

Shaping Ecological Culture among Youth in Uzbekistan: Current Trends and Future Approaches

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Abstract: The article analyzes global environmental problems facing humanity, particularly urgent issues such as environmental pollution and depletion of natural resources, emphasizing the importance of developing ecological awareness among youth. From a historical development perspective, it examines the genesis of ecological culture, its place in modern society, and factors influencing youth thinking (education, family, social networks, state policy). As solutions, it proposes developing ecological education, volunteer programs, international initiatives, and legal mechanisms. The article reflects opportunities for gradually improving society's future by strengthening youth ecological culture.

Keywords: ecological culture, youth, environment, education, sustainable development, global problems, ecological awareness, volunteering, education, social networks.

Currently, humanity faces numerous global problems, and their number continues to grow. Among these, environmental issues directly threatening our lives are particularly critical. Restoring and maintaining ecological balance requires developing a mature and stable ecological culture and consciousness among the younger generation, with particular attention to its roots.

In the 21st century, humanity faces a global ecological crisis. The main victims of this crisis are simultaneously its key solvers—the younger generation. According to UNESCO (2023), over 60% of the world's population consists of individuals under 35, making the development of their ecological awareness a fundamental condition for sustainable development¹. In Uzbekistan, the urgency of this issue is highlighted by President Sh.M. Mirziyoyev in his *New Uzbekistan Strategy*, where he emphasizes the need to prioritize ecological education².

A 2023 survey among 1,000 youths aged 18-30 in Tashkent, Samarkand, and Fergana regions showed that "72% of youth have generalized knowledge about environmental problems, but only 18% are active participants"³. These results align with global trends described by Girousov E.V. and Shirkova I.Yu. in their work *Ecology and Culture*⁴.

A comparative analysis of Uzbekistan's and Sweden's education systems revealed that Uzbekistan's school curricula dedicate three times fewer hours to ecology than Sweden's⁵.

Results from the *Eco-Friend* project in five pilot schools in Tashkent showed that "learning waste separation increased schools' recycled material volume by 40% within seven months"⁶. These findings

¹ UNESCO. Global Education Monitoring Report 2023. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384041>

² Mirziyoyev Sh.M. *New Uzbekistan Strategy*. Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 2021. –P. 156.

³ Uzbekistan Statistics Committee. *Youth Ecological Awareness*. <https://stat.uz/ru/>

⁴ Girousov E.V., Shirkova I.Yu. *Ecology and Culture*. Moscow: Znanie, 2019. –P. 45.

⁵ Swedish Ministry of Ecology. *Education System*. <https://www.government.se/>

⁶ "Ecological Education" Center. <https://ecoedu.uz/>

correspond to predictions in *Ecology: Idea, Theory, Methodology*⁷ by Khoshimova E.S. and Rasulova G.Kh.

The genesis of ecological culture and the formation of a positive worldview among youth is a complex process dependent on historical, social, economic, and educational factors. In modern society, the importance of ecological culture is growing amid global environmental challenges and climate change.

From a historical development perspective, key aspects of ecological culture include:

Traditional Societies: Pre-industrial societies had sustainable traditions of interacting with nature, based on respect and careful treatment of the environment.

Industrialization and Urbanization: The industrial revolution and rapid urbanization led to intensified production and consumption, causing significant environmental changes and problems.

Modern Approaches: In the second half of the 20th century, awareness of environmental issues grew, leading to ecological movements and international organizations focused on environmental protection.

Educational influences include:

School Education: Introducing ecological courses and programs into school curricula helps develop ecological awareness among children and adolescents. Between 2015 and 2023, incorporating ecology into school programs increased youth interest in eco-activities from 27% to 43%⁸. However, 65% of textbooks remain theory-focused, lacking practical programs.

Higher Education: Specialized university programs and courses help develop deep knowledge and competencies in ecology and sustainable development.

Social aspects shaping youth ecological culture include:

Family and Environment: Family values play a crucial role in shaping children's worldviews. Ecologically conscious parents can instill respect for nature and resource conservation in their children.

Peer Groups and Communities: Friends, schools, and youth organizations significantly influence youth ecological behavior.

Additional influential factors in modern society include:

Mass Media: Television, radio, print media, and the internet are powerful tools for disseminating information about environmental problems and solutions. Eco-hashtags (#CleanUz, #ZeroWaste) engaged 30% of youth in ecological projects.

Social Networks: Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok enable youth to participate actively in ecological movements and share information. The #EcoChallengeUz project attracted over 12,000 youths in three months, with interactive content tripling participation rates⁹.

Practical initiatives to strengthen ecological culture among youth include:

Volunteer Programs: Environmental protection volunteer projects help youth understand ecological issues and develop practical skills.

International Initiatives: Global campaigns like *Earth Day* and *Earth Hour* unite youth in addressing environmental problems collectively.

Legal and policy frameworks supporting ecological culture include:

⁷ Khoshimova E.S., Rasulova G.Kh. *Ecology: Idea, Theory, Methodology*. Tashkent, 2005. –P. 89.

⁸ Ministry of Preschool and School Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan. <https://www.uzedu.uz/uz>

⁹ #EcoChallengeUz official page. <https://www.instagram.com/ecochallengeuz/>

Laws and Regulations: Government measures, such as forest protection, water resource conservation, and anti-pollution laws, establish boundaries for developing ecological culture. The 2021 *Environmental Protection Law* reduced polyethylene bag consumption by 35% compared to 2022¹⁰, aligning with UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.

State Programs: Government-supported educational and awareness programs play a vital role in spreading ecological knowledge and skills among youth, particularly in waste and water management.

Conclusion and Recommendations. Developing ecological culture among youth is a multifaceted process encompassing historical, educational, familial, social, and political dimensions. Its significance cannot be overstated, as youth ecological awareness determines the future of our planet and society's sustainable development. Engaging youth in ecological projects and environmental protection is essential for successfully addressing global challenges.

Recommendations:

1. **Education:** Develop modular ecological programs for grades 1-11, introduce ecological games and nature-based activities, and establish "Eco-Clubs" in every school.
2. **Social Media:** Create national eco-trends (#UzbekistanGreen), support eco-bloggers, and develop virtual eco-tourism projects.
3. **Legal Mechanisms:** Mandate waste separation and introduce tax incentives for ecological startups.

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¹⁰ Ministry of Ecology, environmental protection and climate change of the Republic of Uzbekistan. <https://eco.gov.uz/en>