HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

THE ROLE OF NATIONAL VALUES AND HISTORICAL MEMORY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH EDUCATION IN NEW UZBEKISTAN

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Doi: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24192520

Abstract: This study investigates the historical and educational significance of national values and historical memory in the development of youth education in New Uzbekistan. It examines how the reinterpretation of the Jadid educational legacy, the protection of cultural heritage, and the institutionalization of civic and moral education intersect with contemporary reform agendas. The research applies historical-genetic, comparative-historical, source-critical, and interpretive methods to policy texts issued between 2017 and 2026 and to relevant Uzbek and international scholarship. A four-stage periodization is proposed, distinguishing initial reform discourse, strategic consolidation, programmatic specification, and the more explicit integration of national and universal values in the 2026 youth strategy. The analysis demonstrates that historical memory can strengthen educational continuity and civic responsibility only when it is taught as a critically examined, plural and evidence-based historical process rather than as a fixed repertoire of celebratory narratives. The article offers a conceptually grounded model for connecting historical inquiry, family and community heritage, museum learning, digital archives, and inclusive civic education. Its findings are documentary and analytical; they do not claim experimentally verified changes in students' attitudes or academic outcomes.

Keywords: New Uzbekistan; youth education; historical memory; national values; Jadid reformism; cultural heritage; civic identity; historical literacy; education policy; historiography.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the development of contemporary Uzbekistan, education policy cannot be interpreted solely as an administrative programme of school construction, curricular revision, teacher training or university expansion. Its historical meaning also concerns the ways a society understands its past, identifies the knowledge it wishes to transmit and defines responsible membership in a shared political community. For the generation educated during the reforms commonly described as those of New Uzbekistan, the relationship between national values and historical memory therefore constitutes a significant intellectual and pedagogical problem. The key issue is not whether the past should be remembered, but which historical experiences become visible in education, whose voices are included, and by what procedures inherited values are converted into reasoned ethical judgement.

The notion of national values in this article refers to historically formed orientations, practices and meanings transmitted through family life, language, literature, customary institutions, craftsmanship, scholarship and civic interaction. It includes respect for learning, dignity, mutual assistance, hospitality, intergenerational responsibility and the preservation of cultural expression. These orientations are not regarded as immutable properties of an undifferentiated population. Their meanings have changed across historical periods, and different regions and communities within Uzbekistan have interpreted them in distinctive ways. Treating cultural heritage as dynamic, rather

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than as an inventory of unquestionable symbols, permits a richer analysis of educational policy and avoids confusing legitimate cultural continuity with the exclusion of diversity.

Historical memory is related to but not identical with professional historical knowledge. Memory encompasses stories, commemorations, monuments, family testimony, rituals, local landscapes and patterns of public representation through which communities relate past experiences to present identities. Historical scholarship subjects such representations to criticism, chronology, contextual interpretation and comparison of evidence. In a school or university, these activities can be mutually supportive: memory supplies questions and personal relevance, while historical inquiry tests claims, identifies silences and distinguishes testimony from established fact. The theoretical difference is particularly important in a digital environment, where students encounter algorithmically amplified representations of historical events without necessarily receiving their original source contexts [4; 8].

The historical background is multilayered. The educational aspirations associated with the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Jadid reformers constitute one influential point of reference, since debates over new-method schools, literacy, language, social renewal and intellectual independence situated education within larger social transformations. Nevertheless, a responsible historical approach cannot simply equate Jadid reformism with current institutions or assume an uninterrupted intellectual line between the two. The political contexts, social structures, educational participation patterns and institutional opportunities were substantially different. The value of Jadid history for present-day youth is that it reveals education as an arena of contested choices and historical agency rather than an inherited script already resolved in advance [3].

The Soviet period provides a second indispensable layer. It expanded certain forms of mass schooling and scientific training while also placing historical writing, public commemorations and cultural expressions within ideological and political constraints. Independence after 1991 produced new opportunities for revisiting previously marginalized figures, recovering historical sources and revising historical narratives. Yet the reconstruction of national memory after independence also raised methodological questions about selection, continuity and civic inclusion. Any study focused on the period after 2017 must recognize these longer trajectories. Without them, current reforms would appear to have emerged from a historical vacuum, and changes in educational policy could be mistaken for wholly unprecedented innovations.

The post-2017 reform period is significant because the public agenda increasingly connected educational modernization with cultural, moral and civic development. The Development Strategy for 2022–2026, approved by Presidential Decree PF-60 of 28 January 2022, contains a distinct priority concerning spiritual development and envisages support for national values, historical and cultural heritage, and educational continuity across families, educational organizations and mahallas. These provisions establish a documentary basis for examining the relation between modernization and heritage rather than treating the relation merely as rhetorical aspiration [5]. The existence of such provisions, however, is evidence of policy intent, not proof that every educational institution implemented them with equal effectiveness.

A subsequent institutional moment followed the adoption of the Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy by Presidential Decree PF-158 on 11 September 2023. Its educational and cultural objectives linked human development, schools, reading culture and heritage preservation within a broader development architecture [7]. The strategy is useful to historians because it illustrates how cultural policy and educational objectives were framed together in strategic planning documents. Its significance must

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nevertheless be examined with appropriate attention to the distinction between promulgated goals, implementation instruments, and measurable outcomes. The appearance of a heritage-related commitment in a decree cannot by itself demonstrate improvements in historical literacy or mutual understanding among students.

An additional point of chronological specificity is the Youth of New Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy approved by Decree PF-66 on 20 April 2026. The document articulates a principle of national-spiritual harmony that connects contemporary knowledge and skills with national values, family traditions and patriotism; it also emphasizes participation, opportunity and cultural and intellectual development [9]. As this policy was adopted only in 2026, its longer-term effects cannot be retrospectively described as established results. It should instead be read as evidence that the relationship between educational modernization and cultural continuity remained an explicit policy concern at the time of writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Uzbek scholarship provides essential categories for interpreting the relationship between collective experience and education. Narzulla Jo‘rayev's monograph on the theoretical foundations of the philosophy of history examines historical consciousness, human agency and the interpretive dimensions of social development [1]. Its relevance to the present study lies in the argument that an understanding of the past is not an optional supplement to contemporary identity but part of how a society conceptualizes change. In educational terms, this perspective suggests that historical study ought to develop the capacity to connect individual actions with institutional structures and long-term transformations. At the same time, a philosophical account must be supplemented by source criticism if normative claims about memory are to be distinguished from demonstrated historical relationships.

A different but complementary historical perspective appears in the volume on Jadidism edited by Dilorom Alimova [3]. Its examination of reform, renewal, independence and intellectual change makes the history of education inseparable from wider processes of social negotiation. The Jadid inheritance matters because it brings forward questions of pedagogy, literacy, the public circulation of knowledge and the relation between cultural self-understanding and institutional innovation. Importantly, its usefulness is analytical rather than devotional: students can compare competing educational positions, reconstruct the constraints facing reformers and evaluate historical outcomes without assuming that all actors shared a single vision. Jo‘rayev foregrounds the philosophy of historical consciousness; Alimova's editorial scholarship helps restore the specificity of a historically situated reform movement. Together they provide a methodological bridge between interpretive history and curricular practice.

More recent Uzbekistan-focused writings emphasize the contemporary educational environment. Ergashbaev's discussion of continuous education and young people's spiritual worldview associates educational continuity with moral and cultural development [2]. A further item supplied in the requested bibliography treats the organization of continuing education as a means of strengthening a spiritual-philosophical worldview [6]. These works are pertinent for identifying a national pedagogical vocabulary, although the bibliographic record of the latter publication varies across online sources and should be checked against its original journal issue before formal journal submission. A related paper by Mirzaolimjon og‘li and Shohbozbek considers education policy and evolving university models in New Uzbekistan [10]. Its focus on institutional modernization invites examination of whether the language of cultural continuity has been translated into interdisciplinary courses, teacher preparation and university-community partnerships.

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METHODOLOGY

The study employed a historical-documentary research design structured around a defined chronological frame of 2017–2026. The primary corpus comprised three verifiable policy documents: Presidential Decree PF-60 of 28 January 2022, Presidential Decree PF-158 of 11 September 2023, and Presidential Decree PF-66 of 20 April 2026 [5; 7; 9]. Secondary sources were selected for their substantive contribution to Uzbek historical thought, educational reform and international memory theory. These sources were analysed as texts with distinct purposes and evidentiary limitations rather than as interchangeable descriptions of reality. No new interviews, questionnaires or experiments were carried out, and the research does not attribute quantified behavioral changes to any policy intervention.

RESULTS

The first result is a four-stage periodization of the relationship between youth education, national values and historical memory in New Uzbekistan. The period from 2017 to 2021 can be interpreted as one of agenda formation in which educational renewal and public reconsideration of cultural and historical inheritance became increasingly connected. The year 2022 marked a more explicit strategic formulation: the 2022–2026 Development Strategy linked spiritual development with educational, community and heritage institutions [5]. The 2023–2025 phase gave the linkage a longer planning horizon through the Uzbekistan–2030 framework [7]. In 2026 the Youth of New Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy articulated national-spiritual harmony as a governing principle while also emphasizing access, modern skills and youth initiative [9]. This sequence demonstrates an identifiable pattern in policy language; it does not establish a uniform causal trajectory across all schools or regions.

A third result is the identification of three mediating environments. The formal curriculum provides chronological structure, historical methods and opportunities for argumentative writing. Family and mahalla settings transmit local histories, oral testimony and practical values, but their narratives require contextualization and corroboration. Museums, libraries, archives and digital heritage resources offer material and documentary evidence that can connect local experience to broader national and transregional histories. These environments are most productive when treated as complementary rather than hierarchical. A school-based inquiry may begin with family recollections, proceed to archival documentation, and culminate in a public presentation that explicitly distinguishes memory, interpretation and verified historical fact.

DISCUSSION

The findings invite a discussion about the relationship between socially useful remembrance and critical historical education. Jan Assmann understands cultural memory as an institutionalized means through which communities preserve and reactivate forms of identity over long periods [4]. From this perspective, school curricula, commemorative calendars, libraries and heritage institutions are not neutral containers; they participate in selecting the materials through which generations understand continuity. Applied to New Uzbekistan, this argument highlights the importance of the institutional support given to cultural heritage and intergenerational education. It also raises the question of who selects the heritage canon and how institutions revise that selection when new evidence or previously neglected voices become available.

James V. Wertsch's analysis shifts attention from the durability of institutions to the narrative templates through which people repeatedly interpret the past [8]. Collective remembering may remain

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selective even when people have access to accurate individual facts, because familiar story forms direct attention toward some actors, motives and outcomes while obscuring others. In a productive theoretical tension, Assmann helps explain why cultural transmission provides stability, whereas Wertsch cautions that stability may reproduce narrow narrative habits. Neither approach warrants the claim that remembrance is necessarily manipulative or necessarily emancipatory. Their combined contribution is to make the pedagogical quality of remembering an empirical and ethical question rather than a presumed virtue.

CONCLUSION

The historical analysis establishes that the relationship between national values, historical memory and youth education in New Uzbekistan acquired more explicit policy articulation during 2017–2026. The 2022 Development Strategy, the 2023 Uzbekistan–2030 framework and the 2026 Youth of New Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy provide a documentary sequence through which cultural heritage, moral education, modern knowledge and youth participation were connected in public policy. The study proposes four analytical stages and shows that national values are best understood as historically changing cultural orientations rather than fixed prescriptions. The methodological contribution lies in distinguishing policy intentions, collective representations and demonstrable educational outcomes.

The integration of Uzbek historiographical scholarship with the theories of Assmann and Wertsch indicates that historical memory can support educational continuity while also reproducing selective interpretations. For this reason, the article advocates an evidence-based model combining chronological reasoning, critical use of oral and written sources, local-history inquiry, accessible heritage institutions and respect for cultural plurality. It argues that the educational purpose of historical memory is not merely to reproduce inherited accounts, but to equip young people to understand how those accounts were constructed, what they illuminate and which questions they leave unresolved.

For future investigation, comparative classroom studies, archive-based case research and longitudinal assessments are required to establish whether the proposed model improves historical literacy, civic responsibility and inclusive participation. No such effects are claimed on the basis of the present documentary study. The policy and scholarly evidence considered here supports a more modest but important conclusion: a historically informed approach to national values can enhance the intellectual relevance of youth education when the transmission of heritage is consistently connected with inquiry, criticism and the ethical recognition of others.

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