

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING OF YOUTH IN NEW UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This article explores the vital role that religious education institutions play in the moral and spiritual upbringing of youth in New Uzbekistan. It highlights how these institutions contribute to shaping ethically grounded, socially responsible, and spiritually enriched individuals. The paper also examines how religious education is being harmonized with modern educational reforms to promote well-rounded development among young people.

Keywords: Religious education, youth upbringing, moral values, New Uzbekistan, educational reform, spirituality, social development

Introduction

The upbringing and education of youth have always been central to the development and stability of any society. In the context of New Uzbekistan, where significant reforms are taking place across all sectors, special attention is being given to cultivating a morally mature and spiritually strong generation. Religious education institutions, including madrasas and Islamic academies, serve as important platforms for instilling deep-rooted ethical values and guiding youth towards a balanced, purposeful life.

As Uzbekistan moves forward with its modernization agenda, these institutions are not only preserving traditional spiritual heritage but are also actively integrating with contemporary pedagogical practices. The state recognizes the strategic role of religious education in countering extremism, promoting national unity, and fostering a sense of identity among the younger generation.

Preservation of National and Spiritual Identity

In New Uzbekistan, where cultural and spiritual revival is seen as a cornerstone of national development, religious institutions contribute to the preservation and promotion of Islamic values that align with the nation's history and identity. Religious education allows young people to understand their heritage, appreciate cultural diversity, and embrace a sense of belonging to their community and nation.

Modernization of Religious Institutions

Recent reforms have led to significant improvements in the structure and curriculum of religious education institutions. These schools are now incorporating secular subjects alongside traditional religious sciences, ensuring students are well-prepared for modern society while remaining grounded in spiritual knowledge. This approach helps eliminate the gap between religious and secular education, fostering holistic intellectual growth.

Combating Extremism and Promoting Tolerance

A key objective of religious education in Uzbekistan is to promote moderate Islamic teachings and counteract extremist ideologies. Qualified religious scholars provide youth with a correct

understanding of faith, encouraging critical thinking, tolerance, and interfaith harmony. This contributes to the formation of a peaceful and cohesive society.

State Support and Strategic Vision

The government of Uzbekistan has shown consistent support for religious institutions through legal reforms, increased funding, and the establishment of centers like the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan. These efforts underscore the state's commitment to integrating religious values into broader educational and social policies.

Moral and Ethical Development Through Faith-Based Learning

Religious education institutions in New Uzbekistan continue to play a crucial role in shaping youth with strong moral foundations. Through structured teaching of Islamic principles such as honesty, respect, patience, and kindness, these institutions contribute significantly to the formation of a disciplined and conscientious generation. In a world increasingly influenced by digital distractions and moral ambiguity, religious schools offer a space where timeless values are instilled and preserved.

Students are taught not only to follow rituals but to understand their purpose. For example, daily prayer becomes a means to develop personal discipline, fasting cultivates empathy for others, and reading sacred texts builds both spiritual awareness and literacy. This helps youth become individuals who not only succeed academically or professionally but also uphold ethical conduct in all aspects of life.

Strengthening National Identity and Spiritual Heritage

Uzbekistan is historically a center of Islamic learning and culture. Cities like Bukhara, Samarkand, and Termez have produced world-renowned scholars. Religious education institutions today ensure that the legacy of figures such as Imam Bukhari and Imam Termizi is not only remembered but actively taught to new generations. Students learn about the contributions of Uzbek scholars to global Islamic thought, fostering national pride and a strong sense of belonging.

This educational approach helps youth understand their identity through both a national and a spiritual lens. They come to see themselves not just as modern citizens, but as guardians of a deep and rich intellectual heritage.

Modernization of Religious Institutions

In recent years, many religious schools and academies in Uzbekistan have undergone significant modernization. Facilities have been upgraded, and teaching materials have been revised to meet both religious and secular educational standards. Many institutions now include courses in computer literacy, foreign languages, and social sciences alongside classical Islamic subjects such as tafsir, hadith, and fiqh.

This dual-curriculum model has become essential in ensuring that graduates are not only spiritually educated but also well-prepared for contemporary challenges. Teachers are being retrained with modern pedagogical methods, and the use of digital platforms is being introduced to support remote learning, especially in rural areas.

Expanding State Support and Regulation

The government has actively supported religious education by funding institutions, improving infrastructure, and ensuring that religious learning remains within a legal and safe framework. Dozens of new educational institutions have been opened or reopened, including higher Islamic education centers and regional madrasas. Special emphasis has been placed on creating standardized admission procedures, transparent academic criteria, and merit-based scholarship programs.

Laws have been updated to ensure that only certified teachers provide religious instruction and that all programs are aligned with national education goals. These steps have improved the quality, safety, and public trust in religious education institutions.

Preventing Extremism and Strengthening Social Stability

One of the most important roles religious education institutions play is in the fight against radicalization. Proper religious education, grounded in authentic sources and taught by qualified scholars, serves as a shield against extremist ideologies. When youth are educated in a balanced, tolerant, and peaceful understanding of their faith, they are less likely to be drawn into harmful or illegal activities.

Addressing Unofficial Religious Schooling

Due to limited access and high demand, some families have turned to informal religious study circles, sometimes operating without licenses or qualified instructors. In response, the government has strengthened legal measures to discourage these practices and promote formal education alternatives. Penalties have been introduced for unlicensed religious instruction, especially when involving minors, and parents are now required to enroll children only in officially recognized institutions.

At the same time, efforts are being made to expand the number of state-approved schools to reduce the need for unregulated alternatives. This balanced approach ensures both the protection of children and the freedom to pursue religious knowledge responsibly.

International Collaboration and Research Development

Uzbekistan's religious education institutions are also building international ties. Scholars are now participating in exchanges, research projects, and global conferences, and partnerships are being established with institutions in countries such as Egypt, Turkey, and Malaysia. This global perspective allows students to engage with broader Islamic discourse while remaining rooted in their national traditions.

Additionally, the creation of dedicated research centers focused on Islamic civilization, theology, and interfaith dialogue is helping elevate Uzbekistan's role in the international academic community. These centers serve not only as educational institutions but also as cultural and diplomatic bridges.

Conclusion

Religious education institutions in New Uzbekistan are playing an increasingly important role in the moral, spiritual, and intellectual development of youth. Their integration with modern educational reforms has made them effective platforms for building a just, tolerant, and well-educated society. As the country continues on its path of renewal, strengthening the synergy between spiritual and secular knowledge will remain a vital priority.

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