Public Education conducts regular exams in Grades 4 and 9, but these are not standardized and cannot be compared across institutions or over time. As a result, existing tests cannot be used to monitor progress towards improving student learning. The lack of standardized testing makes it impossible to know the current situation of learning among students in Uzbekistan’ (World Bank, 2018: 96).

<sup>33</sup> <http://blogs.worldbank.org/education/economic-case-early-learning>

<sup>34</sup> [http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/the-cost-of-not-assessing-learning-outcomes-2016-en\\_0.pdf](http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/the-cost-of-not-assessing-learning-outcomes-2016-en_0.pdf)

efficiency, equity, and learning. Moreover, the programmes and activities have not been costed, and the projections in the FF do not include details by goal or programme.

With respect to innovative ways to address key issues related to equity, efficiency, and learning, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is proposed as a goal, not as a cross-cutting issue for all sub-sectors. However, there is no detail on how this will be implemented in practice and target. The new Fund for Assistance to Reforms in the System of GSE, worth UZS 100 billion, created by the GoU, will allocate at least 50% to improve ICT equipment and services<sup>35</sup>. During ESP 1 all 13 regions, 193 district education divisions and the MoPE received ICT equipment, being used in the routine teaching/learning and monitoring process. It is important to note that ICT is not a methodology per se but a tool that can facilitate setting up new pedagogical methodologies.

### Results Framework

As mentioned, the ESP does not have a results framework. If we consider the Action Plan and the KPIs, we can have an idea of what the ESP is proposing to improve the education sector. However, the organisation by goal/programme with no separation of any kind by sub-sector makes the information fragmented and the relationship between strategies and indicators difficult to track. The KPIs include a balance between output and outcome indicators. Most of them are easily calculated and will be collected on a yearly basis. However, EMIS will need to be strengthened before all those 47 indicators can be collected.

The selection of the Action Plan's indicators as KPIs (as explained in page 78 of the ESP) does not seem to allow the adequate monitoring of the goals and programmes. As examples, in Goal 1 on access and inclusion, enrolment and inclusion are only tracked in preschool (9 out of 18 indicators). The other indicators are proxies related to the learning environment (construction, equipment) or to the perception of the importance of inclusive education (indicator 1.16 on awareness of parents and teachers). Goal 2, on content of curricula and teaching/learning materials, is mainly about materials and does not track the finalisation and effective classroom use of the competency-based curricula.

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<sup>35</sup> This information was provided by the Head of the Department of Finances of the MoPE during our meeting on 30 October 2018.

#### 4.4 Coherence

The GoU did not collect evidence to show the relevance of the proposed programmes. For instance, the MoPE insists that enrolment is 100% in Uzbekistan, and the number of learners is not growing. At the same time, GSE was extended from 9 to 11 years. The ESP proposed the construction of new GSE schools, but the ESA/ESP does not show evidence that this is the best strategy to guarantee universal enrolment.

There is insufficient information to analyse the coherence between programmes (not costed) and FF. Moreover, more details would be needed on the description of programmes and activities. This statement is supported by several GoU officials in their responses to my questionnaires.

The ESP claims to have included a ‘much more holistic approach on the basis of jointly formulated objectives which have relevance for the entire education sector’. However, the design of the ESP is basically reduced to that of an Action Plan in section 5.2, and there is not a strategic framework articulated by a logical structure, only a list of programmes and activities with no explicit connection among them. As shown in section 4.3 of this report, the activities under the programmes lack coherence among themselves, and they are presented in an isolated way.

The scope of the goals proposed by the GoU in the ESP is not clear because many targets are missing, and activities are not costed. Moreover, the recent changes in the legal framework indicates that many of these targets are changing, with new programmes and activities being added to the legal framework but not adapted in the ESP yet.

The targets set for preschool enrolment imply a massive expansion of service provision that is not described in the ESP. The Action Plan sets a modest target of 40 newly constructed preschools in five years, while the same table increases the number of active state preschools from 4,893 in 2018 to 5,505 in 2022/23 (an increase of 612 schools). The figures do not match the number of private preschools as well: the table on page 60 mentions that 1,531 private schools will be available in 2022/23, marking an increase of 1,281 compared with the baseline in 2018, but the plan expects to establish 2,600 PPPs in preschools.

Overall, it is difficult to assess the coherence between the proposed goals/programmes/ activities, targets, and budget for the following reasons: the above-mentioned lack of a logical structure, missing targets, and absence of costing for activities. Given the lack of sufficient financial information, it is difficult to analyse to what extent the proposed programmes and activities could achieve an impact on the areas of equity, learning, and efficiency. The MoPSE is proposing significant increases in enrolment rates but barely increasing the budget for that sub-sector, and therefore, the achievement of some of the proposed targets is at risk.

## 4.5 Feasibility, Implementability, and Monitorability

### Financial Feasibility

As the costing and financing plan are incomplete, and the funding gap was not calculated, it is not possible to assess the financial feasibility and sustainability of the strategic options and targets proposed in the ESP. The share of the government budget allocated to education has been slightly decreasing over the years, but with the information provided, it is not possible to determine if the share will increase or decrease in the next five years. If the increase in teacher salaries is made effective, the percentage allocated to education should increase, but the line ministries, or Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Economy, were not clear on the figures to include in the ESP.

External contributions are not mentioned as well, and little information is available. With the announced preschool project, the World Bank is currently the largest donor in Uzbekistan. UNICEF, the British Council, and UNESCO contribute with modest amounts to the education sector. The European Union and USAID do not currently have any project in the education sector, but they have expressed an increased interest in this regard.

Despite receiving 12% of the education budget, preschool enrolment is very low (31%), suggesting inefficiencies in the use of public resources (World Bank, 2018a: 16). Uzbekistan's spending on higher education at 5% of the education budget is one of the lowest in the world (ibid.). Despite the on-going reforms, instead of increasing the state contributions, the MoHSSE has opted to focus on the authorisation conceded to public universities to open commercial branches. Therefore, the required sources to improve public higher education institutions will be shouldered by students and families.

In a surprising discussion in my meetings in Tashkent, the Ministry of Finance stated that they expect the ministries of education to show the return that Uzbek society can expect from the investment to be done in education in the next five years. With the scarce available financial information, this exercise would be difficult to accomplish.

### System Capacity

The ESP 2019–2023 recognises the 'reasonably strong national capacity with regard to the development of national strategies and plans on reforming the education sector', and that 'the country has sufficient capacity to implement projects and programmes in collaboration with international partners' (ESP, 2018: 55). Some informants from the ministries of education also expressed their confidence in the sufficient institutional capacities to implement the ESP. However, other informants, including several officials of the ministries of education, highlighted the weak capacities of the GoU in terms of planning, financing, and monitoring. The Minister of

Public Education said in our interview that there is an improvement in the capacities but also that ‘capacity gaps in the sector are the big challenge because of the changing environment’<sup>36</sup>.

The ESP does not include a comprehensive assessment of the current capacities of MoPE/MoPSE/MoHSSE staff to implement successfully an ambitious ESP. Moreover, it does not consider the capacities at the decentralised levels, which will acquire a major significance with the on-going decentralisation process.

The ESP (pages 55–56) recognises the need to improve capacities for primarily six target groups:

- ‘Government officials, who make decisions and can influence the public opinion;
- School directors/principals, who will change their focus to improve educational management;
- Other managers and executers of programmes and projects related to the ESP;
- Teaching methods specialists at regional and district education levels;
- Monitoring and evaluation specialists at all levels of the organisational structure within the education sector;
- Heads and teachers of professional training and higher education institutions’.

The above-mentioned training activities are articulated in programme 3.2 on the role and responsibility of the MoPE (page 58), programmes 4.3 and 4.4 on teachers, and programme 7.1 on M&E (page 73). It would be adequate to articulate this programme on a single capacity development plan for the entire education sector.

The ESP does not include other stakeholders, such as universities, civil society organisations, and non-governmental education providers, to support the implementation of the ESP. This is no surprise as these groups were not invited to participate in the ESP development.

### Governance and Accountability

The governance of the education sector has suffered a total change/revolution since last year, including multiple presidential decrees and resolutions, the creation of the MoPSE, and changes in the top management of the MoPE. The final architecture of the education sector is still to be decided as the legal framework is expected to continue changing<sup>37</sup>.

In a sector with multiple actors, the ESP emphasises the importance of improving coordination. The ESP includes the creation of the National Council on Development of Education under the Cabinet of Ministers. This Council will consist of a series of ad hoc meetings called by the Deputy Prime Minister to coordinate the implementation of the ESP. However, some officials

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Minister of Public Education and other top officials, Tashkent, 30 October 2018.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Minister of Public Education and other top officials, Tashkent, 30 October 2018.

and partners are sceptical about the effectiveness of this mechanism, as it does not imply a formal structure and it could show a lack of credibility.

In this changing institutional environment, schools and local governments are not given more responsibilities. The Minister of Public Education mentioned that some responsibilities currently assumed by local authorities will be transferred to education authorities in regions and districts for the sake of greater effectiveness.

The ESP includes a reference to 'a plan for communicating and disseminating the 2<sup>nd</sup> ESP' to the public, with detailed components and mechanisms, and including students, parents, teachers, and development partners. The participation of parents and communities in the ESP is limited to preschool education; no details are provided on the channels to allow such participation.

### Risks to Implementation and Mitigation of Risks

The ESP includes a section on chapter 4 with risks and some mitigation measures. The identified risks are related to a potential decreased efficiency owing to insufficient capacities, insufficient budget to respond to all the activities of the ESP, lack of support of society, and the rapid expansion of PSE. The information is not presented on a matrix, impeding easy visualisation.

There are two undefined risks, namely, 'around the administration of the ESP' and 'failure to solve even a single task within the ESP' (sic), for which more detailed explanation is required.

The risk related to natural disasters could be mitigated by the elaboration of contingency plans, including roles and responsibilities at central and local levels, coordination mechanisms, and source of funding.

There is a risk linked to the coordination among the MoPE, MoPSE, MoHSSE, State Inspection, and other ministries and agencies working in the education sector, and also linked to the balance between the power of the MoPE, historically the main ministry of education, and the MoPSE, which acquires specific weight with the new GPE grant.

### Robustness of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

It is always important for education authorities and development partners to be able to track the progress of plan implementation. However, there is a significant insufficiency of the data collection systems, which do not collect basic information to illuminate the education system, are not coordinated, and are characterised by duplication and overlapping. Chapter 6 of the ESP on M&E does not recognise these problems, and therefore, the proposals to overcome them are limited.

Currently, the EMIS in Uzbekistan is extremely weak, as it does not collect data on relevant indicators, such as repetition, dropout, out-of-school children, and pupil–teacher ratio. There is

an indicator (section 3.1, ESP, page 80) on harmonisation of EMIS across the three educational ministries, but there are no specific actions to be undertaken to carry out such harmonisation. Moreover, the Statistics Committee also collect data on education but they are not mentioned in the above-mentioned process. Despite the importance of that state structure, no role is attributed to it, and it is only mentioned in a formal way, e.g. participation in workshops, and in the list of references.

KPIs are listed in chapter 6 by goals but without any reference to the programmes presented in chapter 5.

- 6.3.1: This goal on access fails to include the main access indicators, such as Gross Enrolment Rate, Net Enrolment Rate, repetition rates, dropout rate, and number of out-of-school children. There are three indicators on inclusion (1.8, 1.16, and 1.17) but inclusion is assimilated to Special Educational Needs (SEN). There are no indicators related to other vulnerable groups and to gender issues. Indicators do not make any reference to regional disparities as well.
- 6.3.2: Despite being a goal focused on curriculum, there is no reference to the modifications to be made to the curriculum in GSE, SSE, and HE. No equity indicators are included.
- 6.3.3: The recent changes in the management of the three main sub-sectors are not tracked in this goal. Indicator 3.2. KAS (knowledge, abilities, and skills) is more related to goal 2 on curriculum and teaching and learning materials than to educational management.
- 6.3.4: Despite being a goal on teachers, there is no mention of the need to improve the number of qualified teachers, identified by many informants as among the main challenges to improving the quality of education in Uzbekistan.
- 6.3.5: This area on safety could be expanded to include protection related to gender and to education in emergencies (earthquakes, flooding, etc.).
- 6.3.6: This area is supposed to be on methodology and ICT, but there is no reference to methodologies, only to ICT equipment.
- 6.3.7: This area should include a reference to the needed match between the indicators included in EMIS and the ESP's KPIs. The indicator 'Impact of teacher training on classroom level' (ESP, page 75) does not indicate the degree of the impact and cannot be measured at the national level if a percentage is not added.

KPIs do not include the responsible agency for the data collection of each indicator. The means of verification are very general, e.g. 'MoPE reports', 'Analytical report of MoPE'. According to the ESP, indicators will be disaggregated by sex and special needs where applicable (page 78).

The World Bank has indicated the importance of including in the KPIs the three stretch indicators to be used by the MoPSE and the World Bank to measure the variable part of the GPE grant of USD 10 million. These are the following: 1) Equity: Access in lagging regions in Uzbekistan, related to measuring the average preschool enrolment rate in the three poorest regions of the country; 2) Efficiency: Vacant places in public preschools, related to measuring

the total number of vacant seats/places in existing public preschools for both full and half-day groups; and 3) Learning outcomes: Measurement of child development outcomes, for tracking the status of the process for developing a system for measuring child development outcomes in both public and private preschools, as well as the measurement of those outcomes.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (MEF) presents a complex structure, with five ministries and agencies collecting data, and the LEG centralising the reporting on the ESP implementation process. It is not clear how a group that meets twice a year (usually for planning purposes or to discuss external funds) can assume such a responsibility. Moreover, some members of education authorities have expressed concerns on the lack of will of the MoPE to harmonise the EMIS as proposed in the ESP. The following are some issues and challenges to consider in the MEF:

- The key performance indicators are not aligned with the respective programmes, but there is a list of indicators for each goal. It contains many instances of 'TBD' (To be determined), many indicators do not have a baseline value, and according to an indicator for programme 7.3 (ESP, page 74), the baseline will be elaborated only in 2020.
- The SDG-4 indicators should be added to monitor Uzbekistan's engagements in education<sup>38</sup>.
- The quality of the MEF is uneven. Some indicators are well formulated and include baseline and target values. Other indicators are vague, e.g. 3.1. "Degree to which Monitoring and Evaluation System and EMIS have been harmonised across the three educational ministries", which is difficult to define and to measure.
- In addition, some targets seem unrealistic and difficult to achieve. For instance, the percentage of children aged 6–7 years who receive free compulsory training, from 0% now to 100% in five years, or, in scenario 3, the GER for HE would go from 9.2% to 15%.
- Some targets are very modest. For instance, the increase in percentage of compliance of KAS from 56% to only 61% five years later; or the percentage of only 5% of children with SEN aged 3–6 years enrolled in mainstream preschools.

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<sup>38</sup> The GoU has prepared a national system to monitor all of the SDGs for Uzbekistan.

## 5. Conclusions

The critical perspective adopted in this appraisal report should be taken as constructive criticism that allows for opportunities to improve what the education sector has already achieved in Uzbekistan. The major reform undertaken by the GoU is a very encouraging sign of the commitment to put a strong political will into practice. Therefore, we acknowledge the progress and commitment of the new government with the education sector.

The main **strengths of the Plan** are as follows:

- The ESP is linked to strategic documents, both at the national and international levels.
- It is a comprehensive plan that includes all the education sub-sectors.
- The process of elaborating the ESP has been participatory and inclusive at the institutional level.
- The overall KPIs are well constructed and include targets for most items.

Some **areas of improvement** are needed as follows:

- Despite the support provided by several international consultants, the ESP 2019–2023 still presents significant technical gaps, in particular in the MEF and FF.
- Some basic indicators are not included in the KPI, e.g. GER, NER, PTR, completion, and dropout rates.
- All of the sub-sectors are not visible in the core parts of the ESP, e.g. non-formal education or teacher training. Educational management could be more visible as well.
- Despite consistent economic growth, the share of the budget allocated to education is expected to decrease.
- The programmes and activities of the ESP are not costed.
- The funding gap was not calculated.
- In many cases, programmes and activities do not include targets.
- Gender is not mainstreamed.
- The MEF has some deficiencies.
- The list of risks is incomplete.

## 6. Recommendations

### **Overall recommendation:**

The Education Strategic Plan 2019–2023 will be ready for endorsement by the Local Education Group after some important changes recommended in this appraisal report are made, and a clear commitment to make more changes in a medium term is made by the Government of Uzbekistan.

**Note:** given the rapid reforms undertaken by the Ministries of Education, this ESP would benefit from a longer period of development, but as the country expects to get a GPE grant to be included in a World Bank project in March 2019, the top management officials of the three ministries of education agreed that the ESP should be finalised by November 21<sup>st</sup>. Therefore, we have suggested in this report some recommendations to be followed in the short-term (to complete the ESP by that date), and some medium-term recommendations that the ministries of education will consider later in a joint work with development partners.

### **Recommendations for the improvement of the ESP in the short-term:**

#### **1. Overall structure of the ESP:**

- a. It is recommended that a Theory of Change for the entire education sector and for each of the sub-sectors (or at least for the main three sub-sectors: preschool, GSE and SSE–HE) be included.
- b. In addition of the ESP structure by objectives, it is recommended that a section with interventions by sub-sector be included to make all of them visible.
- c. It is recommended that a section with the last reforms in the education sector is included in the final version of the ESP. The table on ESA (pages 10–11) can be useful but it has to be updated.
- d. It is recommended that a more detailed description of each programme be included so elements of the recently legal framework approved for the education sector can be added.
- e. The Action Plan should be clearer on which indicator(s) is to be used for monitoring which expected result/activity.
- f. Complete the chapter 3 on context with information from the Education Sector Analysis.
- g. ICT should be effectively included as a cross-cutting element.
- h. For sake of improving the ownership, make sure the written comments provided by each Ministry/Department are included in the final ESP to reflect what each of them is doing.

## **2. Financial framework:**

- a. The figures of the financial framework must be discussed with MoF and Ministries of Education and updated.
- b. The financial framework must be updated with the last changes in the education sector, including the approval of an increase of 100% for teacher salaries in all educational levels, and the removal of quotas in higher education.
- c. It is recommended that only one scenario be kept for each sub-sector.
- d. It is recommended that the same categories used by the ministries of education (1. Salaries, 2. Benefits, 3. Capital, 4. Miscellaneous) be used in the tables on chapter 7. The rest of the categories can be deleted.
- e. The share of education in the government budget should be included and the share in the GDP has to be updated.
- f. Government to make the commitment to fund the cost of ESP through a letter addressed to the GPE Secretariat.
- g. An estimate of the external contributions should be included in chapter 7.
- h. The share of each sub-sector in the education budget must be included (as shown in section 3 of the ESP -pages 34–36- for previous years).
- i. All the financial projections should include the year 2023.
- j. In order to have an overview of the sector, it is recommended that a table with a summary of budgets with all the sub-sectors be added.

## **3. Regarding the data and the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework:**

- a. The ESP should be more detailed on the plan to harmonise a single EMIS for all ministries and agencies working on education.
- b. Data collection tools and analytical tools must be jointly elaborated by the three ministries of education and the State Inspection.
- c. The World Bank has indicated the importance of including in the KPIs the three stretch indicators to be used by the MoPSE and the World Bank to measure the variable part of the GPE grant of USD 10 million for the Uzbekistan Promoting Early Childhood Development Project. Those are 1) Equity-Access in lagging regions in Uzbekistan, which measures the average preschool enrolment rate in the three poorest regionals of the country, 2) Efficiency-Vacant places in public preschools, which measures the total number of vacant seats/places in existing public preschools for both full and half-day groups, and 3) Learning outcomes-Measurement of child development outcomes, which tracks the status of the process for developing a system for measuring children development outcomes in both public and private preschools, as well as the measurement of those outcomes.
- d. The current outcome KPIs are not complete to track the impact of the ESP on the education system. It is recommended that some extra indicators be included in the KPIs, e.g. Gross Enrolment Rate and Net Enrolment Rate for preschool, Gross Enrolment Rate, Net Enrolment Rate, Dropout Rate, Repetition Rate, Completion

Rate, Pupil-Teacher Ratio for GSE, Out-of-school children in GSE, enrolment in SSE and in HE, Percentage of qualified teachers, by educational level.

- e. The ESP should include an explicit commitment of ministries of education to elaborate standardised national assessments in the different educational levels. Outcome indicators to measure learning outcomes must be included in the Key Performance Indicators. This can be a commitment in the short-term, to be executed in the medium-term.
  - f. Indicators on inclusive education should be included also for GSE.
  - g. It is recommended that the SDG-4 indicators be added to the KPIs in order to monitor Uzbekistan's engagements in education.
  - h. It is recommended that the information be completed for all targets of the key performance indicators where baseline data are available.
  - i. In the current version, the number of new secondary schools is only set until 2019. The targets should be determined for the entire period of the ESP, at least as an estimate.
4. It is recommended that activities on **Specialised Secondary Education** be better reflected on the Action Plan, taking into consideration the new developments in the sub-sector. A study on the adaptation of the SSE curriculum and labour market requirements should be added as an activity.
  5. The ESP should have a **stronger gender approach**, which could include: 1) more indicators disaggregated by sex, 2) the identification of specific problems, barriers, and challenges for boys and girls, 3) specific strategies and actions for boys and girls, including issues related to protection, early marriages and early pregnancies, 4) a differentiated approach to male and female teachers, including the recruitment of more female teachers to serve as role models, especially in the last grades of secondary education, and 5) a gender-sensitive analysis of teaching and learning materials. Given that gender has not been a priority in the elaboration of the ESP, it also would be desirable to train senior staff at the MoPE, MoPSE, MoHSSE and State Inspection on gender issues.
  6. It is recommended that **additional risks** be considered that could affect the implementation of the ESP, such as 1) the potential lack of coordination among the three ministries in charge of the education sector and the State Inspection for Supervision of Quality of Education, 2) lack of sufficient capacities at the MoPE/MoPSE/MoHSSE to implement the ESP, in particular in terms of sufficient qualified teachers in preschool and higher education.
  7. Originally the dates of the ESP were 2018-2022. The MoPE decided to change the period to 2019-2023. However, the ESP is still design for the period 2018-2022. The baseline year is 2017 and many targets and the financial figures are set only until 2022. As it is a ministerial decision, it is recommended that the targets, financial figures and other data be **adapted to the period 2019-2023**.

8. Regarding the **dissemination of the ESP**:
  - a. The elaboration of a communication plan should be included as an activity in the Action Plan. It should include ways to disseminate the ESP among all stakeholders, including at the district and community levels.
  - b. The publication of a summary may be useful. We recommend translating an abridged version of the ESP into Uzbek, Russian and other national languages for dissemination inside and outside of the education sector.
  
9. **Format**:
  - a. The UNICEF logo must be removed from the final ESP.
  - b. Please number in sequence all graphics, tables and figures.
  - c. Please number activities on each programme (chapter 5.2).
  - d. The list of literature of the ESP should be completed, adding for instance the World Bank Education Sector Analysis 2018 and recent decrees.

### **Recommendations for the improvement of the ESP in the medium-term:**

1. **Financial Framework**:
  - a. The ESP must be a fully costed document. The cost of activities should be included on the Action Plan.
  - b. The financial framework should include the projections for SSE.
  - c. Add table on the percentage of the education budget allocated to each sub-sector per year during the period of the ESP.
  - d. The funding gap must be calculated, on the basis of the difference between the cost of programmes/activities and the projected allocations. External contributions have to be considered in the calculation of the funding gap. Strategies for filling the gap need to be explained.
  - e. As recommended by the Ministry of Finance, the financial framework should reflect the improvements expected in the access to and quality of the education to be funded by the State budget in 2019-2023.
  
2. **Action Plan**:
  - a. Each activity must include the cost and the source of funding.
  - b. Activities and indicators should be clearly linked.
  
3. **The decentralization process should be visible in the ESP**, specifying the roles and responsibilities of each level in the chain of the Ministries of Education.
  
4. **Regarding the need to improve the capacities in the education sector**, it is recommended that in the first year of implementation of the ESP a clear timeline be included for the development of a Capacity Development Plan, which should include a

detailed capacity assessment. That Plan should include a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of education personnel at various levels (Ministries of education, regions and districts).

**5. Equity:**

- a. A more detailed analyses of specific vulnerable groups should be elaborated.
  - b. Include clear differentiated strategies by location and level of income.
- 6.** Uzbekistan is affected by natural disasters and therefore a **chapter or a section on education in emergencies**, including the preparation of contingency plans, clear definition of roles and responsibilities in disaster risk reduction and in emergency response, should be elaborated by the education authorities.

## Annexes

- Annex 1: Acronyms and Abbreviations.
- Annex 2: List of People Interviewed.
- Annex 3: List of Documents Reviewed.

### **Annex 1: Acronyms and Abbreviations**

CVE	Centre for Vocational Education
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESA	Education Sector Analysis
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ESPIG	Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GSE	General Secondary Education
GoU	Government of Uzbekistan
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HE	Higher Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning (UNESCO)
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LMIC	Lower Middle-Income Country
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEF	Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
MoE	Ministry of Education (generic reference to the three ministries of education).
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHSSE	Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education
MoPE	Ministry of Public Education
MoPSE	Ministry of Preschool Education
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OOSC	Out-of-School Children
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PTR	Pupil-Teacher Ratio
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SSE	Secondary Specialised Education
UZS	Uzbekistan Soum

## Annex 2: List of People Interviewed

Organization	Name	Position/Division/Agency
Ministry of Public Education	Sherzod Shermatov	Honorable Minister of Public Education
	Alisher Umarov	Deputy Minister of Public Education
	Ilkhom Siradjev	Head of Department Finances
	Alisher Abidjanov	Head of Department on Improvement of Methodological Support
	Tuygun Aglamov	Head of International Department
	Nasirov Abdurakhim Abdimatalipovich	Head of Department for Monitoring the Quality of Education
	Karabaev Abdurakhmanovich	Head of Department of Out-of-School Education
	Aziz Karimov	Head of Department on Personnel
	Firdavs Kutliev	Senior specialist, section of implementation of pedagogical technologies
	Khurshid Karimov	Head of Legal section
	Mekhriniso Pardaeva	Deputy Director, Republican Educational Centre
	Kayumov Shukhrat Shukurovich	Director of Centre for the Development of ICT in Public Education
	Zinaida Kim	Senior specialists, In-service Institute under MOPE
	Tursunov Mirsaidovich	Chief Specialist of the Department for Monitoring the Quality of Education
Ministry of Preschool Education	Yelena Ten	Chief of Main Department
	Irina Grosheva	Chief Officer, Department for International Relations.
	Oyatillo Rakhmatillaev	Head of Section International Cooperation and Investments
	Elena Tsai	Chief Specialist of the Main Department on Organisation of Preschool Institutions
	U.T. Mukhitdinova	Head of Department for Coordination of Special Preschool Institutions
	Dilafuz Makhmudova Timurovna	Head of Department on Coordination of Design of Teaching Aids and Methodological Support
	Khindal Madrakhimov	Head of ICT Department
	N.L. Kim	Head of Quality Education
Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education	Begimkulov Uzokboy Shoimkulovich	Deputy Minister
	Komol Gafurov	Head of Department on Retraining and Qualification Enhancement
	Abbas Khodjaev	Head of Section on Curriculum and Textbooks
	Mr. Kurbanov	Centre of Vocational Education
State Inspection for Supervision of Quality in Education	Asliddin Odilov	Head of Main Department
Center for	Lana Ckhay	Chief Researcher

Economic Research		
State Statistics Committee	Sherzod Abraev	Deputy Head of Social Sector and Sustainable Development Statistics
	Hurriyat Khudaykulova	Lead Expert of Social Sector and Sustainable Development Statistics
Ministry of Finance	Nodir Muslitdinov	Deputy Head of the Social Department
	Adham Eshchanov	Head of Section for Financing, General Secondary Education
Ministry of Economy	Utkir Nematov	Head of Department Education
	Gayrat Asomidinov	Deputy Head of Department Education
	Umida Ibadkhodjaeva	Head of Section Preschool Education
	Sadikov Rauf	Chief Officer Education
Trade Union of Education, Science and Culture	Ravshan Bedilov	Chairman
	Lazokat Turikova	Chief Officer for Social Protection
	Shodman Kubaev	Representative in Kashkadarya Region
UNICEF	Sascha Graumann	Representative
	Deepa Sankar	Chief of Education
	Eleonora Sadirova	Education Consultant
	Vazira Nazarova	Preschool Education Officer
	Umida Islamova	Education Consultant
UNESCO	Pilar Álvarez-Laso	Country Representative
	Bakhtiyor Namazov	Education Officer
European Union	Akmal Rustamov	Project Manager-Cooperation Section-Education
World Bank	Janssen Edelweiss Teixeira	Senior Education Specialist
	Iqboljon Ahadjonov	Specialist of Health and Education Projects

### **Annex 3: List of Documents Reviewed**

#### **- Government of Uzbekistan**

- Constitution of Uzbekistan, 1992.
- National Action Strategy on Five Priority Development Areas 2017-2021.
- Decree of the President #3276 on measures to develop further activities to provide non-governmental educational services, 15 September 2018.
- Resolution of the President #3151 on measures for expansion of participation branches and spheres of economics in increase quality of trainings of specialists with higher education, 27 July 2018.
- Resolution of the President #3775 on additional measures to improve the quality of education in higher education institutions, 6 May 2018.
- Resolution of the President #2909 on measures for further development of higher education systems, 20 April 2018.
- Resolution of the President #3304 on improvement of activities of MOPE, 30 September 2017.
- Resolution of the President #3289 on measures to further improve the system of training teachers, retraining and upgrading the skills of public education workers, 26 September 2017.
- Resolution of the President #3261 on measures for fundamental improvement of the preschool education system, 9 September 2017.
- Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers #732 on improvement of preschool institutions activities, 31 July 2017.
- Resolution of Cabinet of Ministers #515 on establishing the State Inspection on monitoring the quality of education, 18 July 2017.
- Resolution of the President #3183 On the organization of special correspondence departments on pedagogical directions in higher educational institutions.
- The Resolution #961 on approving the Regulations on MOPE.
- Resolution of Cabinet of Ministers #187 on State Educational Standards.
- Resolution of Cabinet of Ministers #140 on approval of regulation on general secondary education.
- Decree of Cabinet of Ministers #234 on retraining and professional development of Public Education staff, 15 August 2014.

#### **- Ministry of Public Education**

- Education Sector Plan 2019-2023.
- Draft Law on Education, 2018.
- Education Sector Plan 2013-2017.

#### **- Global Partnership for Education**

- Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Preparation, 2015
- Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Appraisal, 2015

- Equity and Inclusion in Education: A Guide to Support Education Sector Plan Preparation, Revision, and Appraisal, 2010
  - GPE's Engagement on Domestic Financing for Education, Policy Brief, September 2016.
- **Other sources**
- UNICEF (2018), Situation Analysis of the Education Sector in Uzbekistan, May.
  - World Bank (2018a), Education Sector Analysis, October.
  - World Bank (2018b), Implementation Status & Results Report, Improving Pre-primary and General Secondary Education Project.
  - World Bank (2014), Modernizing Tertiary Education Report.
  - World Bank (2013), Improving Early Childhood Care and Education, March.