

GENDER ASPECTS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN.

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Education in today's world is an important factor in the development of society, one of the means of sustainable socio-economic, political and cultural development. That is why education is the foundation of the state, the method of revival material and spiritual culture of society. At the same time, investment in education and the development of private investment will help to increase productivity in all sectors of the economy.

The education system in the Republic of Tajikistan in post-Soviet period held a special place since has reached high levels of excellence in training high quality specialists. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, this indicator has deteriorated given a number of reasons connected with the Civil War, reduction of budget funds for education, low salary of workers, the outflow of highly qualified specialists (teachers), inadequate infrastructure and material and technical base, high levels of poverty, especially in remote and mountainous regions of Tajikistan. Therefore, **according to the research of UN Development Program, Tajikistan was ranked 127 in the world by the level of education in 2012, and found itself at the lowest rank compared to all former Soviet republics.**

It is obvious that the situation required the adoption of a set of measures on elimination of existing problems at the national scale. Therefore, during the transition to a market economy, democratization and humanization of the education system, the construction of a sovereign, democratic, secular and unitary state there is a special urgency to study and generalize the accumulated positive experience of educational institutions in the period of formation and development of the Tajik independent country.

Serious attitude to the education sector, setting and solving the existing problems at the level of state policy have enormous political, economic, social and cultural and educational value. Indeed, the progress of the society, sustainable economic development, ensuring national and state security and overall achievement of the global level of economic development, engineering and technologies, science and culture, primarily depend on sustainable development of education and organization of a consistent and quality learning process of Tajik citizens.

With the acquisition of the status of independence, Tajikistan has chosen a path towards reforming economy, the social spheres of life, including the education system.

In addition, in recent years by the government initiative towards improving management and financing of the education system, a series of reforms have been conducted, which contributed

to the financing of this sector and facilitating the transition of the system to per capita funding that had a significant impact on the improvement of infrastructure, quality of education and reduction of the population illiteracy. The main priorities in this area were: increase of enrollment in kindergartens, primary education institutions, educational institutions, and improving inclusive education system. Moreover, the reforms have contributed to the development of appropriate conditions and the quality of education in secondary special and higher educational institutions of the country. An important aspect of these reforms is to ensure security of equal rights and opportunities for men and women. To this end, the Government has adopted a number of regulations that have supported this idea and have created favorable ground for the development of this sphere.

During the years of independence, the Republic of Tajikistan adopted a number of laws, which determined the further development of the sphere, including: the Law "On Education" (December 27, 1993, in the new edition of May 17, 2004), Laws of the Republic of Tajikistan "On Primary Professional Education" and "On Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education", developed more than 150 laws and regulations, and provisions of educational institutions. Additionally, the Government has adopted the education development strategy for the period until 2015.

No doubt, all these laws comply with the requirements of the international regulatory and legal documents.

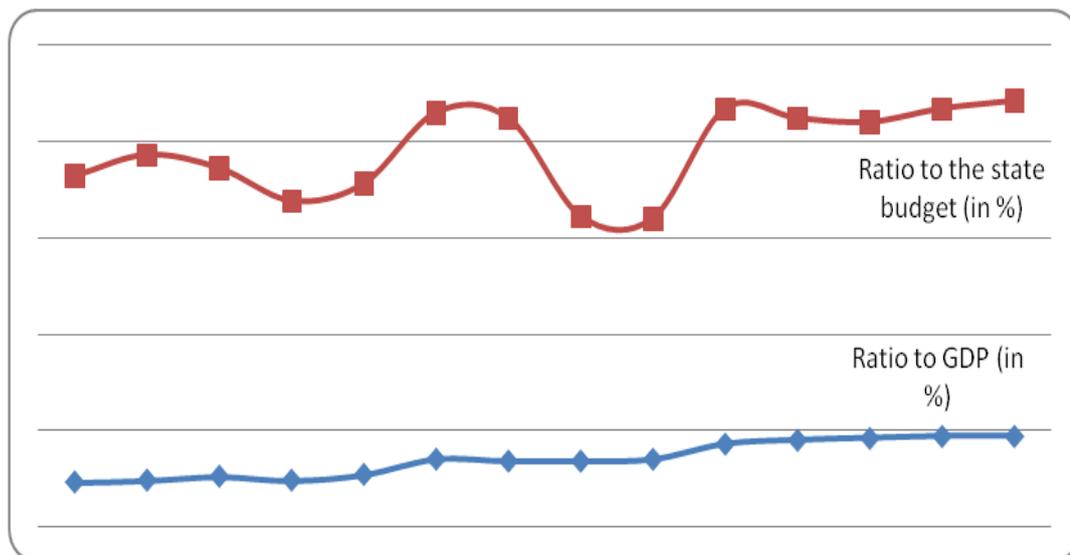
Equally, annually the Government provides educational scholarships in the form of "Presidential quota" to support students from disadvantaged families. Accordingly, in the academic year 2012-2013, the quotas have been awarded to 1185 students, including 578 boys and 607 girls.

Education is rated as a vitally important sphere of the national development, and the development of the education system is one of the main priorities of the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period until 2015 and Strategy to Improve the Welfare of the Population of Tajikistan for 2013-2015 (SIWPT).

In recent years, Tajikistan has experienced dynamic growth in funding the sphere of education, and this aggregate indicator increased by 51 times in 2013 against that of 2000.

Figure 1. Funding the sphere education in the years 2000-2013

(As a percentage of GDP and the state budget)



The above table shows that the ratio of state budget expenditure on education in GDP and the state budget in the period 2000-2013 has remarkably increased. For example, if the state budget expenditures on education in 2000 made 2.3 percent of GDP and 15.9 percent of the state budget, in 2013 the indicator reached 4.7 percent and 17.4 percent of GDP respectively.

Analysis of the Poverty Reduction Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2010-2012 (PRS) years shows that the amount of public spending on the development of education in 2010 totaled to 4.6 percent of GDP, and this level of spending on education system has retained in 2011 and 2012.

Table 1. State budget expenditures on education in the Republic of Tajikistan during the PRS implementation period

	2010	2011	2012
Total expenditures (thousand somoni)	1092,04	1363,8	1607,8
The growth rate of total expenditure to education (in % to the previous year)	113,3	124,9	117,9
Percentage in GDP	4,6%	4,6%	4,6%
GDP growth	6,5	7,4	7,5

The analysis shows that in 2010-2012 the level of state spending on education in GDP ratio remains unchanged. Thus, an increase in the total expenditure on education compared with the previous year is observed, which is 2-3 times higher than the growth rate of GDP.

In Living Standard Improvement Strategy for the period 2013-2015 it is noted that the minimum provision for the development of the education system, taking into account the demographic factor, the share of the annual cost of education will be 5-5.5 percent of GDP in the future.

Education management system of the Republic of Tajikistan consists of pre-school, primary and secondary institutions, institutions of additional education (out-of-school institutions), institutions of secondary vocational education (college, high school, college and technical school), and institutions of higher and postgraduate education.

The main role in the sphere of education in the country, is assigned to the state and to a less extent to the private sector in this direction.

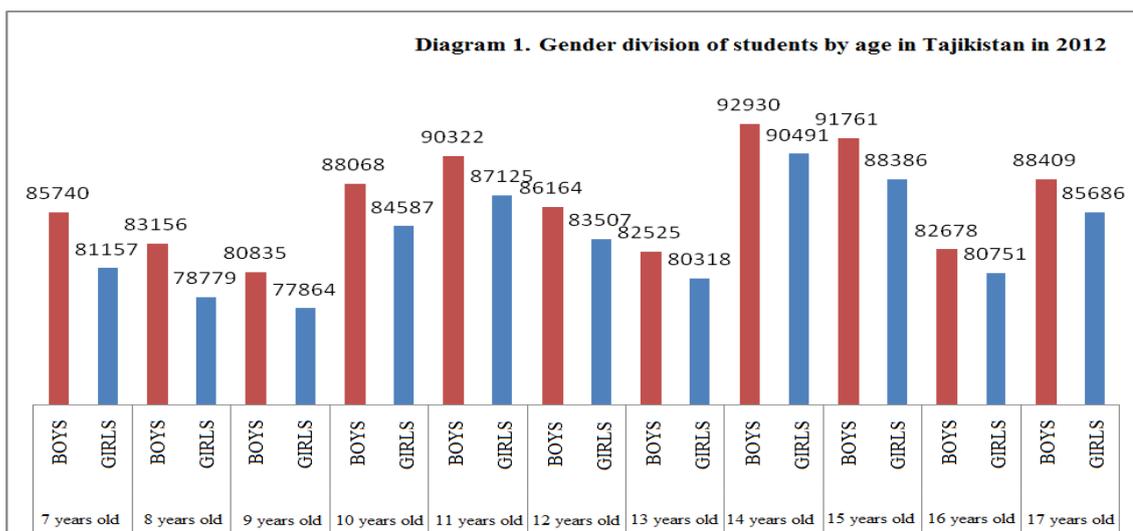
Table 2. Number of educational institutions and students

	Number of educational institutions	Number of students	Number of boys	Number of girls
Primary	542	27192	14095	13097
Basic	674	125056	55741	69315
Secondary	2589	1560619	826398	734221
Total	3805	1712867	902501	810366

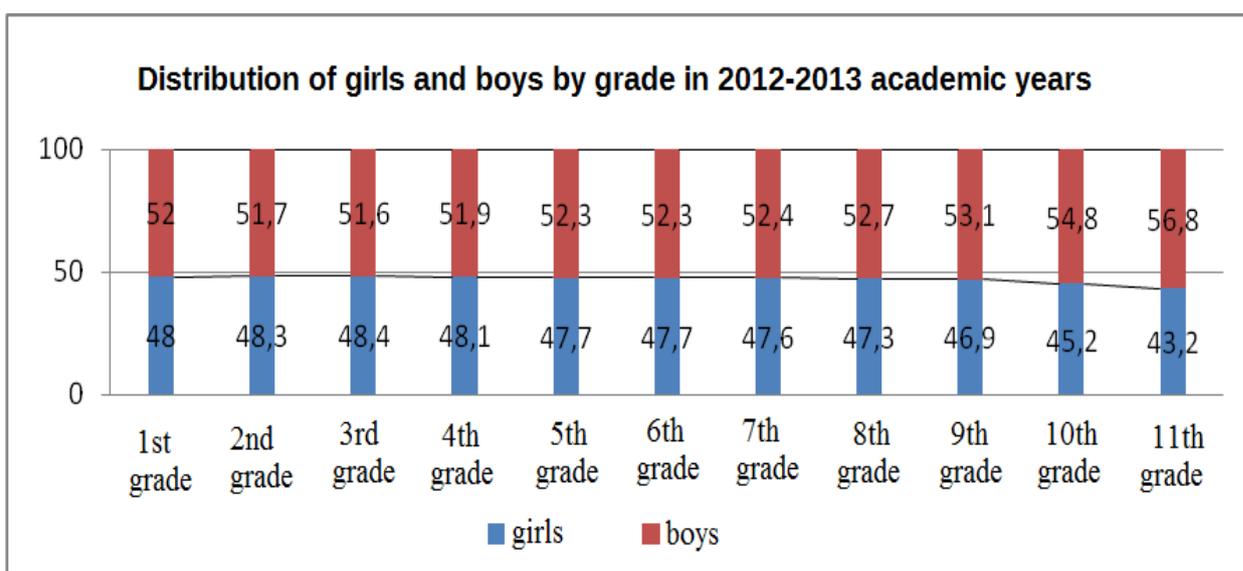
3805 full-time educational institutions with a total coverage of 1712.8 thousand students, including 810.5 girls and 902.3 boys are currently functioning in the system of general secondary education in Tajikistan. Over the past 3 years, a network of educational institutions increased by 66 units, at the same time the number of students increased by 1.1 percent.

The analysis shows that there is a slight difference in the number of pupils enrolled in the first grade in the country. Meanwhile, the number of girls enrolled in first grade is less than that of boys. However, in the process of learning the number of students who continue their studies to complete the 11th grade, mostly changes in favor of girls. Thus, according to the statistics of the education system, the number of students that drop out after the ninth grade in 2012 constituted 2.2 percent of the total number of students¹.

7 years old = 1st grade. 17 years old = 11th grade. Also, in many schools of the country the admission of 6-year-old children to the first grade is widespread and this data is not counted in the diagram.



Age analysis of students in educational institutions of Tajikistan shows that the number of pupils (boys and girls) at the end of the fifth grade considerably decreases, but on completion of



seventh grade, the situation is changing, more in favor of boys. Observation shows that the same tendency persists during the period of completing the tenth grade. It is assumed that the drop out of boys and girls from the 3-4th grades of school more often is associated with the need to work and assist their families in sustaining the household. In some instances, girls drop out of school because of early marriage. In the gender perspective, the ratio of girls against boys in primary and lower secondary education shows that girls less than boys enter basic secondary school (grades 1-9) and there is a gradual decrease in their enrollment.

The analysis shows that the ratio of girls to boys in primary and basic education remains unchanged, at the same time there is a gradual reduction or drop out in grades 9-11. Furthermore, according to the data given in the Poverty Reduction Strategy, enrollment of children has dropped from 90 percent in 1992 to less than 80 percent. The data show that the number of boys is higher than that of girls in school; the number of girls in basic education has been steadily declining from level to level. Significantly more girls than boys drop out of school before completing compulsory education.

According to the next middle-term development strategy for the period of 2013-2015¹ in the academic year 2011 the enrollment in primary, basic and general education made 97.3 percent. It is assumed that the problem is more likely due to difficulties in access to education for children from poor families and vulnerable populations and inadequate coverage of girls in secondary education as well.

Furthermore, SIWPT describes the existing problems in the sphere of education as follows³:

- demand for teaching staff and poor teacher training system;
- deteriorated infrastructure of preschool institutions;
- material and moral deterioration of training aids, especially in primary education and secondary special education institutions;
- limited public involvement in the management of public schools;
- insufficient funding for education (low wages, lack of finance to cover the running costs, utilities, etc.).

In addition, according to research conducted by international and non-governmental organizations in Tajikistan, one of the causes behind the declining enrollment in basic education in rural areas is that in pursuit of a better education for their children, parents send them away to study in urban schools. Also, internal and external migration could be mentioned, while it is likely that the children can move not only to urban areas, but also study in educational institutions of receiving countries - Russia and Kazakhstan. In all these cases, the children are still enrolled at the parents' place of residence that distorts the formal statistical indicators.

The analysis shows that in addition to the actions taken by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, there is need to establish new priorities in gender and education issues. As according to the findings of the survey conducted by the World Bank the number of school-age children in Tajikistan will increase by 50 percent during the period of 2000 to 2015.

Existing problems provide the ground for drawing a conclusion, that in the nearest perspective we need to focus on improving the enrollment of children and ensuring equal access to education, the state support and social protection of children from poor families, children with

disabilities, upgrading the skills of specialists of educational system, improvement of infrastructure and material and technical resources. Formation of a new education system and updating the content of education will serve as a basis for the introduction of new subject standards, curricula and, on their basis methodological guidance and books, models of organization of special education and training of student for crafts and to provide schools with the necessary equipment.