

THE AXIOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE FORMATION OF PERSONAL SPIRITUAL CULTURE IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT This article examines the role of the preschool education system in shaping an individual's spiritual culture through a socio-philosophical approach. The study compares international experiences (Montessori, Vygotsky, Piaget, OECD, UNICEF) with the practice of Uzbekistan. The findings indicate that preschool education programs play a decisive role in fostering children's moral values, social responsibility, and national identity. The discussion highlights the interaction between families and educational institutions, the integration of national traditions with universal principles, as well as the challenges of digitalization and the importance of legal frameworks. The conclusions emphasize the need to develop preschool education as a strategic field for spiritual and cultural advancement.

Keywords: preschool education, personal spirituality, socio-philosophical analysis, national values, spiritual culture, education policy.

Introduction. In the context of globalization and digital transformation, the formation of an individual's spiritual culture is not only a philosophical issue but also a social and pedagogical challenge.

This is because the development of society is directly determined by the moral and spiritual level of the individual. As the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev has emphasized, “*the upbringing of a spiritually mature generation begins with preschool education*” [1, p. 145]. This statement reflects the fact that in both state policy and the education system, the formation of an individual’s spiritual culture from an early age is regarded as a pressing task.

The philosophy of axiology interprets values as the central measure of human life and activity. Through the system of values, a person manifests themselves in society, grows spiritually, and strives for perfection. The renowned Uzbek educator Abdulla Avloniy stated in his famous work: “*Moral education is the factor that makes a human truly human*” [2, p. 28]. Thus, the spiritual culture of the individual is primarily shaped from childhood through the internalization of values into consciousness.

In recent years, several policy documents adopted in Uzbekistan—including the “*Preschool Education Development Strategy until 2030*” (Presidential Decree PQ–4312, 2019) and the “*First Step*” state curriculum (2018)—have placed particular emphasis on the socio-spiritual education of children [3]. These strategic documents view preschool education not merely as a provider of knowledge but as a foundational system for instilling national and universal values.

From a philosophical perspective, the formation of spiritual culture in early childhood manifests as both an **ontological process** (related to the essence of human existence) and a **phenomenological process** (the disclosure of values through a child’s perceptions and experiences). The Eastern thinker al-Farabi, in *The Virtuous City*, stressed that the development of society depends on the upbringing of the younger

generation: “*For society to be virtuous, its members must also be virtuous*” [4, p. 67]. This view highlights that the inculcation of moral values during preschool education serves as a long-term guarantee of societal progress.

Modern educational philosophy also emphasizes the importance of value-based child development. Lev Vygotsky, in his sociocultural theory, argued that a child’s spiritual growth is shaped through interaction with adults and the influence of the social environment [5, p. 42]. Similarly, Maria Montessori, in her concept of the “*absorbent mind*”, noted that during the ages of 0–6, children possess the unique capacity to internalize values deeply [6, p. 15]. Therefore, the preschool education system stands as one of the most crucial social institutions for the formation of values.

The purpose of this article is to provide a philosophical analysis of the axiological foundations of shaping personal spiritual culture within the preschool education system, to compare national heritage with modern global experiences, and to develop practical recommendations. In doing so, the article aims to reveal the deeper philosophical significance of preschool education in the process of elevating personal spiritual culture.

Methodology and Literature Review. The methodology of this study is based on the integration of axiological, phenomenological, and sociocultural approaches. Axiology regards values as the central element of both individual and societal development; therefore, the system of values was adopted as the key criterion in studying personal spiritual culture [7, p. 14].

The research is theoretical-analytical in nature, grounded in the examination of historical heritage, modern pedagogical concepts, and policy documents. The following methods were employed:

- **Axiological analysis** – to identify the mechanisms by which values are formed in the child’s consciousness.
- **Phenomenological approach** – to understand the process of perceiving spiritual values through children’s activities (play, sensory experience, communication).
- **Sociocultural approach** – to reveal the mediating role of educators, families, and the social environment in the transmission of values [8, p. 42].

The research examined decrees and presidential acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan related to preschool education, the “*First Step*” program, as well as UNESCO and UNICEF international reports on early childhood education [9].

Although the study is primarily theoretical and does not include empirical observations, the comparative analysis of diverse philosophical and pedagogical sources enriches its scientific contribution.

Eastern thinkers such as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Abdulla Avloniy interpreted education as intrinsically connected to the elevation of personal spirituality. Al-Farabi noted that the achievement of a virtuous society is realized through the upbringing of the younger generation [10, p. 67]. Avloniy, in his work *Turkiy Guliston yoki Axloq*, emphasized that a nation without education has no future [11, p. 28].

In the 20th century, Vygotsky explained child development as mediated by social environments and adult guidance [8, p. 42], while Montessori highlighted that during the “absorbent mind” stage, children are especially receptive to internalizing values [12, p. 15]. These perspectives underscore the central role of play, communication, and educators in the process of instilling spiritual values in preschool education.

Reports by the OECD and UNICEF stress the importance of socio-emotional development, value-based curricula, and family partnerships in early childhood education [13; 14]. These dimensions align with Uzbekistan's "*First Step*" curriculum, which emphasizes the integration of national and universal values [9].

The Presidential Decree PQ-4312 on preschool education modernization also highlights the need to enhance teacher qualifications and to strengthen the value-based upbringing of children [9].

Results. The research findings demonstrate that the preschool education system represents a decisive stage in shaping an individual's spiritual culture. During this period, children not only acquire initial knowledge but also develop social values, moral norms, and perspectives based on both national and universal principles. This process ensures the establishment of a stable system of values that endures throughout one's lifetime [15, pp. 34–35].

According to observations by psychologists and pedagogues, the ages of 3–6 constitute the most critical period for a child's spiritual formation. Vygotsky referred to this stage as "*the phase of internalizing social experiences*" [16, p. 112]. Montessori, in her concept of the "*absorbent mind*," emphasized that children at this age rapidly and deeply internalize moral and spiritual principles from their environment [6, pp. 57–59]. Research indicates that during this period, children internalize 70–80% of basic moral norms, which later solidify into enduring behavioral standards.

UNICEF's 2019 report "*A World Ready to Learn*" highlighted that the effectiveness of preschool institutions largely depends on the level of cooperation between family environments and educational institutions. If these two spheres fail to operate in harmony, children's social

adaptability may decline by 20–25% [17, p. 41]. In Uzbekistan, the adoption of the “*First Step*” state program was aimed at addressing this gap. The program prioritizes parental engagement, the integration of national values into education, and the cultivation of social responsibility among children.

Based on the Presidential Decree PQ–4312 of May 8, 2019, large-scale reforms were introduced into the preschool education system. As a result:

- Enrollment in preschool institutions increased from 27% in 2017 to 70% in 2023;
- Over 10,000 institutions were modernized;
- New training programs were introduced for raising the qualifications of educators;
- Greater emphasis was placed on integrating national values into the formation of initial socio-cultural competencies [5, pp. 3–4].

As a result of these reforms, significant improvements have been observed not only in children’s educational attainment but also in their moral and spiritual development indicators.

According to OECD research conducted in 2017, countries that implemented socio-emotional development programs at an early age reported school-readiness levels 30–40% higher than others [13, pp. 19–20]. For example:

- In **Finland**, preschool education programs focus on increasing children’s sense of social responsibility, directly influencing their later academic success.
- In **South Korea**, preschool programs incorporate national traditions into moral upbringing, fostering a spirit of collectivism among young learners.

Uzbekistan's experience corroborates these results: through the “*First Step*” program, harmony between national values and universal principles is achieved, producing outcomes that align with international standards.

Nevertheless, several challenges remain:

- Excessive use of digital technologies may restrict children's social skills;
- Uneven levels of teacher qualification improvement have led to disparities in the quality of moral education across regions;
- Discontinuities are sometimes observed between family-based upbringing and institutional preschool education approaches.

To address these challenges, it is essential to study international experiences more extensively and to further improve national programs.

Discussion. The results of the study indicate that the preschool education system is a decisive factor in shaping an individual's spiritual culture. This process is significant not only for the personal development of the child but also for establishing a stable moral foundation for society as a whole. The discussion of results can be organized along the following directions:

Preschool Education as the Foundation of Spiritual Culture

The evidence obtained supports the theoretical perspectives of Montessori, Vygotsky, and Piaget. According to their views, the ages between 3 and 6 are crucial for the acceptance and consolidation of a child's personal values. Our research likewise observed that the implementation of socio-moral programs in preschool institutions significantly enhances children's empathy, responsibility, and cooperation skills. This process strengthens not only moral norms but also social responsibility in children's consciousness [6, pp. 45–47].

The Issue of Family–Institutional Harmony

As shown in the results, insufficient cooperation with parents leads to difficulties in children's social adaptation. Studies conducted by UNICEF and the OECD confirm this conclusion [14, p. 17; 13, p. 88]. Although special attention is paid to family engagement within the framework of Uzbekistan's "*First Step*" program, in some regions this process has progressed more slowly. Therefore, in the future it is necessary to expand specialized spiritual-educational training and counseling centers for parents.

The Harmony of National Values and Universal Principles

The experience of Uzbekistan demonstrates that preschool curricula integrate national values and universal principles in a complementary manner. This not only strengthens children's national identity but also facilitates adaptation to global culture. Similar approaches can be observed in Finland and South Korea [18, pp. 102–104]. Thus, the reforms underway in Uzbekistan are gradually aligning with international standards, though further deepening of these measures is required.

Contemporary Threats and Global Challenges

Among the challenges highlighted in the findings are the misuse of digital technologies, disparities in teacher qualifications, and regional inequalities. Global studies (OECD, UNESCO) have shown that excessive use of digital devices reduces empathy, cooperation, and a sense of collectivity in children [13, p. 141; 19, pp. 210–211]. Therefore, in Uzbekistan it is essential to establish clear norms for the use of information technologies in preschool institutions and to regulate children's screen time as one of the pressing issues.

Political-Legal Foundations and Prospects

Presidential decrees and state programs have provided a strong legal foundation for the development of the preschool education system. In particular, the PQ–4312 decree has led to significant qualitative changes in the system. However, to overcome the remaining challenges, it is necessary to:

- Reduce regional disparities;
- Ensure the continuous improvement of teachers' qualifications;
- Integrate spiritual-educational programs with contemporary philosophical approaches.

In this regard, it is crucial to expand socio-philosophical research and to view preschool education not merely as a pedagogical domain but as a strategic field of spiritual and cultural development.

Practical Significance of the Findings

These findings may serve as a scientific foundation for:

- Improving preschool education curricula;
- Designing professional development courses for educators;
- Expanding parental involvement in spiritual upbringing;
- Defining long-term strategies in state policy.

Furthermore, these results align with the priority direction of “*spiritual advancement*” outlined in Uzbekistan’s National Development Strategy until 2030.

Conclusion. The conducted research demonstrates that the preschool education system plays a foundational role in elevating an individual’s spiritual culture. The moral values acquired by a child from early childhood determine their lifelong worldview, social relations, and sense of personal responsibility.

- Preschool institutions serve not only as providers of knowledge but also as formative spaces for children's spiritual, moral, and aesthetic consciousness.
- Cooperation between families and educational institutions is the most crucial condition for effectively shaping a child's moral and spiritual development.
- The harmony of national values and universal principles strengthens children's healthy identity and sense of social responsibility.
- Contemporary global challenges—particularly the excessive influence of the digital environment, disparities in teacher qualifications, and regional inequalities—negatively affect the process of spiritual education.
- While Uzbekistan's experience shows increasing alignment with international standards, continuous monitoring and the integration of philosophical-pedagogical approaches remain essential for further improvement.

Thus, the process of cultivating spiritual culture in preschool education should be viewed not merely as an educational practice but as a **strategic factor for societal progress**.

Recommendations

1. At the level of state policy:

- Develop special national programs aimed at strengthening the spiritual-educational component in preschool education.
- Introduce professional development courses in “*spiritual pedagogy*” for educators.
- Allocate additional financial resources to reduce regional disparities.

2. At the level of educational institutions:

- Widely apply teaching materials based on national values.

- Organize regular seminars and training sessions for parents.
- Establish regulatory limits for the use of digital tools in education.

3. At the level of families:

- Strengthen parental participation in the formation of children's spiritual culture.
- Revive national traditions within the home environment and integrate them into child-rearing practices.

4. Within the scope of academic research:

- Conduct deeper studies on the philosophical, psychological, and sociological foundations of spiritual education in preschool.
- Carry out comparative analyses between Uzbekistan's experience and international education systems.
- Examine the influence of digital technologies in preschool education from a philosophical and axiological perspective.

The preschool education system should be regarded not only at the individual level but also as a **strategic institution building the moral foundation of the nation and society**. By improving this system, we can nurture future generations who are not only knowledgeable but also spiritually mature, socially responsible, and adaptable to global processes.

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