



**SPIRITUAL EDUCATION THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
READING CULTURE IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF  
SURKHANDARYA REGION (PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS AND  
PROSPECTS)**

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**Abstract**

This scientific article is devoted to the topical issues of improving the spiritual education of youth through the development of reading culture in educational institutions of Surkhandarya region. Also, the material and technical base and the composition of the library of 30 educational institutions were studied in depth. The article scientifically substantiates the impact of reading culture on such indicators as youth's worldview, moral qualities, sense of patriotism, respect for national and universal values, and social activity. As a result of the study, the current state of reading culture in educational institutions of the region, existing problems were systematized, and strategic directions, innovative approaches and practical mechanisms for their elimination were developed.

**Keywords:** Reading culture, spiritual education, educational institutions, library resources, information and library centers, fiction, reading competence, Surkhandarya region, youth spirituality, national values, information security, digital transformation, teacher-librarian cooperation, family reading, literary heritage.

**Introduction**

The twenty-first century is widely recognized as the age of information technologies, in which young people's interest in reading books has been steadily declining while dependence on the virtual world has been increasing. This tendency has become one of the factors posing a threat to the moral and spiritual security of society. Indeed, the role of books is invaluable in educating individuals who are spiritually mature, capable of independent thinking, patriotic, and



endowed with high moral qualities. As emphasized by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, “A book is a source of enlightenment and the most important means of educating young people. If our youth read books, their worldview will broaden, their spirituality will develop, and a healthy moral environment will be established in society”.

Surxondaryo region is one of the largest and demographically youngest regions of Uzbekistan. More than 1.2 million young people live in the region, and nearly 500,000 pupils and students are enrolled in the education system. These figures demonstrate the strategic importance of developing moral education through the promotion of reading culture. At the same time, the level of reading culture, the availability of library resources, and the professional capacity of teachers and librarians in the region remain lower compared to other regions of the republic, which further underscores the relevance of the issue.[1]

### **Literature Review**

Issues related to books and reading culture have attracted the attention of scholars since antiquity. In the works of Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato, books are interpreted as the primary source of knowledge. Among Eastern thinkers, such scholars as Al-Khwarizmi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Al-Biruni, Yusuf Khos Khojib, Alisher Navoi, and Abdurahman Jami placed special emphasis on the educational and moral significance of books. In particular, Yusuf Khos Khojib’s work *Qutadghu Bilig* provides a philosophical justification of achieving virtue and goodness through knowledge and books.

In Western philosophy, thinkers such as M. Montaigne, F. Bacon, R. Descartes, I. Kant, and G. Hegel regarded books as a fundamental factor in the development of human thought and spirituality. Francis Bacon’s famous statement, “Books are ships of thought sailing through the ocean of time,” remains relevant even today.[2]

Representatives of postmodern philosophy, including J. Derrida, U. Eco, M. Foucault, and J. Baudrillard, offered new interpretations of the concepts of books and texts. Umberto Eco, not only in his theoretical works but also through his novel *The Name of the Rose*, artistically demonstrated the role of books and knowledge in resisting totalitarian systems.



## **Methodology**

The theoretical and methodological framework of the study is based on several interrelated approaches. A systems approach considers the development of reading culture as a set of interconnected components, including objectives, content, methods, tools, forms, and outcomes. The activity-based approach interprets reading as a form of activity, analyzing its structure in terms of motivation, goals, actions, practices, and results. A learner-centered approach takes into account students' interests, needs, abilities, age, and psychological characteristics. The competency-based approach identifies the structural components of reading competence, such as knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and values. Finally, the synergetic approach examines the development of reading culture as an open, nonlinear, and self-organizing system.[3]

## **Discussion and results**

The research was conducted in four stages. During the first stage (September–November 2023), theoretical sources were reviewed, the research program was developed, and research tools were prepared. The second stage (December 2023–February 2024) involved collecting empirical data through surveys and observations. At the third stage (March–April 2024), the collected data were processed, analyzed, and generalized. The final stage (May–June 2024) focused on interpreting the results and formulating conclusions and recommendations.

The study employed theoretical research methods such as analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization, abstraction, modeling, and forecasting.[4]

The analysis of the current state of reading culture in Surxondaryo region reveals several important trends. Survey results indicate significant differences between urban and rural students in terms of reading frequency. While 12.5% of urban students reported reading books daily, this figure was only 4.2% among rural students. Conversely, the proportion of students who almost never read books was considerably higher in rural areas, reaching 26.1%, compared to 9.2% in urban schools. Overall, only 8.1% of students reported daily reading, whereas 18.3% stated that they rarely read books. These findings suggest a noticeable disparity in reading culture between urban and rural educational institutions.

An analysis of the types of literature read by students shows that curriculum-based fiction dominates at all educational levels, particularly among students in grades



5–9 and 10–11. This indicates that reading is largely driven by compulsory requirements rather than free choice. At the university level, however, the proportion of students reading supplementary fiction and popular science literature increases, reflecting a gradual shift toward independent and interest-based reading.[5]

Library attendance patterns further illustrate existing challenges. A significant proportion of students rarely visit school, district, or city libraries. While online libraries are used more frequently than traditional libraries, nearly one-third of respondents reported that they almost never use digital library resources. This demonstrates that despite technological opportunities, access to and engagement with library services remain limited.

The analysis shows that only about one third of students regularly visit school libraries. Attendance at district libraries is extremely low. Although the use of online libraries is relatively higher, this indicator remains insufficient to ensure the sustainable development of reading culture.[6]

An assessment of library collections was conducted in 30 educational institutions. The average number of books in school libraries amounts to 12,500 copies in urban schools and 8,700 copies in rural schools. The share of newly published books from the last five years составляет 18% in urban schools and only 7% in rural schools. Children’s encyclopedias are available in 45% of schools, while dictionaries are insufficient in 62% of institutions. Works by contemporary Uzbek writers are found in only 23% of school libraries. Collections of world literature are mostly represented by outdated editions. Electronic resources are available in merely 28% of schools, and internet speed is assessed as satisfactory in only 15% of institutions, while 85% report unsatisfactory connectivity.[7]

Based on the research findings, the factors hindering the development of reading culture in educational institutions of Surxondaryo region were systematized. Infrastructure-related problems include outdated and poorly maintained library buildings, observed in 48% of institutions; obsolete book collections, with 65% of books being older than ten years; a shortage of modern literature (73%); the absence of electronic library systems (82%); low internet speed (85%); outdated library equipment (54%); and the lack of separate reading halls for children and adolescents (76%). Personnel-related issues include a shortage of qualified librarians (62%), low salary levels for library staff (78%), insufficient reading



culture among teachers themselves (42%), weak cooperation between teachers and librarians (68%), and low digital literacy among librarians (58%).[8]

Motivational problems also play a significant role. These include students' dependence on digital devices (52%), a lack of engaging and attractive books (32%), compulsory rather than voluntary reading practices (18%), the perception that reading is no longer fashionable (45%), and a shortage of role models who promote reading (38%). Methodological shortcomings are evident in the absence of modern methods for developing reading culture (74%), outdated approaches to teaching literature (56%), low-quality and unengaging textbooks (48%), ineffective systems of extracurricular and out-of-school reading (62%), and the lack of structured guidance for book selection (71%). Social factors further exacerbate the problem, including the absence of family reading traditions (84%), low reading levels among parents (62%), the negative influence of social networks (78%), a shortage of cultural centers in rural areas (92%), and inadequate organization of leisure time (58%).[9]

To address these challenges, a set of strategic directions and practical recommendations is proposed. One key initiative is the development of the "Surxondaryo – Region of Readers" program for 2025–2030. The main priorities of this program include modernization of libraries in educational institutions, creation of an integrated electronic information and library system, training and professional development of personnel, formation of reading competencies among pupils and students, and promotion of reading culture through cooperation between families and local communities. In addition, the establishment of a comprehensive "Reading Ecosystem" model is proposed, consisting of educational institutions as reading centers, families as reading environments, local communities as spaces for reading culture, media as promoters of reading, and the state as a supporter and sponsor of reading initiatives.[10]

## **Conclusion**

The development of reading culture as a means of moral education in the educational institutions of Surxondaryo region is one of the most pressing issues of today. The research findings allow several key conclusions to be drawn. First, reading culture in the region's educational institutions remains insufficiently developed, with only 8.1% of students reading books on a daily basis, which is



below the national average of 12–15%. Second, there is a significant disparity between urban and rural areas, with reading indicators in rural schools being two to three times lower than in urban schools, highlighting the need for targeted programs to address regional inequality. Third, the condition of library resources is unsatisfactory: book collections are outdated, modern literature is scarce, and access to electronic resources and the internet is limited, making these factors major obstacles to the development of reading culture.

Fourth, a direct correlation exists between reading culture and moral education. Students who read regularly demonstrate higher levels of moral values, patriotism, respect for national traditions, and social activity, which confirms the role of reading as a core instrument of moral upbringing. Fifth, the factors hindering reading culture are systemic in nature. Infrastructure, personnel, motivational, methodological, and social problems are closely interconnected and require comprehensive solutions. Sixth, digital transformation exerts a dual influence: while digital devices often distract students from reading, they also create new opportunities for promoting reading culture, which should be used more effectively.

Seventh, family reading traditions remain underdeveloped. Parents' low reading levels and the lack of shared reading practices negatively affect the formation of reading habits among children.[11] Eighth, the rich literary heritage of Surxondaryo region is underutilized. The works of regional scholars, oral folklore, and epic traditions could serve as powerful sources of moral education, yet these resources are not sufficiently integrated into educational practice. Ninth, positive experiences in promoting reading culture do exist, including initiatives such as "Open Library," "Literary Monday," and "Book Safari," which have proven effective and should be expanded and popularized. Tenth, the development of reading culture requires a strategic approach, as the scale and complexity of the problem necessitate long-term, well-resourced, and systemic programs.

Overall, the research demonstrates that Surxondaryo region possesses significant potential for strengthening moral education through the development of reading culture in educational institutions. Realizing this potential requires coordinated cooperation among the state, society, educational institutions, families, and mass media, as well as a comprehensive and strategic approach.[12] Promoting reading culture is not only the responsibility of educational institutions but a task for



society as a whole. A generation that reads is a generation capable of building the future with its own hands—spiritually mature, patriotic, and competitive. Through the development of reading culture in Surxondaryo region, it is possible not only to enhance the moral values of youth but also to strengthen the region's intellectual capacity and accelerate its economic and social development.

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