



THE ROLE OF FAMILY, NEIGHBORS, AND COMMUNITY IN PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS

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Abstract. This scientific article is dedicated to studying the role of the family, neighborhood, and community organizations in the development of environmental education and the formation of its social and institutional foundations. The study analyzes the significance of the social environment, beyond traditional educational institutions, in ensuring the effectiveness of environmental education. The article provides a scientific rationale for the opportunities, challenges, and solutions related to family-based education, neighborly initiatives, and civil society institutions in shaping environmental awareness and culture. Practical recommendations are proposed to strengthen the institutional framework of environmental education in the context of the New Uzbekistan.

Keywords: environmental education, family, neighborhood, community, social foundations, institutional framework, environmental culture

Introduction.

Environmental education is not merely a formal process conducted in schools or universities; it is also a socio-cultural phenomenon that involves the broader community. In Uzbekistan, the family, neighborhood, and civil society institutions have traditionally served as the main pillars of upbringing and social life. However, in the context of ecological globalization, climate change, and increasing local environmental challenges, the potential of these institutions to promote environmental education remains underutilized. This study aims to analyze the role of the family, neighborhood, and community in reinforcing the social and institutional foundations of environmental education and to propose a new integrated model based on their mutual collaboration.

Literature review and methodology.

International literature on the social context of environmental education (Palmer, Sobel, et al.) highlights the critical role of family and local community in shaping environmental awareness. Uzbek scholars, such as M. Tokhtaboyev in *Environmental Culture and National Values* (2021) and A. Abdukodirov in *Social Ecology* (2020), emphasize the significance of local traditions and family upbringing in forming pro-environmental behavior. Additionally, the Law of Uzbekistan *On Neighborhood* (2020) and the Law *On Family* (1998) legally recognize the role of these institutions in education. Nevertheless, practical mechanisms, adaptation to modern conditions, and integration with formal education systems to advance environmental education remain insufficiently explored, which this article seeks to address.



Observations indicate that despite the broad potential of families, neighborhoods, and community organizations in New Uzbekistan, their involvement in environmental education is limited. At the family level, most parents regard environmental education as the responsibility of schools. Urban families, shaped by city life, often distance children from nature due to digital environments and limited green spaces, while traditional ecological practices persist in rural areas but are inadequately transformed into systematic environmental education. At the neighborhood level, practical issues such as public order and cleanliness are often managed locally, yet systematic environmental education initiatives are absent. Youth participation in neighborhood environmental projects remains sporadic, and the knowledge of neighborhood leaders, women's committees, and youth leaders regarding environmental issues is limited. At the broader community level, including NGOs and volunteer movements, the number of environmental organizations is small, resources are limited, and volunteer efforts are largely project-based rather than continuous learning processes. Moreover, there is a notable lack of information and funding for state-society cooperation in environmental education.

Discussion and results.

The underlying causes include insufficient knowledge and guidance at the family and neighborhood levels regarding environmental education content and methods, the absence of regular collaboration mechanisms among families, neighborhoods, and schools, inadequate training for activists and community leaders, limited financial and organizational resources to support environmental initiatives, and a general lack of public awareness regarding the importance of environmental education. As a result, environmental education remains confined to school walls, weakening its impact on daily life. Environmental awareness, youth responsibility, and collective action on local environmental issues are underdeveloped. The formation of a civil society oriented toward sustainable development is slowed, and traditional ecological values risk being lost among the new generation.

To address these challenges, the role of families must be strengthened through programs such as "Family Environmental Education" (e.g., the *Green Family* project), specialized training and seminars for parents, encouragement of simple home-based ecological projects such as composting, water conservation, and small-scale gardening, and the establishment of regular communication platforms linking schools and families, such as an *Environmental Family Diary*. Similarly, the Mahalla Institute can be activated by implementing programs like *Environmental Activity* or *Green Mahalla*, establishing environmental education corners and mini-libraries, training youth leaders to manage environmental projects, systematizing traditional events such as ecological festivals, Cleanliness Days, and tree-planting ceremonies, and formalizing cooperation agreements on environmental protection between Mahallas and local schools.

Through integrated efforts of families, neighborhoods, and community institutions, environmental education can become a continuous, socially embedded process that strengthens environmental awareness, responsibility, and sustainable behavior across Uzbek society, ensuring the preservation and transmission of ecological values to future generations.

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Broad public engagement should also be promoted by expanding state grant programs for environmental NGOs, creating and activating networks of environmental volunteers across all regions, establishing online platforms for exchanging environmental information between the public and government agencies, funding environmental projects and educational programs in cooperation with the business sector, and promoting the social significance of environmental education through mass media. Institutional integration mechanisms should include developing regulations “*On Cooperation in Environmental Education*” to govern collaboration among families, neighborhoods, schools, and NGOs, introducing the position of Environmental Education Officer within district councils, and developing a *National Program for the Development of Social and Environmental Education* in collaboration with the Ministry of Preschool and School Education and the Ministry of Ecology.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, the development of environmental education is both a pedagogical and a broad social and institutional task. Families, neighborhoods, and communities are decisive in shaping environmental awareness and culture, complementing formal school education, connecting it with practical life, and ensuring continuity of traditions. Fully realizing their potential ensures the effectiveness and sustainability of environmental education. Practical measures include creating a legal framework by enacting a dedicated law “*On Environmental Education*”, implementing certification programs in *Environmental Mentorship* for district activists, NGO members, and parents, allocating state grants and local budget resources for family and community environmental projects, developing mobile applications such as *Green Family* and *Smart Neighborhood* with environmental tasks, competitions, and resources, introducing evaluation systems to rank neighborhoods based on environmental cleanliness and educational activity, integrating local ecological traditions into modern programs, and studying international experiences in countries such as South Korea, Japan, and Germany to adapt successful community-based environmental education practices. Through these integrated approaches, environmental education can become deeply rooted in Uzbek society, foster active civic engagement, and serve as a powerful driver for sustainable national development.

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