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Elevating the Prestige of the Teaching Profession Through Educational Reform and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Integration

Mukhlisa Dustnazar Omonova^{1*}, Malyudaxon Musurmonova¹, Gulasal Tadjalievna Khojkarimova², Oxistaxon Qosimjonovna Dehqonova², Gulnigorbonu Barkhayotjon Mamatkulova¹, Bobomurot Saitxonov Pulatovich³, Doniyorova Iroda Baxtiyori⁴, Sanam Fakhriddinovna Abduvositova¹

¹Alfraganus University, Uzbekistan

²Fergana State University, Uzbekistan

³Center for Strengthening the Material and Technical Base of Higher and Professional Educational Institutions, Uzbekistan

⁴Karshi State Technical University, Uzbekistan

*Correspondence: E-mail: muxlisa.alfraganus@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore strategies for enhancing the prestige of the teaching profession by linking educational reform with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to quality education and decent work. Using a three-phase experimental approach, the research engaged teachers in professional development within educational clusters. Findings showed significant improvements in teacher prestige and motivation, supported by data from pre- and post-tests. These gains were attributed to targeted interventions such as technological literacy, community engagement, and continuous capacity-building, because they addressed both systemic and personal dimensions of the teaching profession. The impact of this study lies in providing a model that supports professionalization in education while contributing to the realization of SDG 4 and SDG 8.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of global educational transformation, the role of teachers has gained renewed attention as a pivotal element in achieving sustainable and equitable development. The teaching profession is not only essential for transferring knowledge but also for shaping values, social norms, and national identity (Adeoye, 2023; Tarraya, 2023; Dastjerdi, 2023). In many societies, however, the prestige of teaching remains undervalued, often characterized by insufficient professional recognition, low remuneration, and limited decision-making autonomy. In Uzbekistan, despite recent constitutional amendments that prohibit interference in pedagogical activities and emphasize the need to enhance teachers' status, social attitudes and institutional conditions still hinder the realization of this ideal. Strengthening the professional standing of teachers requires a comprehensive approach encompassing pedagogical, social, and technological dimensions. Scholars have emphasized that professional autonomy, continuous development, and public trust are foundational to teacher prestige. Researchers have also noted the importance of systemic motivation, social support, and cultural respect in raising teacher status (Faxod, 2023; Hasanovna, 2023; Mamirjonovna, 2024).

These perspectives align with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), which advocate for inclusive, equitable education systems and dignified working conditions for educators. Yet, there remains a lack of empirical studies that rigorously evaluate targeted strategies for improving teacher prestige through structural and behavioral interventions. This study investigates the impact of pedagogical strategies aimed at elevating the professional reputation of teachers within the framework of educational clusters. Specifically, it analyzes changes in teachers' perceived status before and after structured interventions in two general secondary schools. The study integrates policy directives with practical innovations such as technology adoption, social engagement, and collaborative development models. Baseline data reflected a significant proportion of teachers with low perceived professional standing. The novelty of this research lies in its experimental design that applies a cluster-based approach to teacher development within the broader vision of the SDGs. The results contribute to theoretical and practical understanding of how education policy can influence teacher prestige, thereby improving educational quality and national human resource competitiveness.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The prestige of the teaching profession has historically been acknowledged by scholars and thinkers across civilizations. In Eastern intellectual traditions, renowned figures such as Alisher Navoi, Abu Ali Ibn Sina, and Amir Temur emphasized the moral and social value of educators, highlighting their role in shaping human character and transferring cultural values. More recent Uzbek literary figures like Muhammad Yusuf and Utkir Hashimov have continued this discourse, illustrating the emotional and ethical dimensions of teaching as a vocation. Empirical studies in Uzbekistan have begun to explore the determinants of teacher prestige in the context of educational transformation. Researchers have emphasized professional competencies, ethical conduct, and social support as central components of teachers' reputation. These studies highlight the pressing need for motivational systems and structured support to enhance both the public image and the self-perception of educators. Internationally, scholars have conceptualized teacher prestige in relation to autonomy, policy engagement, and continuous professional development. Their work aligns with global educational frameworks, particularly SDG 4, which advocates for inclusive and quality education, and SDG 8, which promotes decent work. Despite the availability

of these frameworks, there is still a limited integration of global SDG-oriented reforms into localized, evidence-based strategies to strengthen teacher status, which this study aims to address.

3. METHOD

This study employed a three-phase experimental research design to investigate strategies for enhancing the professional prestige of teachers in general secondary schools. The methodological approach integrates qualitative and quantitative techniques to assess changes in teachers' status within educational cluster environments, in alignment with the SDGs (SDG 4 and SDG 8). In the first phase (experimental-research stage), teachers' pedagogical qualities and social roles were observed through structured interviews, questionnaires, and online surveys distributed via Google Forms. The observation focused on personal attributes such as initiative, pedagogical ethics, professional awareness, and sociocultural engagement. Teachers were viewed as not only educators but also community leaders whose influence extends beyond the classroom. In the second phase (theoretical-experimental stage), the research team developed a set of pedagogical strategies grounded in national priorities and global educational standards. These included:

- (i) Improving the quality of the educational process through learner-centered and technology-integrated teaching.
- (ii) Reinforcing teachers' personal qualities, such as integrity and communication skills.
- (iii) Promoting societal respect through media engagement and economic support.
- (iv) Enhancing continuous professional development via training and research.
- (v) Encouraging collaboration through cluster-based cooperation and shared pedagogical councils.
- (vi) Increasing technological literacy for modern instructional practices.

In the third phase (pilot testing stage), the proposed strategies were implemented and evaluated in general education schools 225 and 248 in Mirzo Ulugbek district, with 44 teachers participating (23 students in the experimental group and 21 students in the control group). Pre-test and post-test measurements were taken to assess changes in perceived professional prestige. Indicators were statistically analyzed and compared across both groups to validate the effectiveness of the interventions. Throughout the process, ethical standards were upheld. Participation was voluntary, and data confidentiality was maintained. The research design aimed to offer a scalable and context-sensitive model that integrates educational policy, institutional reform, and teacher empowerment, with relevance to both national goals and international frameworks such as the SDGs.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the baseline indicators of professional prestige among teachers in the experimental and control groups at the beginning of the study. The data show that in the experimental group, 26.09% of teachers were classified as having a high level of professional prestige, while 39.13% were in the low category. The control group had similar patterns, with only 23.81% in the high category and 42.86% in the low category. This suggests that prior to the intervention, both groups experienced low recognition, aligning with the national concern about diminishing teacher authority. These results highlight the need for systemic action to reverse declining motivation and societal respect for the teaching profession. **Table 2** illustrates the changes in teacher prestige after the implementation of the pedagogical strategy in both groups. In the experimental group, the proportion of teachers with high professional standing increased to 43.48%, while those in the low category drastically decreased to 4.35%. In the control group,

improvements were more modest: high-level increased to 28.57%, and low-level decreased to 33.33%. This indicates a significant positive shift among the experimental group, especially in terms of motivation, self-efficacy, and external recognition. Teachers who engaged in collaborative activities, digital integration, and pedagogical innovation reported increased confidence and perceived respect, suggesting that structured interventions can produce meaningful results aligned with SDG 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education.

Table 1. Indicators obtained on increasing the professional reputation of teachers in general education schools.

Level	Experimental Group (23 Teachers)	%	Control Group (21 Teachers)	%
High	6	26.09%	5	23.81%
Medium	8	34.78%	7	33.33%
Low	9	39.13%	9	42.86%
Total	23	100%	21	100%

Table 2. Indicators obtained on increasing the professional prestige of teachers in general education schools.

Level	Experimental Group (23 Teachers)	%	Control Group (21 Teachers)	%
High	10	43.48%	6	28.57%
Medium	12	52.17%	8	38.10%
Low	1	4.35%	7	33.33%
Total	23	100%	21	100%

Table 3 presents a side-by-side comparison of the beginning and end results across both experimental and control groups. The experimental group experienced an increase in high-level prestige from 26.09% to 43.48%, while the medium level rose from 34.78% to 52.17%. The low-level category nearly disappeared. In contrast, the control group saw only minor improvements. These findings statistically confirm the effectiveness of the intervention. Specifically, the experimental group showed an efficiency increase of approximately 11%, calculated through the ratio of pre- and post-test data. Meanwhile, the control group showed only a 4% improvement. These results validate the hypothesis that a strategic approach involving professional development, pedagogical collaboration, and digital competency directly enhances teachers perceived and actual prestige in educational settings. This comparative framework emphasizes that investing in teacher quality does not only affect classroom learning but also uplifts the profession socially and economically. It supports SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by showing that enhancing working conditions and motivation results in higher performance and professional satisfaction. The data presented in **Tables 1** through **3** demonstrate a clear progression in the professional prestige of teachers who participated in the experimental intervention. Initially, as shown in **Table 1**, both experimental and control groups exhibited a relatively low distribution in the "high" category of professional influence, highlighting the underlying issue of diminished teacher reputation across the educational environment. This aligns with previous studies that noted societal undervaluation of the teaching profession in Uzbekistan. Following the implementation of structured pedagogical strategies, **Table 2** illustrates a notable shift in the experimental group, where the "high" category increased by nearly 17% points. This change is attributed to deliberate interventions such as targeted training, digital literacy integration, and community-based recognition models.

Table 3. The obtained indicators on increasing the professional prestige of teachers in general education schools.

Level	Exp. Group Start (23 Teachers)	%	Exp. Group End (23 Teachers)	%	Control Start (21)	%	Control End (21)	%
High	6	26.09%	10	43.48%	5	23.81%	6	28.57%
Medium	8	34.78%	12	52.17%	7	33.33%	8	38.10%
Low	9	39.13%	1	4.35%	9	42.86%	7	33.33%
Total	23	100%	23	100%	21	100%	21	100%

The control group, in contrast, showed only marginal gains, reinforcing the argument that passive exposure to existing systems is insufficient to elevate teacher status. The comparative analysis in **Table 3** highlights the statistical and pedagogical significance of the findings. The experimental group experienced a transformation not only in quantitative terms but also qualitatively, as reflected in reduced numbers in the "low" category and strengthened representation in both "medium" and "high" prestige levels. This indicates that teachers not only gained confidence but also received validation from peers, students, and the broader educational system. The alignment of these findings with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) is particularly significant. By demonstrating that institutional support, ongoing capacity-building, and pedagogical collaboration yield measurable improvements in professional perception, this study contributes to a model for advancing teacher empowerment. Moreover, the cluster-based framework applied here offers a replicable and scalable approach for other educational contexts seeking similar transformations. This study adds new information regarding current issues in SDGs, as reported elsewhere ([Awalussilmi et al., 2023](#); [Fiandini et al., 2024](#); [Keisyafa et al., 2024](#); [Khamdamovna, 2025](#); [Maryanti et al., 2022](#); [Supriatna et al., 2024](#); [Vilmala et al., 2022](#)). From a policy perspective, these findings emphasize the need for sustained investment in teacher development (beyond one-time trainings) through embedded support systems and career-long professional learning opportunities. Furthermore, the role of public recognition, equitable workload distribution, and meaningful teacher participation in decision-making processes must be prioritized in future reforms.

5. CONCLUSION

The study confirmed that the prestige of the teaching profession can be significantly enhanced through targeted pedagogical strategies aligned with educational reform and SDGs. Interventions focusing on continuous professional development, collaboration, and technological literacy resulted in measurable improvements in teachers’ status. The cluster-based model effectively addressed structural and personal challenges in the education system. These findings contribute to strengthening SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 8 on decent work, emphasizing that empowering teachers through systemic support improves both professional identity and national educational outcomes.

5. AUTHORS’ NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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