

**DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL–EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND
ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS IN QASHQADARYO REGION**

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Abstract: This research examines the development of cultural and educational institutions in Qashqadaryo Region, the historical stages of their functioning, the modernization processes of the independence period, and the reforms carried out in the administrative system. The study provides a scholarly analysis of the role of libraries, museums, cultural centers, art schools, and other educational institutions operating in the region in fostering cultural and intellectual life. It also highlights improvements in management practices, capacity building of personnel, digitalization processes, and the impact of state cultural policy. The scientific significance of the study lies in analyzing transformations in the cultural sphere of Qashqadaryo Region through new historical approaches.

Keywords: Qashqadaryo Region, cultural–educational institutions, culture, enlightenment, modernization, administrative system, libraries, museums, cultural centers, art schools, digitalization, personnel policy.

INTRODUCTION

Qashqadaryo Region is one of the ancient and culturally rich territories of Uzbekistan, where cultural and educational institutions have historically played an important role in the socio-spiritual development of society. From the second half of the 20th century, a wide network of cultural centers, libraries, museums, and art and music schools formed across the region, serving as key institutions in meeting the cultural needs of the population. During the independence years, the activities of these institutions were significantly renewed: their material and technical base was strengthened, broad educational programs were introduced, and reforms were implemented to enhance the cultural literacy of the population and nurture a spiritually mature young generation.

The designation of culture as a priority sphere of state policy and the adoption of regional modernization programs for cultural and educational institutions created conditions for a qualitative new stage of development in Qashqadaryo. Decentralization of management, expansion of institutional autonomy, and the introduction of digitalization helped these institutions operate in accordance with contemporary cultural standards.

This research focuses on examining the infrastructure of cultural–educational institutions in Qashqadaryo, their administrative mechanisms, and the essence of reforms implemented in this sphere, while also illustrating how historical experiences can be applied in shaping modern cultural policy.

President of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev, during his address at the meeting with representatives of the creative intelligentsia on August 3, 2017, emphasized the importance of educating the younger generation in the spirit of loyalty to national culture and art, and highlighted the necessity of thoroughly studying the role of literature, culture, and fine arts, objectively evaluating achievements and shortcomings, and providing material support for the further development of this sector.

In the years of independence, the functions of cultural and educational institutions underwent profound changes. Newly organized activities were designed to meet the specific needs and interests of the population, while international experience was also widely utilized. In developed countries, cultural clubs not only address social needs but also operate on self-sustaining principles. In Uzbekistan, as market relations developed, the influence on cultural–educational institutions grew accordingly. Starting from 1991, many such institutions transitioned to partial self-financing. Legal and regulatory frameworks governing their activities were developed and implemented.

The 1991 Law “On Public Associations of the Republic of Uzbekistan” affirmed that citizens have the right to establish various creative organizations, foundations, associations, and public unions aimed at fulfilling their political, economic, social, and cultural rights; supporting amateur interests; encouraging scientific, technical, and artistic creativity; promoting cultural–educational and sports activities; and protecting historical and cultural heritage. In addition, a model Charter for state-run cultural clubs under the Ministry of Culture was developed. According to the Charter, clubs are established by cultural authorities and may be dissolved by local government decisions in coordination with the Ministry of Culture [1].

The establishment of cultural centers and their territorial distribution formed the foundation of the state's cultural policy. Analyzing the activity of cultural–educational institutions across regions of the republic allows us to draw certain conclusions. For example, in 1998 the number of cultural–educational institutions located in rural areas amounted to: Andijan Region – 188; Bukhara – 141; Jizzakh – 74; the Republic of Karakalpakstan – 165; Qashqadaryo – 106; Namangan – 172; Samarkand – 273; Surkhandarya – 138; Syrdarya – 100; Fergana – 228; Khorezm – 186; and Navoi – 113 [2]. This demonstrates that as the population of the republic increased, the construction and spatial organization of cultural institutions had to take these demographic changes into account.

One of the key issues of social reforms was the revival of ancient rural cultural traditions and their development in accordance with modern requirements. As the foundations of a democratic state were being formed, the social role of community and public organizations was officially recognized, and rural cultural development was designated as a strategically important priority. This indicates the importance of strengthening the role of public organizations in advancing rural culture in the conditions of independent Uzbekistan [3].

In the early years of independence, despite economic hardships, one of the primary roles of cultural–educational institutions in rural areas was to provide cultural services to the population. Cultural centers increasingly shifted toward offering paid services. Revenue from such paid cultural services grew significantly: in 1991 by 108.8 percent (from 29,681.6 to 323,000 soums), in 1992 by 139.5 percent (from 48,405.5 to 67,547.3 soums), in the first quarter of 1993 by 168.9 percent (from 17,447 to 29,485.1 soums), and in 1998 the indicator rose to 161.2 percent. By 2006, paid services provided by republic-level organizations reached 112 percent of the planned target, totaling 1,116.6 million soums [4].

In 1993, Qashqadaryo Region had 156 functioning cultural–educational institutions [4]. These institutions were tasked with organizing various cultural and recreational events for the population, as well as supporting amateur art groups and their performances.

One of the main conditions for improving the sector’s activity was strengthening its material base. For example, in Surkhandarya Region, to improve the material and technical infrastructure of cultural centers, the central district library of Termez was relocated to the district center in 1993 [6]. Such measures significantly contributed to reinforcing library work across the region.

During the previous years, special attention had been paid to organizing cultural and educational activities in rural cultural centers and palaces. However, by 1995 this issue had been largely neglected. Funding for cultural–educational institutions remained problematic. As a result, young cultural specialists struggled to find venues and financial support for organizing events. Previously held competitions and festivals—such as “Young Talents,” “Welcome, Talents,” and the “Talented Youth” festival—gradually ceased to exist and were forgotten [7].

The formation of a democratic society based on a market economy in Uzbekistan required a fundamental reform of the functioning of cultural–educational institutions. Cultural institutions that no longer met contemporary requirements were gradually reduced. In reorganizing their activities, significant attention was given to the needs and demands of local communities (mahallas). In 1995, out of 7,225 libraries operating across Uzbekistan, 5,986 were located in rural areas [8]. Due to financial constraints, the number of books and journals in these libraries also declined. Several factors contributed to this situation: improvements in living standards, the widespread use of computers and video technologies, and the increasing influence of information entering people’s lives through digital media reduced interest in traditional books. With access to the Internet, readers gained the opportunity to obtain information electronically. It should be noted that this process is characteristic not only of Uzbekistan but of the entire world.

In September 1996, the Presidential Decree “On Further Improving the Activities and Increasing the Effectiveness of the ‘Spirituality and Enlightenment’ Public Center” [9] identified urgent measures for advancing the activities of cultural–educational institutions across the republic. To ensure the implementation of this decree, specific measures were developed for rural areas. In particular, efforts were undertaken to train staff and improve their qualifications. Special attention was also given to providing communal service benefits and financial incentives to rural librarians [10]. To revitalize the work of cultural–educational institutions, financial support measures were implemented for their employees. In 1996, several social protection initiatives were carried out in Qashqadaryo Region as well. For example, five employees of the central district library in Kasbi District were granted free privatization of their homes. Additionally, librarians in the rural communities of T. Malik, Sh. Rashidov, and “Navro‘z” collective farms received a 30-percent salary supplement funded by the farms themselves [11].

An analysis of this process through the example of Uzbekistan’s rural areas leads to several conclusions. For instance, in 2004 the number of rural club institutions was as follows: Karakalpakstan – 165; Andijan – 158; Bukhara – 130; Jizzakh – 113; Navoi – 102; Namangan – 153; Samarkand – 231; Syrdarya – 91; Surkhandarya – 144; Tashkent Region – 149; Fergana – 147; Khorezm – 170; and Qashqadaryo – 143. However, by 2008 the total number of such institutions across the republic had dropped to 89. This reduction occurred due to several factors: insufficient funding and the negligence or lack of initiative on the part of local authorities and responsible leaders, which contributed significantly to the decline in club activities [12].

Cultural clubs attract visitors to literature, music, and visual arts, help develop amateur creativity, and foster aesthetic taste. One of their most important functions is the dissemination of scientific knowledge and the coordination of public–political work with leisure activities [13].

According to the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan on February 10, 2006, during its meeting on “The Results of Socio-Economic Development in 2005 and the Priority Directions for Deepening Economic Reforms in 2006,” an expanded session of the Ministry’s Board was held on February 17 [14]. During this session, the Ministry’s priority tasks for 2006 were identified. In the fields of culture and the arts—including theater, music, educational institutions, cultural centers, libraries, and museums—the Board emphasized the creation of artistic works reflecting the essence of the adopted decision, conducting spiritual–educational events on these themes, organizing book-reading evenings, exhibitions, and museum

expositions. Additionally, theater organizations were instructed to enrich their repertoire with works promoting independence, strengthening the national economy, and fostering patriotism, while critically addressing problems such as bureaucracy, corruption, incompetence, laziness, lack of initiative, and insufficient technological knowledge, as well as condemning war and international terrorism. Cultural institutions were tasked with promoting the value of labor and demonstrating through events and activities that scientific progress is fundamental to societal advancement. They were also encouraged to expand paid services, attract foreign partners for restoring cultural heritage sites, and strengthen financial self-reliance.

On June 20, 2006, the Presidential Decree “On Providing the Population with Information and Library Services” was adopted [15]. This decree mandated the establishment of Information-Resource Centers to elevate library services to a qualitatively new level, as well as the development of collections of national and foreign publications.

Funding allocated for culture and sports in Uzbekistan increased progressively. In 2006, 32,591.3 million soums were allocated from the state budget for culture and sports, including 7,292.3 million soums for theater organizations, 1,538.9 million soums for restoring cultural monuments, and 1,144.1 million soums for supporting cultural–educational institutions [16].

In 2006, 37,765 visually impaired individuals lived in the republic. Libraries for the blind served 49,000 readers, more than 22,000 of whom were visually impaired. A total of 254 librarians worked in these libraries, 54 percent of whom held higher education degrees [17].

There were 81 libraries for the visually impaired across Uzbekistan: 2 republican, 12 regional, and 67 city and district libraries, serving nearly 60,000 individuals with visual disabilities. The Republican Central Library for the Blind provided methodological and practical support to all similar institutions and served as the coordinating organization. A total of 376 staff worked in the system: 157 (42 percent) held higher or specialized education, and 100 (26 percent) held higher education degrees. The libraries’ collections contained over 500,000 items, including 120,000 in Braille, 220,000 in print, and 172,000 audio publications. The national book fund was annually enriched with more than 8,000 new items.

Libraries, as centers of spiritual nourishment and knowledge, collect, preserve, and provide access to printed works. They organized various cultural and educational events. For example, in 2006 the Scientific Universal Library of Karakalpakstan held an event titled “Defending the Homeland is the Peace of the Nation” for the Day of Defenders of the Motherland, and another event dedicated to the anniversary of the People's Poet Zulfija titled “The Queen of Our Poetry.” At the Republican Central Library for the Blind, an event called “Guards of the Motherland” was held, while the State Children's Library organized a program titled “Brave Men Protect the Homeland.”

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