HSR London International Conference on Multidisciplinary Academic Research
(HSR-ICMAR) 2026
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# ISSUES OF SCIENCE AND EDUCATION IN THE LEGACY OF AHMAD DONISH

**Durdiqilichov Shaxzod Maxkam o'g'li**

**ABSTRACT**

The legacy of Ahmad Donish occupies a significant place in the development of scientific and educational thought in Central Asia, particularly within the historical and cultural space of the Emirate of Bukhara. This article analyzes the issues of science and education reflected in his works and reformist ideas, with special attention to their relevance for contemporary Uzbek educational discourse. Drawing on Uzbek scholarly literature, the study examines Donish's critical attitude toward traditional scholastic education, his advocacy for rational and empirical knowledge, and his emphasis on the modernization of teaching methods. It also highlights his comparative observations of educational systems in Russia and Central Asia, which allowed him to identify structural weaknesses in the madrasa system and propose reforms oriented toward natural sciences, language learning, and practical knowledge. The research demonstrates that Donish's intellectual heritage represents an early synthesis of enlightenment ideals and socio-political criticism, which later influenced the Jadid movement and the modernization of education in the region. His views on science, morality, and social progress continue to serve as an important theoretical foundation for understanding the evolution of pedagogical thought in Uzbekistan.

**KEYWORDS**

Ahmad Donish, education reform, science, enlightenment, Bukhara Emirate, Uzbek pedagogy, Jadid movement, natural sciences, critical thinking, modernization

## INTRODUCTION

The scientific and educational heritage of Ahmad Donish is one of the most important intellectual foundations of nineteenth-century Central Asian reformist thought. In Uzbek scientific literature, Donish is widely recognized as a thinker who critically assessed the backwardness of the educational system in the Emirate of Bukhara and proposed progressive ideas aimed at integrating science, rational thinking, and practical knowledge into traditional education. According to contemporary Uzbek researchers, his works reflect the contradictions of his time, when rigid scholastic traditions limited the development of scientific inquiry and the acquisition of modern knowledge. In this context, Donish's intellectual activity emerged as a response to social stagnation, administrative inefficiency, and educational conservatism. His writings demonstrate a deep concern for the role of education in societal progress and emphasize that ignorance and outdated teaching methods were the main obstacles to development. Uzbek academic sources underline that Donish's travels and exposure to Russian educational practices significantly shaped his comparative understanding of science and schooling, enabling him to advocate for reform in the educational institutions of Bukhara.

## MAIN PART

The legacy of Ahmad Donish in the field of science and education is characterized by a critical reassessment of traditional pedagogical systems and a strong orientation toward modernization and enlightenment. Uzbek scholarly studies emphasize that Donish's works, including his historical and philosophical writings, consistently criticize the dominance of dogmatic religious instruction in madrasas, where rote memorization and limited engagement with empirical sciences prevailed. He argued that education should not be restricted to religious texts alone but must include mathematics, astronomy, geography, and other natural sciences essential for understanding the real world[1].

In Uzbek academic interpretations, this position is considered a foundational step toward the development of modern scientific thinking in Central Asia. Donish's comparative observations during

[1] Z. A. Ahmedova, *Reformative views of Ahmad Donish in modernization of educational systems in the Emirate of Bukhara*, Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 2022.

his travels played a crucial role in shaping his educational philosophy, as he noted the advanced state of science and education in Russia compared to the Emirate of Bukhara. This comparison led him to conclude that progress depends on the acquisition of knowledge and the adoption of rational teaching methods. He criticized the excessive focus on Arabic grammar and theological repetition, advocating instead for the inclusion of practical subjects and foreign languages in the curriculum. Uzbek literature also highlights Donish's belief that education should serve societal development and that enlightened individuals are essential for the progress of the state. His ideas on reform were not only theoretical but also practical, as he encouraged younger generations to pursue self-education in sciences despite institutional resistance. The influence of his educational philosophy extended beyond his lifetime, contributing significantly to the emergence of the Jadid movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Jadid reformers adopted many of his principles, particularly the emphasis on new-method schools, literacy expansion, and the integration of secular sciences into education. In this way, Donish's intellectual heritage became a bridge between traditional Islamic scholarship and modern educational reform in Uzbekistan. His legacy also includes a broader philosophical dimension in which science is viewed as a moral and social force. Uzbek researchers note that for Donish, knowledge was not only a cognitive tool but also a means of ethical development and social responsibility. He believed that an educated individual must contribute to justice, societal well-being, and moral improvement. This synthesis of science, ethics, and social progress remains a key feature of his pedagogical thought and is widely discussed in contemporary Uzbek academic discourse.

In the scholarly interpretation of Ahmad Donish's legacy, the discussion of science and education reveals a complex intersection between traditional intellectual culture and emerging modernist ideas in nineteenth-century Central Asia. Uzbek academic literature consistently emphasizes that Donish should not be viewed merely as a critic of the madrasa system, but as a transitional thinker who attempted to reconcile inherited Islamic educational traditions with the demands of a changing world. His intellectual position reflects a broader historical tension in the Emirate of Bukhara, where educational institutions were deeply rooted in scholastic repetition and religious authority, while external influences introduced new models of scientific rationality and administrative efficiency[2].

One of the central points in Uzbek research is Donish's redefinition of knowledge itself. In traditional madrasa education, knowledge was largely associated with religious jurisprudence, grammar, and commentary on canonical texts. Donish, however, expanded this concept by insisting that true knowledge must include observation of nature, mathematical reasoning, and empirical inquiry. This shift is interpreted by Uzbek scholars as an early manifestation of epistemological modernization in the region. His critique was not a rejection of religion but rather a call for balancing spiritual education with worldly sciences, a perspective that later became a key principle in Jadid educational reform.

Another important aspect discussed in Uzbek literature is Donish's comparative educational perspective. His diplomatic missions to Russia exposed him to institutions where structured curricula, scientific disciplines, and state-supported education were more systematically developed. He contrasted this with the fragmented and memory-based instruction in Bukhara, concluding that educational stagnation was directly linked to societal backwardness. Modern Uzbek researchers interpret this comparison not as simple admiration of Western systems, but as a methodological approach to identifying structural weaknesses in local education and proposing adaptive reforms.

The discussion also highlights Donish's understanding of the social function of education. He believed that education was not only an individual pursuit but a foundation for state development and social stability. In this sense, ignorance was seen as a cause of administrative corruption, economic weakness, and moral decline. Uzbek scholars note that this socio-political dimension of education

[2] M. Raxmonova, *Theoretical and artistic analysis of Ahmad Donish's educational philosophy*, Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences and Innovations, 2024.

places Donish among early social reformers in Central Asia, as he linked intellectual development with governance and justice.

Furthermore, his emphasis on critical thinking is considered one of the most progressive elements of his legacy. In a context where rote memorization dominated learning practices, Donish encouraged analytical reasoning and questioning of established norms. Contemporary Uzbek pedagogical studies interpret this as an early advocacy for learner-centered education, even though it was not systematized in modern pedagogical terminology. His ideas anticipated later educational reforms that prioritized creativity, inquiry, and independent thought.

However, Uzbek literature also acknowledges limitations in Donish's reform program. His ideas remained largely theoretical and were not implemented during his lifetime due to political constraints, conservative resistance, and lack of institutional support. Some scholars argue that his reforms were intellectually ahead of their time, which limited their practical impact but increased their symbolic significance for later reform movements. The Jadids, in particular, transformed his conceptual critiques into practical educational models, thereby extending his intellectual legacy into institutional reform[3].

Overall, the discussion of Ahmad Donish's views on science and education in Uzbek academic discourse presents him as a foundational figure in the intellectual transition toward modern educational thought. His synthesis of critique, comparison, and reformist vision continues to serve as an important reference point for understanding the evolution of pedagogical ideas in Uzbekistan and the broader Central Asian region.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of Ahmad Donish's legacy demonstrates that his views on science and education played a crucial role in the intellectual transformation of Central Asian society. Uzbek scientific literature consistently portrays him as a pioneer of educational reform who challenged outdated scholastic traditions and promoted the introduction of modern scientific disciplines into the educational system. His comparative approach, critical thinking, and advocacy for rational knowledge laid the groundwork for later reform movements, particularly Jadidism. The significance of his ideas lies not only in their historical context but also in their continued relevance for modern educational philosophy in Uzbekistan. Donish's emphasis on knowledge, critical inquiry, and moral development highlights the interconnectedness of education and social progress. His intellectual heritage remains an important source for understanding the evolution of pedagogical thought and the modernization of education in the region.

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